youth VIOLENCE

SEX AND RACE DIFFERENCES IN OFFENDING, VICTIMIZATION, AND GANG MEMBERSHIP

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Contents

List of Figures and Tables

FIGURES

TABLES

Preface

The topic of youth violence has received considerable attention during the past decade. However, we have noticed, while reviewing and selecting texts for our courses on juvenile gangs and violence, a lack of books that deal comprehensively with the interrelationships of youth violence, gang membership, and violent victimization while attending to the important issues of who is involved in these forms of violence and whether risk factors differ by type of violence or by type of person (i.e., sex and race/ethnicity). In this book, we provide a comprehensive analysis of three forms of youth violence—violent offending, gang membership, and violent victimization—with a specific focus on how they are affected by both sex and race/ethnicity. We rely on one study to lead the reader through the maze of theory and research methodology that is essential to understanding the dynamics of youth violence. Importantly, we link our findings to current juvenile justice policies.

Our objectives in writing this book are threefold: (1) to examine the intersection of youth violence, gang membership, and violent victimization; (2) to investigate the role of sex and race/ethnicity in youth violence; and (3) to relate our findings to current debates concerning the value and necessity of sex-specific and race/ethnicity-specific policies and programs.

Although recent research has tackled the issues of gangs, drugs, and violence; the relationship between gang membership and violence; and the link between delinquent behavior and victimization, no singular work, to the best of our knowledge, has examined the interrelationships among these three types of violence. Understanding the overlap in involvement in violence and risk factors for various types of violence guides the reader toward understanding the best ways to help youths avoid or desist from these behaviors. Our

work first explores each of these issues separately. Adopting a public health approach, we examine the risk factors associated with youths' becoming involved in violence as offenders, as gang members, and as victims, and we propose a theoretical framework that links these different risk factors into a coherent model for understanding youth violence. We then analyze the co-occurrence of these behaviors and identify whether similar or unique risk factors and theoretical explanations underlie each, an important question for juvenile justice policy and programming.

Throughout the book, we integrate the roles of both sex and race/ethnicity. Much criminological work has tended to exclude or dismiss girls as insignificant contributors to violence either because it assumes low rates for their involvement in violence or that they have fulfilled auxiliary roles in the perpetration of violence. In the past three decades, increased attention has been paid to girls' criminality, and theoretical perspectives on girls' offending have expanded. We applaud this trend and believe that including girls in our study of youth violence will add to this growing body of knowledge. Race/ethnicity has received considerable attention as a correlate of delinquency. However, it has rarely been integrated into a general discussion of violence. The tendency is to provide a chapter or section that addresses the role of race and ethnicity in offending or victimization. To some extent, this shortcoming can be attributed to inadequate numbers of either whites or racial/ethnic minorities in study samples. With our diverse sample, we were able to compare patterns and etiologies of violence, gang membership, and victimization among whites, African Americans, and Hispanics. Through our discussion, we encourage our readers to consider the meaning and implications of findings that challenge commonly held notions about who commits violence and why. Our findings also inform current debates about the value and necessity of sex-specific and race/ethnicity-specific policies and programs.

Finally, rather than leave readers asking, "So what?" we use the results from our risk factor and theoretically based explorations of youth violence, gang membership, and victimization to guide readers in thinking about appropriate responses to these societal problems. We review current programs and policies and discuss whether general prevention and intervention approaches are appropriate or whether approaches should be tailored for each form of violence, for each sex, or for each racial/ethnic group.

The data source for our examination of youth violence, gang membership, and victimization is a cross-sectional study of 5,935 eighth-grade students in eleven diverse U.S. cities. The study was part of the National Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program funded by the National Institute of Justice (1994–2001). Although we have published a number of specific articles examining the epidemiology and etiology of violence, gang membership, and victimization (as well as the effectiveness of the G.R.E.A.T. program), this is the first attempt to integrate these streams of inquiry. In this book, we provide a "user-friendly" and generalized presentation of what we consider the relevant findings of prior work, and, importantly, we expand on that work, and on the work of others, in the ways described here.

1
Introduction

Violence by and against youth, ranging from gang-related drive-by shootings to mass killings during school, has attracted considerable public and scholarly attention since 1990 (see, e.g., Cloud 1999; Howell 2009; Loeber and Farrington 1998; Office of the Surgeon General 2001; Thornton et al. 2002; Zimring 1998). Some social commentators speak of "super-predators" or violent offenders as if there is some unique characteristic that can be used to identify those adolescents who will become involved in violence (Capaldi and Patterson 1996; Fox 1996). No such label or stigma accurately captures the variety of behavior engaged in by adolescents. In fact, the notion that purely "violent offenders" per se exist may be open to debate (Capaldi and Patterson 1996; Farrington 1994; Klein 1984).

In his examination of the court careers of juvenile offenders in Arizona, Snyder (1998, 429) found that individuals who committed the violent offenses of murder and non-negligent manslaughter, kidnapping, violent sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault were a rarity. The vast majority of individuals were classified as non-chronic offenders (fewer than four offenses) with no serious offenses (burglary, serious larceny, motor vehicle theft, arson, weapons offenses, and drug trafficking) or violent offenses. Furthermore, the majority of those referred for violent offenses also committed nonviolent offenses. This finding lends support to Klein's (1995) contention that most juvenile offenders participate in "cafeteria-style" delinquency, making the juvenile who specializes in violence indeed rare. Thus, when we use the term "violent offender" (or "violence victim"), it is important to remember that we are referring to individuals who commit a variety of offenses, only some of which are violent.

Our primary goal in writing this book is to demystify youth violence by identifying factors associated with youths' involvement in violence, both as perpetrators and, importantly, as victims. We examine youth violence, gang membership (arguably a key factor in understanding much youth violence and victimization), and violent victimization while also focusing on the unique effects of sex and race/ethnicity on these forms of violence. We frame our work around our own research, a large school-based survey of middle-school students. To understand youth violence better, we will merge the relatively recent public health perspective with the more traditional criminological literature. During the past fifteen years or so, research and policy dealing with youth violence has moved from talking about theoretical explanations for the phenomenon and using these perspectives to justify youth policy (such as labeling theory and its attendant non-intervention strategies or deterrence theory and its more recent accountability legislation) toward taking a public health perspective that outlines risk factors associated with youth violence. Adopting this approach, we examine the risk factors associated with youths' involvement in violence as offenders, gang members, and victims and propose a theoretical framework that links these separate risk factors into a model for understanding youth violence.

Another focus of this book is the connection among youth violence, gang membership, and victimization. Recent research has tackled gangs, drugs, and violence (Howell and Decker 1999); the relationship between gang membership and violence (Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Hill et al. 1999; Maxson 1999; Thornberry et al. 2003); the link between delinquent behavior, including gang membership, and victimization (Loeber, Kalb, and Huizinga 2001; J. Miller 2001; Peterson, Taylor, and Esbensen 2004); the criminal behavior of gang and non-gang youth (Huff 1998); the intersections of gang membership, delinquent peers, and delinquent behavior (Battin-Pearson et al. 1998); and the relationship between violence and victimization (Esbensen and Huizinga 1991; Lauritsen, Sampson, and Laub 1991). To the best of our knowledge, however, no single work has examined how these three types of violence overlap, and few studies have considered the extent to which sex and race/ethnicity affect these relationships. Among the questions we will explore are:

- What is the prevalence of the various forms of youth violence? What is the overlap among the three types of violence?
- Are there variations by sex and race/ethnicity in the prevalence of youth violence?
- What are the risk factors associated with youth violence? What are the independent and cumulative effects of these risk factors? And are there differences by sex and race/ethnicity?

Data Sources on Youth Violence

To better appreciate some of the issues associated with youth violence, it is important to understand the sources of information about the phenomenon. While we provide in-depth discussion of data sources in subsequent chapters, we believe it is important to review the main sources of information about the nature and scope of youth violence. Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) maintained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation provide the most commonly cited information about crime, including juvenile crime, in the United States. These data, reported annually by law enforcement agencies throughout the United States, include crimes known to the police, arrests, and crimes cleared by arrest, and they are useful for providing one picture of who offends and how offending changes over time. It is important to note that the scope and nature of reporting has changed throughout the history of the UCR. Arrest records were not reported separately by age, sex, and race until 1952; all fifty states were not represented until 1960; and data about arrestees' ethnicity were collected only between 1980 and 1987, when the federal Office of Management and Budget's authorization to collect these data expired (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2004).

Using UCR data, youth violence can be described in a variety of ways. For example, we can look at the total number of juveniles arrested or the relative number of arrests of juveniles (i.e., X number of arrests per Y number of juveniles, or "rates"). Using rates can answer questions about the proportion of the youth population that has been arrested for violent crime and whether juveniles' arrests for violence are higher now than they were in the past. Caution must be used, however, because low base numbers for some offenses—particularly for serious violent offenses—can give the appearance of huge increases in offending over time when the actual increase in the number of offenses is in fact small. Other useful questions we could ask to help understand the scope of youth violence are: What percentage of all arrests of juveniles is for violent offenses? For what percentage of all violent arrests are juveniles responsible? In addition, we could ask how these percentages have changed over time and how they are distributed by sex and race/ethnicity.

Clearance rates provide a different set of information by reporting the number of crimes that are solved or cleared by arrest rather than the number of offenders arrested for a crime. This distinction is important, given the group nature of adolescent offending. Snyder and Sickmund (1999, 63) report that youths are "twice as likely as adults to commit serious violent crimes in groups." One consequence of this tendency to engage in group activities is that arrest data may overestimate the number of offenses committed by juveniles (but not the number of offenders), and data on crimes cleared by arrest may underestimate the number of juvenile offenders for the same reason (i.e., although five juvenile offenders might be arrested for committing one crime together, only one crime is actually cleared as a result of these five arrests).

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) is another source of information on the prevalence, frequency, and type of violent victimization in the United States, as well as some information about violent offenders, from victims' perceptions of their aggressors. The NCVS, a nationally representative survey of households, has been used to compare statistics on crime from other data sources, such as the UCR. Because the NCVS surveys ask about experiences of victimization, they can uncover and document crime that is not captured in law enforcement statistics. For example, crimes not reported to the authorities or that do not come to the attention of authorities would not be included in the UCR, but they could appear in the NCVS.

The influential self-report research conducted by Short and Nye (1958) initiated a new trend in the study of delinquency and youth violence. Juveniles' self-reports about involvement in violence provides another piece of the total picture of youth violence, adding to arrest data captured by law enforcement and data reported by victims of crime. Early self-report research, however, often focused on more minor behavior than violence. In the late 1970s, self-report studies started to include serious behavior, providing better information about youth violence and even serious violence. Many self-report studies have been cross-sectional (one-shot) in nature. If conducted with representative samples, these designs can provide a wealth of information about the nature of youth violence, but are unable to disentangle the temporal ordering issue (e.g., which came first: the potential "cause" or the observed "effect?"). Longitudinal (panel or cohort) studies of delinquency, while less common due to their time-, labor-, and resource-intensive nature, allow causal relationships to be examined. Trends in youth violence can be examined using data from several nationally representative projects. The annual Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey, for example, assesses self-reported drug use and delinquency, as well as a host of other issues, among high-school seniors (see, e.g., Johnston et al. 2006); the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, gathers information about behavior such as sexual activity, status offending, drug use and sales, delinquency (but not serious violence), and gang involvement; and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey includes various items regarding weapons and fighting (see, e.g., Centers for Disease Control 2004). These studies do not include measures of more serious violent behavior, however. Several longitudinal panel studies—including the Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency studies (Huizinga et al. 2003; Loeber et al. 2003; Thornberry et al. 2003), Seattle Social Development Study (Hawkins et al. 2003), and Montreal Study (Tremblay et al. 2003)—examine serious violence but do not use nationally representative samples, so caution must be used in generalizing findings from them.

Limitations of the Data

Self-report data reflect youths' reports of their actual behavior; law enforcement data reflect a societal response to youths' alleged behavior; and victimization data reflect victims' perceptions of offenders and crime. Further, these data sources have different implications for the picture of adolescent offending and victimization. For example, law enforcement estimates may exaggerate sex and racial/ethnic gaps in offending, while self-report data may underestimate these gaps, especially if certain youths are more likely than others to under-report their involvement in violence. None of these data sources is a perfect measure, and one must keep in mind the purposes and limitations of each.

Several weaknesses are inherent in law enforcement statistics. First, information is generally provided in aggregate format, making comparisons across sex, race/ethnicity, and community virtually impossible. In fact, ethnicity often is not recorded or reported (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2004). Second, only information that comes to the attention of the authorities appears in official records. Thus, little information can be garnered about the "dark figure of crime"—those crimes that do not receive official attention. Third, the "dark figure" problem is made worse in the UCR, as some agencies (approximately 7%) do not participate, and others provide only partial reporting (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2004). Finally, since official statistics technically measure only official responses to behavior, they may not accurately represent the actual amount of violent behavior (Geis 1965). This is compounded by the fact that, "if ethnic or racial groups differ in their inclination to report crime to authorities, or if crimes committed by certain groups are more likely to result in an arrest, these factors can bias estimates of racial differences in offending" (D. Hawkins et al. 2000, 1). Another cautionary note with regard to UCR data is that Hispanics (an ethnicity) are often counted as whites (a racial category), thus confounding race and ethnicity (Walker, Spohn, and DeLone 2006). Consequently, arrest statistics cannot be compared directly with some other data sources, including data from our sample.

While using the NCVS for comparisons is helpful in examining patterns in the nature of and trends in crime, the limitations of these data make it difficult to use them as the only source of information about violence—especially when broken down by age and by race/ethnicity. Specifically, only crimes against victims over age 11 are included, and the age and race/ethnicity of perpetrators depend on victims' recall and perceptions, which may be influenced not only by the stress associated with victimization but also by perceptions of who commits crime (Hawkins, Laub, and Lauritsen 1998; D. Hawkins et al. 2000; Walker, Spohn, and DeLone 2006).

Self-report data also have limitations. Although self-report studies are now well accepted in the field of criminology, it is still common, for example, to hear concerns that respondents lie either by not admitting their violations or by exaggerating them. To date, studies have generally found support for the reliability

and validity of self-report measures of offending (Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis 1981; Junger-Tas and Marshall 1999). Differences in reliability and validity, however, may exist in terms of the types of measures used and demographic characteristics of respondents. While self-report data appear to be reliable and valid across sex (Knight et al. 2004; Sampson 1985), there is mixed evidence of their validity by race/ethnicity and by seriousness of offense (Huizinga 1991, 62). In a recent review, Farrington, Loeber, and Stouthamer-Loeber (2003) concluded that there does appear to be a tendency for African American boys and girls to underreport their involvement in delinquent activity more frequently than their white counterparts. By contrast, Knight and his colleagues (2004) found a reasonable level of agreement in reporting delinquency among racial/ethnic groups, although more so for comparisons between whites and Hispanics than between whites and African Americans.

The different limitations associated with data sources about crime are especially important to keep in mind when thinking about the relationship between sex or race/ethnicity and youth violence. Debate still exists as to whether minorities' over-representation in the juvenile and criminal justice systems results from discrimination or from a tendency among minorities to commit more crime than their white counterparts (Gibbons 1997; Russell 1998; Walker, Spohn, and DeLone 2006; Wilbanks 1987). Influencing this debate is the finding that racial/ethnic differences in offending appear substantial in official statistics, but are less pronounced in self-report data (Elliott and Ageton 1980; Huizinga and Elliott 1986; Walker, Spohn, and DeLone 2006). A similar debate exists about whether violence among girls is on the rise, especially compared with rates for boys. UCR data tend to reflect drastic increases in girls' violent offending and a narrowing of the sex gap in violence, but the NCVS and self-report data show stable trends in both girls' offending and the sex gap in offending (Steffensmeier et al. 2005).

The data on which this book is based are self-reported by a large sample of middle-school students in sites across the United States. The richness of these data allow us to examine the overlap of youth violence, gang membership, and victimization; the factors associated with these experiences; and whether and how these factors vary by sex and race/ethnicity. In addition, using self-report data, in which information is collected about a variety of behaviors, may provide more information than police or court referral data, which usually report information only for the offense (or for the most serious of the offenses) for which an individual was arrested.

Plan for the Book

Our goal in writing this book is to provide a comprehensive assessment of youth violence in American society in the new millennium. We are constantly bombarded with visions of youth violence, ranging from the infamous school shootings in Columbine, Colorado, to gang-related murders, and reports and information about youth violence are readily accessible. Staff members at the National

Gang Center, for example, comb news outlets nationwide and post gang-related articles on the website at http://www.iir.com/nygc/summaries.cfm. Even a brief look might lead the average person to believe that our nation's communities are overrun with gang violence. Of particular interest in this book is the examination of the extent to which common myths and stereotypes accurately describe the nature of youth violence. To accomplish these objectives, we have organized the book into three parts.

Part I, "Understanding Youth Violence," consists of two chapters. Chapter 2 presents an overview of approaches to understanding youth violence, including the risk factor approach and more traditional criminological explanations for youth violence. In Chapter 3, we describe the study, including the measures of risk factors and theoretical perspectives on which our discussions of youth violence are based.

Part II, "Types of Youth Violence," comprises three chapters that provide descriptive accounts of specific types of youth violence and one chapter in which we explore the overlap in the three types of violence. In the first three chapters of Part II, we explore the risk factors associated with each type of violence, as well as the unique roles of sex and race/ethnicity in the prevalence and explanation of offending. In Chapter 4, we provide a detailed account of violent offending, placing youth violence in recent historical context and assessing the nature of youths' violent offending. During the past twenty years, youth gangs have received considerable attention in the media and have become synonymous with youth violence. Because of the prominence of gangs in popular culture, Chapter 5 presents a review of youth gangs and explores the extent to which youths who belong to gangs differ, in terms of offending and risk factors, from youth who are not involved in gangs. Chapter 6 represents the "opposite side of the coin" of youth violence: violent victimization, which we view as a major component of the youth violence experience. Chapter 6 examines violent victimization and scrutinizes more closely the relationship between victimization and gang membership.

In Chapter 7, we turn our attention to the overlap among the three types of violence reviewed in Chapters 4–6. To what extent are youths present in one, two, or all three categories of violence? We then examine the cumulative effect of risk factors on behavior, specifically violent offending—that is, does the presence of multiple risk factors or the presence of risk factors in multiple domains increase the probability of offending? In Chapter 7 we also explore the extent to which the various risk factors influence youth violence when controlling for other factors.

Part III, "Preventing and Responding to Youth Violence," consists of two chapters. In Chapter 8, we present and test a theoretical framework for understanding youth violence, and in Chapter 9, we review potential responses to youth violence. Importantly, throughout the book we pay special attention to the unique roles of sex and race/ethnicity in youth violence. In light of our findings, we discuss the merits of gender- and race/ethnicity-specific programs in Chapter 9.

I

Understanding Youth Violence

2
Conceptual Framework

Youth violence has been of considerable interest to moral crusaders, the general public, and criminologists for more than a century. Even before the first juvenile court was established in 1899, concern about "wayward youth" was widespread, and early reformers tried to intervene in the lives of these youthful offenders (see, e.g., Platt 1977). Some of the efforts consisted of providing structure to their lives; others focused on providing a sense of community; and still others tried to teach children a trade. One thing we can say with some degree of certainty is that none of these attempts to respond to youths' offending was informed by research or knowledge about the extent and distribution of the problem. Furthermore, until relatively recently, little was known about the causes and correlates of youth violence.

In this chapter, we turn our attention to explanations of youth violence and, to some extent, gang membership and victimization. We believe it is useful to frame this discussion within the public health perspective, focusing on risk factors associated with these behaviors. Most of the research on risk factors can be classified as atheoretical in that it relies primarily on establishing the co-occurrence or correlation of key relationships rather than explains the causes of violence. Complementing the risk factor approach, a number of theoretical explanations of youth violence have been proposed. Thus, throughout the book, we link the risk factor literature to criminological theoretical perspectives. Specifically, in Chapters 4–7 we discuss risk factors related to each of the various types of violence, and in Chapter 8, we link many of these risk factors to criminological theories—including self-control, social bond, social learning, and routine activities/opportunity—to develop

TABLE 2.1 RISK FACTORS BY DOMAIN AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Risk factor	Theoretical perspective
Demographic characteristics	
Sex	
Age	
Race/ethnicity	
Family structure (non-two-parent family)	
Individual domain	
Impulsivity	Self-control
Risk seeking	Self-control
Low guilt associated with deviance	Social learning
Neutralization of behavior	Social learning
Self-esteem	
Social isolation	
Family domain	
Low parental monitoring/supervision	Self-control
Low attachment to mother	Social bond
Low attachment to father	Social bond
Peer domain	
Association with pro-social peers	Social learning
Association with delinquent peers	Social learning
Commitment to positive peers	Social learning
Commitment to negative peers	Social learning
Unsupervised/unstructured time with peers	Routine activities
Availability of alcohol and drugs	Routine activities
School domain	
Lack of commitment to school	Social bond
Perceived limited educational opportunities	
Perceived negative school environment	

our own theoretical model to explain youth violence. In Table 2.1, we outline the risk factors examined throughout the book, noting those that correspond specifically to the theories included in the model that we test in Chapter 8.

Risk Factor Perspective

Risk factor terminology has become commonplace in American society. We have become accustomed to hearing about risk factors associated with heart disease and cancer (e.g., being overweight, having a poor diet, and not exercising). The transition from these health issues to crime and violence is an easy one, a point highlighted during the past decade by the widespread adoption of a public health model in the discussion of violence. For instance, youth residing in single-parent households are at greater risk of becoming involved in gangs, much as an overweight person is at higher risk of having a heart attack (Hill et al. 1999; Vigil 1988). This does not mean, however, that because a child lives with her or his mother only that she or he will join a gang, any more than being overweight means a person will have a heart attack.

During the past fifteen years, a number of researchers have begun to use the risk factor approach to examine various forms of problem behavior among adolescents (see Farrington 2000 for a review). The majority of the risk factor literature has been applied to general delinquency and violent offending; it has less often been applied to gang activity and violent victimization. Given the relationships between violent offending and victimization (Esbensen and Huizinga 1991; Lauritsen, Sampson, and Laub 1991; Loeber, Kalb, and Huizinga 2001; Shaffer and Ruback 2002) and between offending and gang membership (Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Miller 1998, 2001; Miller and Brunson 2000; Miller and Decker 2001; Peterson, Taylor and Esbensen 2004; Thornberry et al. 2003), we suggest that much of the general risk factor literature on delinquency and violence may apply to gangs and victimization, as well.

Researchers have identified a number of risk factors in five major domains: community, individual, family, peer, and school. Most prominent in this vein has been the work of David Hawkins and Richard Catalano and their colleagues in developing the Communities That Care model.[1] The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) also adopted this perspective in its promotion of the comprehensive strategy to address youth violence (see Howell 2009).[2] A partial list of these risk factors includes:

- *Community domain:* availability of drugs and firearms, media portrayals of violence, community norms favorable to drug use and crime, transition and mobility, economic deprivation, and low neighborhood attachment and community disorganization.
- *Individual domain:* rebelliousness, early initiation in problem behavior, favorable attitudes to norm violation, and constitutional factors.
- *Family domain:* family history of problem behavior, family management problems, family conflict, favorable parental attitudes toward and involvement in problem behavior.
- *Peer domain:* association with delinquent peers and less involvement with pro-social peers.
- *School domain:* early and persistent antisocial behavior, academic failure, and lack of commitment to school.

Within the community domain, researchers have reported that youth who live in neighborhoods in which drugs or firearms are readily available are more

[1]Communities That Care is a prevention strategy that brings together various community groups, organizations, and agencies to assess local risk and protective factors and to develop a comprehensive, integrated approach to addressing problems such as youth violence. See the website at http://www.channing-bete.com/positiveyouth/pages/CTC/CTC.html.

[2]The Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders is a four-phase approach (mobilization, assessment, planning, and implementation) to reducing delinquency, improving juvenile justice systems, and identifying and controlling the small population of serious, violent, and chronic juvenile offenders (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention 1995).

likely to engage in violence than are youth from neighborhoods where these are not widely available (J. Hawkins et al. 2000; Herrenkohl et al. 2000). Numerous studies have also noted that poverty, unemployment, the absence of meaningful jobs, and social disorganization contribute to the presence of gangs (Curry and Spergel 1992; Fagan 1990; Hagedorn 1988; Vigil 1988, 2002) and victimization (Roundtree, Land, and Miethe 1994; Sampson and Lauritsen 1990; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997; Sampson and Wooldredge 1987).

The individual domain has received considerable attention from researchers. Among the more robust findings is the role of attitudes in behavior. For instance, favorable beliefs or attitudes toward deviant behavior (dishonesty, negative views of law enforcement) have been found to be associated with adolescent violence (J. Hawkins et al. 2000; Howell 2009). In addition, those individuals who have participated in prior delinquency and hold non-conventional attitudes are more at risk of gang membership (Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Hill et al. 1999; Howell 1998; Klein and Maxson 2006). Esbensen, Huizinga, and Weiher (1993) found that non-delinquent youths reported lower levels of commitment to delinquent peers, lower levels of social isolation, lower tolerance for deviance, and higher levels of commitment to positive peers than did gang members and serious youthful offenders. And Schreck (1999) reported that people with low self-control are more likely to experience criminal victimization.

Research within the family domain has produced mixed results, but studies have noted the role of poor parental management practices or skills (inconsistent or harsh discipline, permissiveness, poor supervision) in youth violence and gang affiliation (J. Hawkins et al. 2000; Howell 2009). Recent research (see, e.g., Esbensen, Huizinga, and Menard 1999; Schreck and Fisher 2004; Schreck, Fisher, and Miller 2004) has also illustrated the role of family factors in victimization.

The role of peers is well established in the literature. In fact, in self-report studies, association with deviant or delinquent peers is consistently one of the strongest predictors of an adolescent's own delinquency (J. Hawkins et al. 2000, 2003; Huizinga et al. 2003; Loeber et al. 2003; Thornberry et al. 2003; Tremblay et al. 2003). Other peer-related factors include limited or lack of association with pro-social peers and involvement in youth gangs (Battin et al. 1998; Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Esbensen, Huizinga, and Weiher 1993; Thornberry et al. 2003). Findings from studies of victimization (Cohen and Felson 1979; Cohen et al. 1981; Hindelang, Gottfredson, and Garofalo 1978) also highlight the important role peers play.

Studies of the role school factors play in youth violence have produced mixed results, but there is support for the influence of school-level variables on youth violence. For instance, research has documented the role of academic failure or poor performance, lack of commitment and low bonding to school, and dropping out of school before age 15 on youth violence and gang membership (Bjerregaard and Smith 1993; J. Hawkins et al. 2000; Hill et al. 1999; Howell 2009; Maxson, Whitlock, and Klein 1998). Similarly, school-level risk factors related to

victimization include school climate and youths' commitment to education (Gottfredson et al. 2005; Welsh 2001; Welsh, Greene, and Jenkins 1999).

Individuals may experience risk factors in one or more of these domains, and these risks can have cumulative effects. For instance, youths residing in socially disorganized communities characterized by high crime, high mobility, and high density share a community-level risk factor. Not all youths in this situation, however, become violent offenders. Loeber, Farrington, and Waschbusch (1998) suggest that it is youths who possess risk factors in multiple domains who are the most likely to offend. That is, the child living in this community who also has a low level of involvement in family activities, whose parents abuse each other, who does poorly in school, who associates with delinquent friends, and who enjoys taking risks is more likely to offend than is the child who does not share these additional risk factors. In addition, it is important to understand that these factors are embedded in a developmental framework and emerge at different points over the life course (Loeber and LeBlanc 1990).

Sex- and Race/Ethnicity-Specific Risk Factors

Tests of sex differences in risk factors are not common, but there is some evidence that a number of factors affect boys and girls similarly, while other factors have differential effects. For example, while Blum and her colleagues (2003) found that girls and boys share quite a few risk factors (thirteen out of eighteen across the individual, family, and community domains), some risk factors appear to operate in a sex-specific manner: The suicide of a family member, parents' expectations about school performance, emotional distance in family, and caring within the family predict violence for girls, while size of the family predicts violence only for boys. In the school domain, expectations (from oneself or from parents) predict girls' but not boys' involvement in gangs (Bjerregaard and Smith 1993) and violence (Blum, Ireland, and Blum 2003); attachment to school is more important in girls' than in boys' drug and property offending (Rosenbaum 1987). Blum and her colleagues (2003) found that learning problems and skipping school are significant risk factors for violence for boys but not for girls.

The extent to which risk factors vary for youths of different racial/ethnic groups is examined even less often than sex differences. In large part, information is lacking because samples do not include adequate representations of different racial/ethnic groups to allow comparisons. Most research ties youth violence, gang membership, and victimization among racial/ethnic minorities to community-level factors such as poverty, unemployment, the absence of meaningful jobs, and social disorganization (Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Fagan 1990; Hagedorn 1988; Huff 1990; Shaw and McKay 1942; Vigil 1988). However, as Klein (1995) cautioned with regard to gang membership, other factors need to be explored, because most youths who live in these communities do not join gangs.

Although the risk factor approach has attracted considerable attention from researchers during the past two decades, studies examining sex and racial/ethnic differences are still limited. Thus, we pay specific attention to the extent to which risk factors are influenced by a youth's sex and race/ethnicity. Such information will enhance our understanding of, and allow us to assess, the degree to which prevention and intervention should take these factors into account in their programming. That is, if the role of risk factors is the same for boys and girls or for various racial/ethnic groups, then programs may not benefit from targeting certain subgroups. However, if risk factors differ by sex and race/ethnicity, then prevention and intervention efforts should develop unique strategies for these separate subgroups.

Linking Risk Factors to Theoretical Perspectives

The risk factor approach has a number of desirable attributes: It identifies correlates of such behaviors as delinquency, violence, and gang involvement, especially those that interact with other characteristics to increase deviance; it suggests avenues for causal analyses of relationships; it helps identify youth who are at risk for deviant behavior; and it provides a link between researchers and practitioners by being comprehensible and logical and by suggesting opportunities for prevention and intervention efforts (Farrington 2000; Howell 2009; Thornberry et al. 2003). However, while the risk factor approach informs us, for example, that individuals with high levels of impulsivity are more likely to be violent offenders than those with low levels of impulsivity and that low levels of commitment to school are associated with gang membership; it does not explain why these factors are associated with these experiences.

While the risk factor approach describes the link between certain factors and delinquency, a conceptual or theoretical framework can increase the understanding of such observed relationships and guide recommendations for responding to the occurrence of problematic behavior in adolescents. Exceptions to the nontheoretical approach do exist—most notably, the work associated with large-scale longitudinal research programs such as the Seattle Social Development Study (Hawkins and Catalano 1992); the three projects that are part of the OJJDP's Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency (the Denver Youth Survey [Huizinga, Esbensen, and Weiher 1991], the Rochester Youth Development Study [Thornberry et al. 2003], and the Pittsburgh Youth Study [Loeber, Farrington, and Waschbusch 1998]); and the Montreal Study (Tremblay et al. 2003). These studies use conceptual frameworks to understand how risk factors predict, rather than co-occur with, behavior. Our theoretical model tested in Chapter 8 also seeks to bring together the various risk factors in a coherent model for understanding youth violence. The model links the risk factors to four well-known theories: self-control, social bond, social learning, and routine activities/opportunity.

Theoretical Perspectives

Self-Control Theory

Gottfredson and Hirschi proposed their general theory of crime, commonly known as self-control theory, in 1990. The theory's central argument is that ineffective management by parents results in low levels of self-control in children. People with low levels of self-control are likely to show the following six characteristics:

- Impulsivity, or a desire for immediate gratification
- Risk-seeking behavior, or a desire for that which is dangerous or thrilling
- Simplicity, or a preference for easy, rather than complex, endeavors
- Physicality, or a preference for the physical or material over the spiritual or mental
- Self-centeredness, or a concern with one's own needs and desires over those of others
- Anger, or a low tolerance for frustration and a quick temper

When a person with low levels of self-control is presented with an opportunity for delinquency, these characteristics make it likely that he or she will choose to engage in that behavior, as he or she would perceive it as providing immediate benefit (e.g., material goods), thrills, and an easy way to fulfill personal desires.

The steps that must be taken for self-control to be created lie with parents (or parental figures), who must practice effective management by (1) monitoring their children's behavior; (2) recognizing deviant behavior; and (3) punishing deviant behavior appropriately. Parents' attachment to children is an important aspect of this socialization process, for if that tie exists, parents will "watch [the children's] behavior, see [them] doing things [they] should not do, and correct [them]" (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990, 98). Conversely, if parents feel little or no attachment to their children, they are less likely to monitor and correct their behavior. If parents do not successfully negotiate these steps for effective socialization, children will fail to develop levels of self-control sufficient to inhibit them from deviance. Importantly, it is necessary for these steps to occur before children reach age 8–10, when, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) contend, a person's level of self-control is set for the remainder of the life course. That is, they argue that self-control, once established, is a relatively stable trait.

Although Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) devised their theory as an explanation of offending, some researchers have explored the link between low levels of self-control and gang affiliation (Lynskey et al. 2000), while others have applied the theory as an explanation of victimization (Schreck 1999; Stewart, Elifson, and Sterk 2004). Schreck (1999), for example, found that college students with low

levels of self-control were more likely to report having been victimized; importantly, this risk was greater if the individual was also involved in criminal activity. Stewart, Elifson, and Sterk (2004) examined a sample of female offenders to determine the effects of self-control on victimization while simultaneously controlling for demographic factors and involvement in offending and other "risky" lifestyle behaviors. Their findings suggested that self-control is a viable predictor of victimization, although its effects were mediated somewhat through lifestyle factors.

In an important publication, Grasmick and his colleagues (1993) operationalized the six subcomponents of self-control. The measures they presented have served as the basis for many of the subsequent empirical assessments of self-control theory. Within the family domain, self-control theorists highlight the role of parents in the socialization of the child, especially with respect to parental oversight or monitoring. Within the individual domain, self-control is measured in terms of a person's risk-taking orientation, as well as his or her level of impulsivity. Using measures of self-control, some studies conducted since the early 1990s have provided general support for this theory's propositions (De Li 2004; LaGrange and Silverman 1999; Paternoster and Brame 1998), while others have found little to no support for this perspective (Grasmick et al. 1993; Winfree and Bernat 1998). Although few researchers have examined the role of parents' management practices in affecting youths' levels of self-control, this sparse literature offers evidence that parental management variables are positively associated with levels of self-control in youths (Gibbs, Giever, and Martin 1998; Hay 2001; Lynskey et al. 2000; Pratt, Turner, and Piquero 2004). The most common of the six elements of self-control that have been examined empirically are risk seeking and impulsivity, and when all six elements are included, risk seeking appears to have the greatest predictive power (Arneklev et al. 1993; Wood, Pfefferbaum, and Arneklev 1993). Thus, among the risk factors that we include in our study, the following are theoretically linked to self-control theory: parental monitoring, impulsivity, and risk seeking.

Social Bond Theory

Hirschi's (1969) conceptualization of social bond theory is perhaps the best known of the control theories, and it has become one of the most used criminological theories (Akers 1997). Social bond theory presumes that, in the absence or weakness of certain bonds to society, deviance is the likely result. Hirschi's theory involves four principal elements or bonds: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief (Hirschi 1969, 17–26). Attachment refers to one's identification with other individuals and one's desire for their support; the more attached an individual is, the less likely he or she is to engage in crime. Commitment is the investment an individual has made in conventional behavior; individuals who have invested much time and effort in conventional activities (e.g., through education or an occupation) are less likely to engage in deviant behavior

because they have much to lose if detected. Involvement includes participation in conventional activities; the assumption is that an individual who is involved in conventional activities is too busy to engage in delinquent behavior. Belief refers to the acceptance of society's norms and values. Although Hirschi maintains that people believe in the common values of society even as they violate those rules, this apparent contradiction is explained as evidence that the individual's bonds to society are not strong. According to Hirschi's approach, the absence of any of the four elements reduces the individual's social bond, resulting in a higher likelihood of engaging in criminal or delinquent conduct.

A number of studies have tested various elements of social bond theory. For one element, attachment to parents, the consensus appears to be that an inverse relationship exists between attachment and delinquency—that is, the more a youth reports being bonded (having an emotional attachment) to parents, the lower his or her involvement in delinquency (Blum, Ireland, and Blum 2003; Canter 1982; Esbensen and Deschenes 1998; J. Hawkins et al. 2000; Maxson, Whitlock, and Klein 1998). Research on commitment to school, another element of social bond theory, has shown that those youths who report greater commitment to school have lower rates of delinquency and of involvement in gangs (Bjerregaard and Smith 1993; Blum, Ireland, and Blum 2003; Esbensen and Deschenes 1998; J. Hawkins et al. 2000; Maxson, Whitlock, and Klein 1998).

This brief review of social bond theory has identified several risk factors that may be related to the three types of youth violence on which we focus. Within the family domain, social bond theory emphasizes the importance of attachment to parents while also maintaining the role of commitment to larger social institutions, such as education. Thus, from social bond theory we identify the following risk factors: attachment to parents and commitment to school.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory has its criminological roots in the works of Sutherland (1939), who first proposed his theory of differential association in 1934. Following that initial formulation, Sutherland revised his theoretical propositions until 1947, when the present version, consisting of nine propositions, was introduced. In 1973, Akers proposed a merger or integration of Sutherland's differential association theory and Bandura's (1971) behavior modification/operant conditioning approach. Akers's variant of social learning theory, like Sutherland's, maintains that the mechanisms for learning criminal behavior mirror those for learning all other behavior. At the core of the theory are four key elements: differential associations, definitions, differential reinforcements, and imitation.

Akers's concept of differential association reflected Sutherland's proposition that individuals learn through interaction with others (primarily family and peers), and a result of that interaction is the learning of definitions that are favorable or unfavorable to violating the law. Not all definitions are received

with the same impact, however. The extent to which an individual accepts certain definitions is influenced by the nature of the relationship to the person or people providing the definition. For instance, those individuals with whom one has had a long relationship will have more impact. In addition, those individuals with whom contact was initiated early and with whom regular contact is maintained will have more influence. These differential associations contribute to the acceptance of definitions of behavior that affect a person's likelihood of committing crime. Differential reinforcements (rewards or punishments) can either strengthen or inhibit further involvement in the behavior. The last component of Akers's version of social learning theory suggests that people also learn behavior by imitating those around them.

Social learning variables—particularly association with negative peers—have been found to be associated with a multitude of deviant behaviors, including substance use (see, e.g., Akers and Lee 1996; Krohn et al. 1985; Sellers and Winfree 1990; Winfree, Sellers, and Clason 1993), delinquency (see, e.g., Elliott, Huizinga, and Ageton 1985; Matsueda and Heimer 1987), and involvement in gangs (see, e.g., Esbensen and Deschenes 1998; Winfree, Mays, and Vigil-Bäckström 1994).

Social learning theory focuses on the importance of interacting with others in the shaping of attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, interacting with family and friends influences the development of moral values regarding perceptions of right and wrong. For example, youths who have high levels of involvement with peers are likely to form attachments and commitments to those groups (Elliott and Menard 1996; Menard and Elliott 1994; Warr 2002). If this interaction is with a delinquent peer group, rates of offending will be enhanced. These interactions also affect perceptions about the appropriateness of various behaviors. Within the individual domain, we derive the following risk factors from social learning theory: guilt associated with deviance and use of neutralizations or rationalizations of behavior (learning justifications for violating the law). Within the peer domain, we derive four risk factors from social learning theory: involvement with pro-social peer groups; involvement with delinquent peer groups; commitment to negative peers; and commitment to positive peers.

Routine Activities/Opportunity Theory

Hindelang and his colleagues (1978) offered one of the first formal theories of victimization, commonly known as lifestyle-exposure theory, suggesting that daily routines affect the risk of being victimized. One important component of lifestyle theory was the expectation that lifestyles (and, consequently, risk of victimization) differ across demographic groups based on income, race, and age. Demographic differences were due to the different role expectations, or "cultural norms that are associated with achieved and ascribed statuses" (Hindelang, Gottfredson, and Garofalo 1978, 242), and structural constraints (social factors that limit individuals' lifestyle choices) associated with these groups.

Cohen and Felson (1979) introduced their version of a macro-level routine activity theory as a framework for understanding changes in rates of criminal victimization. They suggested that victimization results from people who have some motivation for crime (motivated offenders), people or objects who are vulnerable to crime (suitable targets), and opportunity in the form of an absence of capable guardians coming together at the same time. While many criminological theories have sought to explain crime as a result of variations in "motivated offenders," Cohen and Felson (1979) focused on the factors or characteristics that made certain groups of people more likely to be victimized than others. For this reason, they were concerned with variations in the characteristics of "suitable targets" and in opportunities to commit crime. Cohen and colleagues (1981) expanded this approach to include five components. In addition to the presence of a motivated offender, the likelihood that predatory victimization would occur was related to the exposure of desirable people or property (attractive targets), the physical distance between these targets and motivated offenders (proximity), and the effectiveness of measures aimed at protecting the targets from motivated offenders (guardianship).

In addition to focusing on characteristics of victims and macro-level patterns (Cohen and Felson 1979; Cohen, Kluegel, and Land 1981; Hindelang, Gottfredson, and Garofalo 1978; Miethe, Stafford, and Long 1987), studies have been undertaken recently in the areas of violent victimization at the individual level (Lauritsen, Laub, and Sampson 1992; Massey, Krohn, and Bonati 1989; Miethe, Stafford, and Long 1987; Sampson and Wooldredge 1987; Schreck and Fisher 2004; Schreck, Fisher, and Miller 2004) and victimization at school (Gottfredson et al. 2005; Welsh 2001; Welsh, Greene, and Jenkins 1999). In addition, studies have expanded the elements of lifestyle/routine activities theory to include involvement in delinquent offending and other risky behavior (Lauritsen, Sampson, and Laub 1991), exposure to delinquent peers (Schreck and Fisher 2004; Schreck, Fisher, and Miller 2004), unstructured and unsupervised time with peers (Osgood and Anderson 2004; Osgood et al. 1996), and the importance of family bonding (Schreck and Fisher 2004). Attention to variation in motivated offenders and opportunity or lifestyle elements of routine activities has also increased (Sampson and Lauritsen 1990).

The routine activities perspective pays special attention to the role of unstructured and unsupervised time in the lives of youths. Thus, we include within the peer domain the following risk factors derived from this perspective: hanging out where no adults are present and getting together where drugs and alcohol are available.

Theoretical Issues Specific to Sex and Race/Ethnicity

Given our interest in examining the unique effects of sex and race/ethnicity on the epidemiology and etiology of youth violence, we briefly turn to assessing

the extent to which theorists and researchers have incorporated sex and race/ethnicity into their theoretical formulations and empirical tests. These issues will be explored in considerably greater detail in Chapters 4–6, where we examine specific forms of youth violence.

Effects of Sex

Many early criminological theories either ignored girls' behavior or commented on it as an afterthought. Similarly, research that links theories to criminal and delinquent behavior traditionally focused on boys (either white boys or lower-class minority boys). The past three decades, however, have seen growing concern with, and attention to, girls' involvement in crime, resulting in a revisiting of traditionally "male-stream" theories (Daly and Chesney-Lind 1988) and questions about whether these explanations can be applied to girls', as well as boys', misbehavior. Further, more recent theoretical formulations (such as Gottfredson and Hirschi's self-control theory and Akers's social learning theory) purport to be "general" and able to explain delinquency equally well for girls and boys. This claim begs empirical examination, and numerous scholars have subjected the earlier theories, as well as more recently proposed general theories, to the gender-equality test.

Nevertheless, questions about these issues remain. Are there universal theories of delinquency (a gender-neutral perspective)? Or does girls' and boys' misbehavior stem from different causes (a gender-specific perspective)? Answers to these questions are important from policy and program perspectives. If there are different reasons for violence among girls and boys, this would suggest that different prevention and intervention approaches are required. If, however, common causes underlie youths' behavior, regardless of sex, then more general approaches are warranted.

Effects of Race/Ethnicity

Race/ethnicity has long been associated with various types of criminal behavior, including delinquency, violence, and gang membership. However, this race–crime connection remains a controversial issue for a number of reasons. One debate, introduced in Chapter 1, is whether racial/ethnic disparities seen in the criminal justice system result from an actual tendency of minorities to commit more crime or from discrimination in the system (Gibbons 1997; Russell 1998; Walker, Spohn, and DeLone 2006; Wilbanks 1987). At the forefront of this argument are the differences seen in various types of data. While official statistics and victimization data provide evidence for the over-representation of minorities in criminal activities, these differences largely disappear when one examines self-report data (Elliott and Ageton 1980; Huizinga and Elliott 1986; Short and Nye 1958; Snyder and Sickmund 1999; Walker, Spohn, and DeLone 2006).

A second issue involves how theoretical explanations of violence incorporate the concept of race/ethnicity. Most of the dominant theories of violence suggest that race and ethnicity have no direct role in explaining violence. In addition, the processes outlined are typically assumed to operate in the same manner regardless of an individual's race or ethnicity (Matsueda and Heimer 1987; McNulty 2001). Each of these assumptions suggests that factors other than race/ethnicity are expected to explain observed racial or ethnic differences in offending or victimization. For example, racial/ethnic differences in crime typically have been attributed to macro-level social differences (such as socioeconomic status) among members of different racial and ethnic groups (Sampson and Wilson 1995), and these factors operate similarly across racial/ethnic groups (McNulty 2001). Consistent with this assumption, empirical tests of theories commonly include race/ethnicity as a control variable. Less common are studies that examine racial/ethnic differences in theories of offending and victimization, although this is an important research question (Crouch et al. 2000).

A third important issue concerns which racial or ethnic groups have been included in studies. Research in this area typically has been restricted to differences between African Americans and whites while excluding other racial/ethnic groups, such as Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asians. For example, many gang studies are ethnographies of specific gangs in certain cities (Hagedorn 1988; Moore 1991; Vigil 1988). These gangs are often racially homogeneous, preventing racial differences from being examined. Similarly, many studies of general offending or victimization have been restricted to one or two racial/ethnic groups (typically whites and African Americans). While this approach can provide a wealth of information regarding certain groups, it rules out comparisons of explanatory factors across racial/ethnic groups. Although recent studies have begun to address these issues, few have adequately examined the role of race/ethnicity in juvenile offending and victimization.

Because of these issues, there is still much to be learned from research examining race/ethnic differences. This area of exploration continues to be significant mainly for the policy implications that follow. The main question is whether current programs address the risk and explanatory factors for all groups or whether these factors vary by race/ethnicity and thus dictate a variety of programs. While some research has examined this issue and proposed that separate programs are not needed (Ellickson and McGuigan 2000; Freng 2001; Jang 2002), other research is mixed (Curry and Spergel 1992; McNulty and Bellair 2003). Thus, this is an area for further exploration.

Summary and Conclusion

In the past decade, the risk factor approach to studying violence has become increasingly popular. To some extent, this approach mirrors early research in the study of crime and delinquency by focusing on correlations between explanatory

factors and behavior; it also abandons attempts to explain the causes of behavior. While we see this as an informative strategy for identifying the range of factors that are related to youth violence (as well as gang membership and violent victimization), it fails to link these disparate risk factors into a coherent explanation of youth violence. Criminological theories, however, have been developed to explain how and why particular factors operate to account for offending. In Chapter 8, we revisit the role of theory in explaining youth violence. In the next few chapters, we set the stage by describing the more parsimonious risk factor approach to understanding youth violence.

3
Research Design and Methodological Issues

In Chapter 1, we reviewed the types of data available for the study of youth violence: law enforcement data, specifically the Uniform Crime Reports; victimization surveys and general adolescent surveys such as the Monitoring the Future study that use self-report techniques to study youth violence. Knowledge about the data source and, importantly, the limitations of the data is vital to understanding the phenomenon under investigation. In this chapter, we provide a brief overview of self-report data, the method used in the study on which this book is based.

It was the groundbreaking work of Short and Nye (1958) that introduced self-report methods into the field of criminology. Self-report studies have allowed researchers to examine characteristics of offenders; to test individual-level theories of crime and delinquency; and, importantly, to investigate individual change over time. Since that initial study by Short and Nye, numerous other researchers have adopted the self-report method to study delinquency, drug use, and, more recently, gang membership (see, e.g., Battin et al. 1998; Battin-Pearson et al. 1998; Elliott, Huizinga, and Ageton 1985; Hill et al. 1999; Huizinga, Esbensen, and Weiher 1991; Loeber et al. 1991; Moffitt et al. 2001; Simmons et al. 2002; Thornberry et al. 2003).

Although self-report studies are now well accepted in the field of criminology and have broadened our knowledge of delinquency beyond law enforcement and victimization data, it is still common to hear concerns raised about the validity of respondents' answers. Most frequently, critics claim that respondents lie by either not admitting or exaggerating their violations. A considerable body of research has addressed this issue. For instance,

Clark and Tifft (1966) used lie detectors to validate responses; Hardt and Hardt (1977) used known groups of offenders; and Dunford and Elliott (1984) completed reverse record checks (i.e., they examined the correspondence between police data and self-reports). These studies, as well as others, have generally concluded that the technique provides a valid and reliable measure of behavior (Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis 1981; Junger-Tas and Marshall 1999). Huizinga (1991) provides information about the quality of self-reported delinquency, particularly violence and aggression. His review suggests that, although most people will not under-report their involvement in these more serious offenses, these behaviors are potentially among those that pose the most serious problems in terms of reliability and validity. Thus, results relating to these measures should be viewed with caution.

Also important is whether self-report data appear to be equally reliable and valid across sex and race/ethnicity. While Sampson (1985) found that there is approximately equal reliability for prevalence (i.e., the percentage of individuals reporting offending behaviors), lower incidence reliabilities (i.e., the number of offenses reported by offenders) exist for women than men, leading him to suggest that using prevalence measures may be preferable when researching sex differences. Sampson does acknowledge theoretical bases for the study of incidence measures, however, and argues that in research of this type, sacrificing some reliability is justified. The consistencies found for sex are not as apparent for race/ethnicity. There is mixed evidence of differential validity by race/ethnicity and by seriousness of offense (Huizinga 1991; Knight et al. 2004). In a recent review, Farrington, Loeber, and Stouthamer-Loeber (2003) conclude that a tendency does appear to exist for African American boys to under-report their involvement in delinquency more frequently than white boys. Likewise, African American girls were less likely than white girls to report their offenses.

In addition to validity studies, researchers following in the footsteps of Short and Nye (1958) have fine-tuned self-report techniques, including establishing a shorter and better-defined recall period to improve respondents' memory and the validity of their responses. For instance, whereas Short and Nye asked individuals to indicate how often they had engaged in certain behaviors since they began elementary school, researchers today often use a one-year recall period. "From Christmas a year ago to the Christmas just past" is the standard used in Elliott, Huizinga, and Ageton (1985) and in Huizinga, Esbensen, and Weiher (1991); Loeber and colleagues (1991) and Thornberry and colleagues (2003) use a six-month period; and Brener and colleagues (1999), Johnston and colleagues (2006), and Snyder and Sickmund (1999) use a thirty-day period.

Another methodological improvement deals with the range of behavior included in the inventories. The early studies, for example, included a disproportionate number of trivial offenses, especially status offenses (skipping school, violating curfews, defying parental authority) and contained relatively few measures of serious offenses. More recent studies include not only status offenses but also rape, aggravated assault, and burglary, thus allowing for investigation

of serious youthful offenders. These methodological improvements lend further credence to the assessment in Junger-Tas and Marshall (1999) that self-report surveys provide a viable and valid way to measure delinquent behavior, to identify individual correlates of delinquency, and to test individual-level theories of delinquency.

Description of the Study

The research on which this book is based was funded by the National Institute of Justice and was part of the National Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program.[1] Developed in 1991 by law enforcement officers from the Phoenix area, G.R.E.A.T., a school-based program that sought primarily to prevent gang involvement, quickly spread throughout the United States. The national evaluation was funded in 1994. (For a detailed history of the G.R.E.A.T. program, see Winfree, Lynskey, and Maupin 1999.) We rely on the cross-sectional component of that evaluation for several reasons. First, it provides a relatively large sample that includes a number of violent youth offenders, gang members, and victims of violent crime. Second, data are available for youth residing in eleven different cities and counties across the country. And third, it includes a large representation of African American, Hispanic, and white youths.

The objectives of the evaluation determined the sampling design. Specifically, two conditions had to be met before a site was selected for inclusion in the study. First, it was necessary to survey students after they had completed the program, and second, it was necessary to include both students who had participated in the program and others who had not. In the cross-sectional study, these conditions were met by surveying eighth-grade students. Because the G.R.E.A.T. program was generally delivered in the seventh grade, this allowed researchers to assess the impact of the program one year after treatment. Schools were selected in which some, but not all, students had received G.R.E.A.T. as seventh-graders.

During the spring of 1995, eighth-grade students in eleven locations—Kansas City, Missouri; Las Cruces, New Mexico; Milwaukee; Omaha, Nebraska; Orlando, Florida; Philadelphia; Phoenix; Pocatello, Idaho; Providence, Rhode Island; Torrance, California; and Will County, Illinois—completed self-administered questionnaires.[2] The final sample consisted of 5,935 eighth-grade students at public schools, representing forty-two schools and 315 classrooms. All eighth-grade

[1]This research was supported under award no. 94-IJ-CX-0058 from the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view in this book are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice.

[2]Once cities that met the two core criteria—availability of both treatment and comparison students and identification of students who had completed the G.R.E.A.T. program—were identified, two additional criteria were used to select the final eleven study sites. Cities were chosen in part to provide a degree of geographic and demographic diversity, and only those sites in which we successfully negotiated with school districts were ultimately included in the sample. For a detailed description of the sample and site selection, see Esbensen and Winfree 1998.

students in attendance on the day the survey was administered, and for whom parental consent was provided, completed the questionnaires. At least two members of the research team were in each classroom, with one researcher reading the questions out loud while students filled in their answers. The other researchers monitored the room and assisted students who required additional help.

A more restrictive code of ethics is applied when conducting research with minors than in research that involves adults. In addition to providing the standard information to potential respondents (on the potential benefits and risks, the voluntary nature of their participation, the purposes of the research, the procedures to be followed, and the degree of confidentiality), researchers must also secure consent from minors' parents. Two types of procedures are available to researchers: passive and active parental consent. Passive parental consent requires researchers to inform parents or legal guardians about the research and provide them with the opportunity to refuse their child's participation in the research. Under this provision, absent a refusal, parental consent is implied, and the child is included in the research. Active parental consent is more rigorous and more difficult to attain. Under this standard, the researcher must obtain a signed consent form from the parent or legal guardian providing permission for the child to participate in the study. Absent a signed consent form, it is assumed that the parent has withheld permission, and the child is excluded from the study.

Passive parental consent was used at all sites except one. The Torrance, California, School District required that we obtain active parental consent. Participation rates, or the percentage of children providing answers to the questionnaires, varied between 98 percent and 100 percent at the passive consent sites. At the four active consent schools in Torrance, the participation rates ranged from a low of 53 percent to a high of 75 percent (for more detail, see Esbensen et al. 1996). A comparison of data by school district indicates that the study sample is representative of eighth-grade students enrolled in public schools in these eleven communities.

This public school-based sample has the standard limitations associated with school-based surveys—that is, it excludes students at private schools, truants, and students who are sick or tardy on the day of the survey. In other words, it potentially under-represents "high-risk" youth. With this caveat in mind, the current sample comprises nearly all eighth-grade students in attendance on the days the questionnaires were administered in these eleven jurisdictions. The sample primarily includes students age 13–15 attending public schools in a broad cross-section of communities in the continental United States. This is not a random sample, and generalizations cannot be made about the adolescent population as a whole. However, students from these eleven jurisdictions do represent the following types of communities: large urban areas with a majority of students belonging to a racial or ethnic minority (Philadelphia, Phoenix, Milwaukee, and Kansas City); medium-size cities (populations between 100,000 and 500,000) with considerable racial or ethnic heterogeneity (Providence and Orlando); medium-size cities with a majority of white students but a substantial minority

TABLE 3.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CROSS-SECTIONAL SAMPLE

Characteristic	*N* (%)
Sex	
Female	3,030 (52)
Male	2,792 (48)
Race	
White	2,337 (41)
African American	1,527 (26)
Hispanic	1,077 (19)
Other	828 (14)
Age	
13 or younger	1,686 (29)
14	3,486 (60)
15 or older	606 (11)
Family structure	
Two parents	3,593 (62)
Single parent	1,808 (31)
Other	414 (7)
Highest parental education	
Less than high school	505 (9) (10)[a]
High school	1,210 (21) (24)[a]
More than high school	3,323 (57) (66)[a]
Don't know	752 (13)

[a]Valid percentage (i.e., percentage excluding "Don't know").

enrollment (Omaha and Torrance); a small city (fewer than 100,000 inhabitants) with an ethnically diverse student population (Las Cruces); a small, racially homogenous (white) city (Pocatello); and a rural community in which more than 80 percent of the student population is white (Will County). Table 3.1 describes the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Girls (52%) represent approximately half of the sample, and most of the respondents (62%) live in two-parent homes—that is, they indicated that both a mother and father (including stepparents) were present in the home. Of the students who reported their parents' highest educational achievement, two-thirds indicated that one or both parents had gone beyond high school (at least some college), while only 10 percent stated that their parents had less than a high-school diploma. The sample is ethnically diverse, with whites accounting for 41 percent of respondents; African Americans, 26 percent; Hispanics, 19 percent; and youth of other or mixed racial/ethnic background, 14 percent.[3] As would be

[3]For many of the analyses in this and the following chapters, we include findings for "other" racial/ethnic groups in addition to whites, African Americans, and Hispanics. However, it is difficult to interpret or attribute such results, as this category comprises youths who reported mixed-race backgrounds, as well as white ethnic-group backgrounds (e.g., "German American"). Thus, while findings for "other" are reported for descriptive analyses, we restrict most of our analyses and discussion to the three main racial/ethnic groups: white, African American, and Hispanic.

expected with an eighth-grade sample, most of the respondents were between age 13 and 15; 60 percent were age 14. Based on data provided by the school districts included in this study, the sample characteristics are similar—indeed, virtually identical—to the districts' student profiles. For example, in middle schools in Las Cruces, 36 percent of students are white, 61 percent are Hispanic, and 4 percent are classified as some other background. Our Las Cruces sample is 34 percent white, 57 percent Hispanic, and 9 percent in the "other" category.

Measurement

The student questionnaire was developed to assess the effectiveness of the G.R.E.A.T. program. To accomplish this task, we identified risk factors that were directly addressed or implied in the program's lessons. We also linked these risk factors to the theoretical perspectives described in Chapter 2. In addition to providing a theoretically driven evaluation of the G.R.E.A.T. program (Winfree, Esbensen, and Osgood 1996), this strategy laid the foundation for a number of additional investigations into youth violence, gang membership, and victimization, including this book. (For discussion of G.R.E.A.T.'s effectiveness in reducing gang membership, delinquent activity, and risk factors for these behaviors, see Esbensen and Osgood 1999; Esbensen, Osgood, Taylor, Peterson, and Freng 2001.)

The questionnaire consisted of demographic questions; attitudinal questions tapping risk factors and the theoretical perspectives described in Chapter 2; and measures of self-reported delinquency, gang affiliation, and victimization. Students required approximately 40–45 minutes to answer all of the questions in the questionnaire.

Demographic Measures

Demographic measures were obtained from students who completed the self-administered questionnaires. Responses to six questions describe the demographic composition of our sample and allow us to assess the effect of these variables on youth violence, victimization, and gang membership (see the Appendix). Importantly, students indicated whether they were male or female and self-identified their race/ethnicity. Students were instructed to circle the response that best described them. In this book, we report the race/ethnicity of the entire sample in this chapter, but in subsequent chapters we restrict our analyses to those respondents who identified themselves as white, African American, or Hispanic. Three additional background characteristics were obtained from the respondents: age, family living situation, and, as a proxy for social class, measurement of mother's and father's educational attainment. With respect to family structure, we recoded responses into three categories: single-parent, two-parent (including stepparents), and other. For the parental-education measure, we recorded the highest educational level reported for either parent.

Risk Factor Measures

As discussed in Chapter 2, a considerable body of theoretical and empirical work identifying risk factors associated with youth violence has emerged during the past fifteen years. In this chapter, we organize our discussion by risk factor domains, but we also continue to link the various risk factors to specific theoretical perspectives, such as self-control, social bond, social learning, and routine activities/opportunity, when possible.

Eighteen risk factors representative of the individual, family, peer, and school domains are included in this study. Fourteen are indicators of one of the theoretical perspectives introduced in Chapter 2. We include six risk factors in the individual domain: impulsivity and risk seeking (self-control theory), perceived guilt associated with norm violations (social learning theory), and using neutralizations for illegal activity (social learning theory). As discussed in Chapter 2, two risk factors in the individual domain that are not directly linked to the four theoretical perspectives are also included: self-esteem and social isolation. The family domain includes parental monitoring (self-control theory) and attachments to the father and mother (social bond theory). The peer domain is represented by six risk factors: association with delinquent peers, association with pro-social peers, commitment to positive peers, and commitment to negative peers (all with origins in social learning theory), and unsupervised activity and access to alcohol and drugs (routine activities/opportunity theory). Three risk factors are included from the school domain. However, only commitment to school represents a theoretical perspective (social bond theory) included in our model. The other two risk factors—perception of limited educational opportunities and perceptions of the school environment—have been found to be associated with higher rates of youth violence. Most of the scales were adapted from the National Youth Survey (Elliott, Huizinga, and Ageton 1985) or the Denver Youth Survey (Huizinga, Esbensen, and Weiher 1991). Reliability of the scales is reported for the entire cross-sectional sample (see the Appendix), as they were quite stable across all subgroups, including sex, race/ethnicity, and study location.

Community Domain

Since the influential work of Shaw and McKay (1942), community and neighborhood contexts have been linked to variations in rates of juvenile violence. We acknowledge that this is an important domain; however, the surveys do not include measures of community characteristics. The student sample does include schools and students in eleven different communities across the United States. As described above, these cities include geographically and demographically diverse populations. To provide contextual perspective, we include some descriptive information about the prevalence of violent offending, gang membership, and victimization in these diverse communities. We do not, however, include this measure of the community domain in our consideration of risk factors.

Individual Domain

The individual domain has received considerable attention in the literature on risk factors. Accordingly, we include six measures that tap this dimension, including two scales derived from self-control theory and two from social learning theory. Since the seminal work of Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), a number of tests of self-control theory confirming the role of low self-control in criminal activity have been published (Arneklev et al. 1993; LaGrange and Silverman 1999; Longshore, Turner, and Stein 1996; Turner and Piquero 2002). Much of the research has been based on the empirical work of Grasmick and colleagues (1993). In that important article, they introduced six subscales (impulsivity, risk seeking, anger, temper, physicality, and self-centeredness) that measured self-control, as articulated by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990). While some theorists and researchers have argued that self-control is a uni-dimensional concept (Nagin and Paternoster 1994; Piquero and Tibbetts 1996; Polakowski 1994), others have maintained that the various elements of self-control measure different aspects and should not be considered uni-dimensional (Arneklev et al. 1993; DeLisi, Hochstetler, and Murphy 2003; Wood, Pfefferbaum, and Arneklev 1993). We adhere to the latter perspective and included only measures of impulsivity and risk seeking in this study (see the Appendix).[4] (For further discussion of the uni-dimensionality and the stability of self-control measures, see Hay and Forrest 2006; Winfree et al. 2006.)

Two additional individual-level risk factors are derived from social learning theory. Sutherland (1939) and, subsequently, Akers (1973) argued that criminal behavior is a result of social interaction and the learning of such behavior, as well as of rationalizations or justifications for that behavior. For Akers, learning to define behavior as appropriate was a key component; an individual would not engage in specific behavior if he or she had not learned to define it as acceptable in the circumstances. Two measures included in this study are directly linked to this definitional aspect of learning theory: perceived guilt and use of neutralizations. They assess the amount of guilt that a youth would feel if he or she committed a variety of illegal acts and the extent to which the youth believes it is OK to lie, steal, and hit people under certain circumstances (see the Appendix).

In addition to these theoretically derived measures, we include self-esteem and social isolation as indicators in the individual domain (see the Appendix). Several studies have documented the role of low self-esteem in violent offending and gang membership, especially for girls (Ellickson and McGuigan 2000; Esbensen and Deschenes 1998; Maxson, Whitlock, and Klein 1998). In addition, social isolation and emotional distance have been found to be particularly relevant for female violent offenders and gang members (Blum, Ireland, and Blum

[4]Impulsivity and risk seeking were the only two components of self-control with direct ties to the G.R.E.A.T. curriculum. These two dimensions, however, represent two of the more general elements of the theory and have been found to be useful in predicting criminal behavior in other studies (e.g., Longshore, Stein, and Turner 1998; Piquero and Rosay 1998).

2003; Esbensen and Deschenes 1998). In his review of victimization in schools, Farrington (1993) identified low self-esteem as a characteristic associated with being victimized.

Family Domain

Hirschi introduced his widely cited version of social bond theory in *Causes of Delinquency* (1969). In that book, he proposed and tested a theoretical statement maintaining that delinquency was the product of a lack of a stake in conformity. That is, if left to our own desires, we would all engage in illegal acts to satisfy our needs and desires—that is, we would rape, pillage, and plunder to our hearts' content. What prevents most people from acting along such lines is their stake in conformity, or, in other words, the strength of their social bond. This social bond, according to Hirschi, consists of four components: an attachment to conventional others; a commitment to conventional social institutions such as education and family; involvement in conventional activities such as school and work; and belief in the legitimacy of the elements of this social bond (the legitimacy of social norms, structures, and institutions). In this study, we employ separate measures for attachment to the father and attachment to the mother (two measures of attachment to parents) as indicators of social bond theory (see the Appendix).

An important element of the family domain is the extent of parental monitoring (see the Appendix). According to self-control theory, parents play a pivotal role in establishing self-control within children. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) suggest that poor parenting, including a failure to provide adequate monitoring of a child's activities, contributes to low levels of self-control. Ineffective parental monitoring while a child is young, according to this theory, results in a lack of development of self-control.

Peer Domain

Recall from Chapter 2 that Akers (1973) proposed a version of social learning theory in which he combined elements of operant conditioning theory and Sutherland's differential association theory. In this study, we included measures of two of the four components of Akers's social learning theory related to peers: differential associations and differential reinforcements. The study of crime and delinquency has produced few findings as enduring and robust as the relationship between delinquent peers and offending (Elliott, Huizinga, and Ageton 1985; Krohn et al. 1985; Menard and Elliott 1994; Sellers and Winfree 1990; Warr 2002; Winfree, Mays, and Vigil-Bäckström 1994; Winfree, Sellers, and Clason 1993). Consequently, we have included a sixteen-item scale that taps peer delinquency and an eight-item scale that assesses friends' involvement in conventional activities.[5] To capture differential reinforcements, we asked the respondents five

[5]Results from a study by Haynie and Osgood (2005) support the argument that using self-reports of peers' delinquency, rather than independent measures, overestimates the importance of these deviant

questions about the extent to which they would listen to friends who told them not to do something (commitment to positive peers) and whether they would hang out with friends who were getting them in trouble (commitment to negative peers; see the Appendix).

Two additional items measure the peer domain. Based on the routine activities/opportunity perspective developed by Hindelang and colleagues (1978) and by Cohen and Felson (1979), a basic premise is that for delinquency to occur, three elements must co-occur: the presence of a motivated offender, the absence of capable guardians, and the availability of a suitable target. The measures of routine activities/opportunity theory for this project concentrated on whether individuals spent unsupervised time with their friends and whether they hung out with friends where drugs and alcohol were available (see the Appendix).

School Domain

Interestingly, the school domain has received relatively little attention from researchers assessing the influence of risk factors on various outcomes, and what has been completed shows mixed findings. One of the more stable relationships to date, however, has been the role of commitment to school, one of the four elements of Hirschi's (1969) social bond theory. Thus, we include the commitment to school element of social bond theory to tap the effect of risk factors in the school domain (see the Appendix).

We include two additional risk factors in this domain in our subsequent analyses: perceived limited educational opportunities and perceptions of the school environment (see the Appendix). As indicated earlier, some researchers have cited the importance of the school environment on behavior (Gottfredson 2001; Gottfredson et al. 2005; Welsh, Greene, and Jenkins 1999), while others have identified lack of academic success and failure at school as risk factors for violence (J. Hawkins et al. 2000; Howell 2009). While these two measures are not directly related to the four criminological perspectives that we incorporate into our theoretical model, we nonetheless include them in our descriptive risk factor analyses.

Behavioral Measures

Of primary importance in our research is an examination of youth violent offending, gang membership, and victimization. Thus, it is necessary to have

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peer associations in contributing to one's own delinquency, in part failing to account for the selection effect of youths who hang around with peers who are like themselves. We acknowledge these limitations and in prior work excluded this measure in favor of measures of commitment to peers. In this work, we chose to include association with delinquent peers partly because of its generally accepted inclusion in prior risk factor research, and partly because we do not rely solely on this measure for the peer domain. Instead, it is only one of six measures. Our prior work demonstrates that variables in the peer domain are generally robust predictors for this age group, whether peer associations or peer commitment is substituted.

valid measures of these behavioral characteristics. For each, we rely on self-reported data, not official records.

Self-Reported Offending

Respondents were given a list of seventeen behaviors and asked to indicate whether they had ever committed each act. If the students answered yes, they were also asked to indicate how many times they had engaged in the behavior during the previous twelve months. Responses to each of these items can be analyzed individually, or they can be combined into a composite measure. In this book, we focus on violent offenses and have created two indices of violent behavior: general violent offending and serious violent offending (see the Appendix).

To understand why we make the distinction between general and serious violent offending, it is important first to examine the definition of violence provided in Webster's New World Dictionary: "physical force used so as to injure, damage, or destroy" (Neufeldt 1994, 659). This definition recognizes even simple assaults as having both intent and potential to injure. We could "define away" this type of youth violence as being so commonplace as to be "normative" youth behavior, but we feel it is important to address. If you are the one being hit, is it trivial? In addition, from a developmental perspective, tolerance of and engagement in hitting is the first step toward engaging in more serious violence. Furthermore, to exclude the hitting item would be to adhere to an arbitrary cut point of what constitutes violence. By including it, we have a "cleaner," or more pure, distinction between violent and nonviolent behavior and violent and nonviolent youths. Some may consider this an error of thinking, however, and argue that using such a broad definition inflates the level of violence. Thus, to explore the nature of violence and youths who commit violent offenses, we include in all analyses a measure of general violence that includes the hitting item and a measure of serious violence that excludes hitting. In addition, in our risk factor analyses, we separate out youths who reported only having hit someone from youths who had engaged in other forms of violent behavior. This allows us to determine whether, in fact, youths who reported having hit someone are more similar to youths who reported no violent acts or are more similar to youths who reported engaging in other, more serious forms of violence. Since our primary interest is in serious violence, however, whenever we refer to violent offending (or violent victimization), unless specified otherwise, we are referring to the serious violent measure.

Responses to the open-ended questions about involvement in illegal activity ranged from never to "every day" (carrying a hidden weapon). The most common response was never, which resulted in highly skewed data, posing potential problems for statistical analyses in which a normal distribution is assumed. Several strategies are available to address this problem: transforming the data using the natural log, truncating responses at the ninetieth percentile (Nagin and Smith 1990), or truncating the responses based on a conceptual rationale. We chose to truncate responses at twelve. Thus, any respondent who indicated that she or he

had committed a specific act twelve or more times during the recall period would receive a score of twelve for that behavior. Our premise is that any adolescent who commits twelve robberies or twelve aggravated assaults during a twelve-month recall period can be considered a high-rate offender. In creating the summary measures, the individual responses were added to create a range of 0–60 for the general violent index and 0–48 for the serious violent measure. That is, each of the four behaviors in the serious violent offending index has a value between 0 and 12. The summed individual scores can therefore range from 0 (for youths who reported no violent offending) to 48 (for youths who reported twelve or more instances of each of the four offenses).

Levels of involvement in violent offending can be measured in a number of ways, including through prevalence rates, frequency reports, and individual offending rates (also known as lambda). *Prevalence* refers to the percentage of the population that has engaged in the behavior during a specified period of time. An *ever prevalence* rate refers to all those individuals who report having committed an offense at some point in their lifetime, whereas an *annual prevalence* rate is restricted to those who report offending during a specified recall period (i.e., the past year). *Frequency* is synonymous with average—that is, the average number of offenses committed by all members of the sample during the reporting period. *Individual offending rates* refer to the average number of offenses for those individuals who report having engaged in the behavior. Thus, individual offending rates are restricted to the small subset of active offenders within the larger sample. To reduce confusion, throughout Chapters 4–7 we present results for annual prevalence rates and individual offending rates. In Chapter 8, however, we use frequency rates to test our theoretical model.

Gang Membership

One of our substantive interests in this book is to examine gang membership and gang violence as a specific type of youth violence. We measure gang membership through self-nomination, which relies on respondents to self-identify their gang affiliation, a practice similar to police reliance on gang members' "claiming" affiliation. Just as the police often require additional criteria to be met (i.e., using gang signs, wearing "colors," and associating with "known" gang members), self-report surveys often include follow-up questions that provide evidence of gang affiliation. In the current study, respondents were asked two filter questions: "Have you ever been a gang member?" and "Are you now in a gang?" As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5, we classified respondents who stated that they were "now in a gang" as gang members.

Violent Victimization

Another outcome of importance in our discussion of youth violence is violent victimization. As with self-reported offending, respondents were asked to indicate whether any of the specified things had happened to them, and if they had,

how many times in the previous twelve months. Three items were included to measure general violent victimization:

- Have you been hit by someone trying to hurt you?
- Have you had someone use a weapon or force to get money or things from you?
- Have you been attacked by someone with a weapon or by someone trying to seriously hurt or kill you?

The serious violent victimization index excludes the first item—hit by someone. As with offending, we will examine the following summary measures of victimization: ever prevalence, annual prevalence, and individual victimization rates. Also, to address the skewed distribution, responses to individual items were truncated at twelve and then summed to create the summary victimization indices (scores ranged from 0 to 36 for general violent victimization and 0 to 24 for serious violent victimization).

Analysis Strategy

In Chapter 2, we laid out our framework and described the data that will be used to examine risk factors associated with youth violence. We have also introduced a linkage between risk factors and criminological theory that will provide the groundwork for a theoretical framework that will be introduced and tested in Chapter 8. We now briefly describe the analytic strategy that guides the next three chapters, in which we examine the issues associated with youth violence (Chapter 4), youth gang membership (Chapter 5), and violent victimization (Chapter 6). In each of these chapters, we adhere to the following format:

- Basic descriptive analyses, including prevalence rates and epidemiology of the behavior
- Comparison of prevalence rates and epidemiology by sex and race/ethnicity
- Examination of risk factors associated with violence
- Examination of risk factors controlling for sex and race/ethnicity

In Chapter 7, we explore three interrelated topics: (1) the co-occurrence of the three forms of violence discussed in Chapters 4–6; (2) the cumulative effect of multiple risk factors, as well as the role of possessing risk factors in multiple domains; and (3) the extent to which the risk factors are significant once other factors are held constant. We then provide a test of the theoretical model that will be introduced in Chapter 8. Two overarching concerns guide our theoretical testing: the extent to which the theoretical model explains two of the specific forms of violence (offending and victimization) and the extent to which the model fits patterns of offending and victimization that are specific to sex and race/ethnicity.

Summary and Conclusion

Data initially collected as part of a federally funded evaluation of the G.R.E.A.T. program serve as the basis for this examination of youth violence. Building on the now well-established tradition of self-report methods, self-administered questionnaires were collected from a diverse sample of students, allowing us to address the specific role of sex and race/ethnicity. This study provides a unique opportunity to use one large data set (5,935 respondents) to examine which risk factors are related to the three types of youth violence: violent offending, gang membership, and violent victimization. In summary, the eighteen risk and theoretical factors included in this study (see Table 2.1) are:

- *Individual:* impulsivity, risk seeking, guilt, use of neutralizations, social isolation, and self-esteem
- *Family:* parental monitoring and attachment to parents (mothers and fathers separately)
- *Peer:* association with delinquent peers, association with pro-social peers, commitment to negative peers, commitment to positive peers, unsupervised or unstructured time with peers, and availability of drugs and alcohol
- *School:* lack of commitment to school, perceived educational opportunities, and perception of the school environment

Prior research has linked these risk factors to youth violence; no study to date, however, has examined the extent to which this array of risk factors is associated with offending, gang membership, and victimization, the three forms of violence under study here. In the next three chapters, we explore the unique effects of each of these risk factors on each type of youth violence. In Chapter 7, we examine the extent to which these forms of violence overlap and the extent to which these risk factors predict offending, gang membership, and victimization.

II

Types of Youth Violence

4
Youth Violence

Chapters 1–3 provided the framework for this chapter and the ones that follow, describing the book's purpose in contributing to understanding youth violence as it relates to sex and race/ethnicity, our risk factor and theoretical perspectives, and our research methodology. In this chapter, we begin our analysis of the epidemiology and etiology of youth violence, opening with a review of the nature of and trends in American youth violence and moving into a more detailed description of violence from our school-based sample of youths. Key questions that guide the chapter are:

- What is the state of youth violence in America? For example, is violence by adolescents on the rise? What proportion of young offenders is violent? Who commits violent acts?
- What is the state of youth violence in our sample, and is there variation in violent offending by sex or race/ethnicity?
- Do youths who commit violent acts differ in terms of risk factors from other youths, especially other delinquents, and how do risk factors for violence vary by sex and race/ethnicity?

These questions are important to consider for a number of reasons. First, public perception is that juvenile crime, particularly violent crime, is especially high and is rising (Coalition for Juvenile Justice 1997; Dorfman and Schiraldi 2001). Media have perpetuated these perceptions, playing especially on images of violent criminals as young minority men concentrated in urban

environments (Chiricos and Eschholz 2002; Coalition for Juvenile Justice 1997; Esbensen and Tusinski 2007). Thus, describing the true scope of the problem is important in promoting public awareness and combating "moral panic."

Second, public perceptions and political reactions have led to shifts in policy responses to juveniles. From the non-interventionist and rehabilitation models of the 1960s and 1970s, the United States turned in the 1980s and 1990s to a crime control model that emphasizes harsh punishment in an attempt to curb the perceived "wave of youth violence" (Howell 2009; Zimring 1998). Despite increased implementation of a more "balanced" approach in the 2000s, crime control legislation and policies enacted in previous decades continue to affect young offenders. A substantial body of literature documents the damaging effects of certain juvenile justice interventions (Dunford, Osgood, and Weichselbaum 1981; Welsh, Jenkins, and Harris 1999), particularly for minority youths (Black and Reiss 1970; Pope, Lovell, and Hsia 2002). These findings underscore the importance of strategies aimed at preventing violence rather than at responding to it (Howell 2009; Mihalic et al. 2004). Thus, youth policy based on *actual* rather than *perceived* youth behavior is reasonable public policy that will better serve not only society at large, but also individual juvenile offenders in particular.

Third, identifying risk factors associated with juveniles' violent acts provides insight into appropriate and cost-effective prevention and intervention strategies. Since federal, state, county, and local budgets are perpetually in crisis, specifying which interventions are most likely to succeed is attractive from a policy and a budgetary perspective. Cost-benefit analyses conducted by such researchers as Aos and his colleagues (2004; Aos, Phipps, and Barnoski 2001) and Greenwood and his colleagues (1998) provide estimates of both crime and money saved per prevention dollar spent. Early childhood programs such as Nurse Home Visitation are estimated to provide a benefit valued at as much as $15,918 per program participant, and youth development programs such as the Seattle Social Development Project have a potential benefit of $14,169 per participant (Aos, Phipps, and Barnoski 2001).

Finally—and, depending on one's perspective, perhaps most important—identifying the risk factors and reasons for youths' involvement in violence is the first step toward reducing the problem and promoting positive youth development to provide the resources young people need to lead healthy and productive lives (Catalano et al. 2004; Rozie-Battle 2002). Further, because sex-specific and race/ethnicity-specific inquiries are still lacking, we often find ourselves in debate over whether sex- and race/ethnicity-specific programs are necessary for youths in our diverse society without a body of evidence on which to base policy and programming decisions. We aim to inform this discussion as we consider the roles of sex and race/ethnicity in this chapter and those that follow.

We turn now to the first question: What is the state of youth violence in America? We review what is known from law enforcement statistics and self-report data about trends in and the distribution of youth violence. We then

examine the nature of youth violence in our sample (the second question), followed by an investigation of risk factors for violence in existing research and in our sample to address the third question guiding this chapter.

Trends in Youth Violence

Different data sources use different definitions of crime. Recall from Chapters 1 and 3 that we define "serious violence" in this book as aggravated assault (attacking someone with a weapon), robbery (using a weapon or force to get money or things from people), shooting at someone because you were told to by someone else, and being involved in gang fights. In the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), shooting at someone is likely to be classified as aggravated assault, and gang fights may be included under either simple or aggravated assault. Keeping this potential for lack of comparability in mind, we examine trends in simple and aggravated assault and robbery. Although self-report surveys do not collect data on homicide offending, given public concern with homicide committed by juveniles, we include data about this particular form of violence in our discussion of law enforcement data. It should also be noted that the UCR's violent crime index includes forcible rape, for which we have no comparative measure in our data.

Since 1980, juvenile violent crime, measured by both arrests and victim reports, increased until it peaked in 1993–1994 and has been steadily decreasing since (Snyder and Sickmund 2006). Juveniles' share of all violent crime, measured by crimes cleared by arrest, follows a similar pattern, increasing from 1980 to 1994 and then declining (Snyder 2003). By 2002, arrest rates for murder, forcible rape, and robbery had declined to or near their levels in 1980 (Snyder 2003). For robbery, for example, there were 167.5 arrests per 100,000 juveniles age 10–17 in 1980; the rate climbed to a high of 198.9 in 1995, then declined steadily to 75.8 in 2003 (Snyder and Sickmund 2006). Arrest rates for simple assault have not followed the general trend for serious violent offenses, increasing more than 237 percent, from 299.8 per 100,000 in 1980 to 712.0 in 2003, with a peak of 768 in 1997 (Snyder and Sickmund 2006).

Although data available from various self-report surveys cannot be compared directly with law enforcement data, we are able to examine trends in some types of youth violence. The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention every two years beginning in 1991, is consistent with law enforcement data indicating that behavior related to violence is on the decline among youths. In the nationally representative YRBSS, the percentage of high-school students who reported having been in a physical fight in the previous year decreased from 43 percent in 1991 to 33 percent in 2003 (Centers for Disease Control 2004).

Data from the annual Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey of offending by high-school seniors over the previous twelve months reveal different trends from 1982 to 2003, depending on the violent behavior in question. For some offenses, the trend mirrors that found in UCR data, but others are not consistent. Further,

the peak year of offending prevalence varies by offense. The percentage of youths who reported getting into a serious fight in the previous twelve months, for example, decreased overall from 17.3 in 1982 to 14.3 in 2003, peaking at 19.7 percent in 1989. The prevalence of robbery, however, increased overall from 2.3 percent in 1982 to 3.9 percent in 2003, peaking at 4.8 percent in 1994 (Pastore and Maguire 1996, 2006). Although trend data from self-reports by middle-school youths are very limited, a recent study indicates that seventh-graders and eighth-graders—the age of our cross-sectional sample—are similar to eleventh-graders and twelfth-graders in prevalence of violent offending in that 12 percent of youths in both age groups had committed at least one violent act (beating up someone, carrying a weapon, engaging in gang fights) during the school year (Rainone et al. 2006).

Trends by Sex

While rates of arrest for young men historically have been significantly higher than rates of arrest for young women, girls nonetheless account for a growing number of arrests. Since 1980, increases in arrest rates for juveniles have been greater for girls than for boys. Statistics show, for example, that between 1980 and 2001, girls showed increases of 257 percent and 113 percent in their number of arrests for simple and aggravated assaults, respectively, compared with 109 percent and 22 percent for boys (Snyder 2003). It is important to note, however, that the initial low arrest rates for girls (fewer than 50 arrests for aggravated assault per 100,000, compared with more than 220 per 100,000 for boys) inflate the increase in their percentages—in other words, even a small increase in the number of offenses committed by girls produces a large increase in girls' rates compared with boys' rates (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1998). Further, although the rapid increases shown in official statistics seem alarming to some, closer examination reveals the true nature of these arrests. For example, although the greatest increases in arrest rates for girls were for person rather than property offenses, this category is largely dominated by fighting among adolescent peers and fighting with parents (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1998), not the types of violent offending the public fears.

Some have suggested that arrest statistics indicate not an actual increase in assaults by girls but, rather, a change in the ways in which law enforcement has responded to and classified this behavior. As we have noted, the picture of juvenile violence differs by data source. If one relies on arrest statistics reported in the UCR, for example, the gap between male and female juvenile offending appears to be narrowing, leading many to claim that girls are becoming more violent. A look at alternative data sources (such as the National Crime Victimization Survey [NCVS] and longitudinal self-report studies), however, shows that the trend in the gender gap in violence from 1980 to 2003 is stable and that there has not been a drastic change in girls' offending; the change is in how female offenders are handled by the juvenile justice system (Steffensmeier et al. 2005).

Thus, in contrast to negative media attention that portrays girls, and especially minority girls, as a "'new breed' of 'violent women' roaming the streets and threatening the social order" (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1998, 13), the available data reveal that the true nature of girls' misbehavior is generally the same as it has always been and that the image of girls as a new breed of violent delinquents is, on the whole, a myth. This is a particularly important point that we highlight in this book.

Trends by Race/Ethnicity

Because the UCR does not collect data specifically on ethnicity, comparisons cannot be made with youths of Hispanic origin, only between youths of white, African American, or "other" (Native American or Asian) backgrounds. Although arrest rates for young minorities are consistently higher than those for whites, the decreases in serious violent offending after 1993–1994 were greater for African American juveniles than for white juveniles (i.e., the racial gap was narrowing), and this pattern held across the UCR and NCVS data (Lynch 2002; Snyder 2003).

The general pattern of decreases in annual prevalence of self-reported physical fighting from 1991 to 2003 held across race/ethnicity (white, African American, and Hispanic) in the YRBSS (Centers for Disease Control 2004). In the MTF data, however, the trends for getting into serious fights differed by race (Pastore and Maguire 1996, 2006): Prevalence rates decreased for whites but increased for African Americans from 1982 to 2003. Also, there was no net change in the prevalence of aggravated assault for whites but a slight increase for African Americans in the MTF, and the prevalence of robbery increased for both groups.

In sum, both official and numerous self-report data sources indicate a downturn in overall violent offending among juveniles since 1994. Depending on the data source, the sex gap in violence is either increasing (UCR data) or remaining stable (NCVS and self-report data), while the racial/ethnic gap appears to be narrowing, especially for serious violent offenses, according to both law enforcement and self-report data.

Epidemiology of Youth Violence

The cross-sectional self-report study data we use for our analyses were collected in 1995 (around the peak of the "youth violence epidemic"), so it is instructive to review law enforcement statistics from that year. In Table 4.1, we present UCR data from 1995 on individual types of crime—robbery, aggravated assault, and other assaults—that are comparable to self-reported measures in our study. While the actual behaviors underlying these categories may not be directly comparable across these data sources (in that legal codes may not match youths' definitions or perceptions of these offenses), they do provide a general sense of the differing pictures of who commits violence. Another limitation is the fact that the UCR

TABLE 4.1 EPIDEMIOLOGY OF YOUTH VIOLENCE: UNIFORM CRIME REPORT ARREST DATA, 1995

	Arrest rate[a] (arrests per 100,000 juveniles age 10–17)						Ratios of arrest rates		
	Total	Male	Female	White	African American	Other	Male to female	African American to white	Other to white
Simple assault	738	1,038	421	565	1,776	910	2.48	3.12	1.61
Aggravated assault	286	447	117	198	791	315	3.75	3.95	1.59
Robbery	199	351	38	92	776	160	8.75	8.67	1.74
Violent crime[d]	516	856	158	308	1,668	501	5.38	5.39	1.63

	Distribution of offenders[b] (group's % of all juvenile crime arrests)					Ratios of offender distributions		
	Male	Female	White	African American	Other	Male to female	African American to white	Other to white
Population[c]	51	49	79	16	5			
Simple assault	72	28	62	35	3	2.57	.56	.05
Aggravated assault	80	20	56	42	2	4.00	.75	.04
Robbery	91	9	38	60	2	10.11	1.58	.05
Violent crime[d]	85	15	49	49	2	5.67	1.00	.04

Sources: [a]Snyder and Sickmund 2006; [b]Pastore and Maguire 1996 (excluding population figures); [c]Puzzanchera, Finnegan, and Kang 2006.

[d]Violent crime includes murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

do not record ethnicity. Thus, while we report data from self-identified Hispanic youths in our sample, we are unable to provide comparative arrest information.

In the UCR data, offenders age 10–17 accounted for approximately 19 percent of all arrests for violent crime in 1995 (Pastore and Maguire 1996). While this may appear to be a large number of juvenile violent offenders (in that juveniles commit one-fifth of all violent offenses in the United States), this percentage actually represents a minuscule proportion of the total juvenile population. In 1995, there were 738 arrests for simple assault per 100,000 juveniles age 10–17 (see Table 4.1).[1] To put this in context, there were 30,408,465 juveniles age 10–17 in 1995. Hence, although each arrest does not necessarily equate to one juvenile (i.e., some juveniles are responsible for more than one arrest each), a rough approximation can be made that only .74 percent of all juveniles were arrested for simple assault in 1995. The arrest rates decrease as the seriousness of the offense increases: There were 286 arrests for aggravated assault per 100,000 juveniles and 199 arrests per 100,000 juveniles for robbery. According to the violent crime index (which is not comparable to our self-reported violence indices because it includes murder, non-negligent manslaughter, and forcible rape), 516 arrests were made per 100,000 juveniles. Again, this equates to only .52 percent

[1]Our sample consists mostly of youths age 13–15, while UCR data reported here are for youths age 10–17. UCR data restricted to youths age 13–15 reveal patterns similar to those for youths age 10–17, both in general and by sex. Data broken down by both race and specific age are not provided in available UCR sources.

of juveniles if each of the arrests for violent crime reflects one juvenile. Since it is likely that some juveniles are represented more than once, the percentage of all juveniles arrested for a violent offense in 1995 is even lower.

Self-Report Data

Prevalence rates for violence are generally higher in self-report data. This is due not only to the fact that many youths are not arrested for illegal behavior they have committed but also to the different behaviors tapped—that is, some self-reported violent behaviors may not be as serious as those that would result in arrest (Elliott and Huizinga 1989). High-school seniors who participated in the MTF in 1995 reported whether they had engaged in a variety of violent behaviors over the previous twelve months (Pastore and Maguire 2006). The percentage of students who had been violent ranged from 3 percent (had hit an instructor or supervisor) and 4 percent (had robbed someone) to nearly 20 percent (had engaged with a group in a fight with another group). About 12 percent reported having seriously hurt someone, and 15 percent had been in a serious fight.

Who Are the Violent Offenders?

Epidemiology by Sex

Arrests of male juveniles outnumber arrests of female juveniles for every violent offense reported in Table 4.1, and the sex gap is greater as the seriousness of offenses increases. In 1995, for every arrest of a girl for simple assault there were about 2.5 arrests of boys; for every arrest of a girl for aggravated assault, there were 3.75 arrests of boys. For robbery, the number of arrests of boys, at 8.75, was nearly nine times that for girls, at 1. For overall violence, boys were arrested 5.38 times for each time a girl was arrested.

Self-report data that allow violent offending between the sexes to be compared provide a different picture, suggesting a far narrower sex gap than do the arrest data, although the gap is larger for more serious offenses than for less serious offenses (Canter 1982; Steffensmeier et al. 2005). The sex gap in self-reported offending also varies depending on the measure used (prevalence or frequency) and by the age of the sample. The prevalence ratios of male-to-female offending among high-school seniors in the MTF survey in 1995 ranged from 1.64:1 for serious and group fighting to 5:1 for robbery. These ratios are much lower than those in the UCR data. The same is generally true for frequency of offending. Kelley and her colleagues (1997, 5), for example, examined sex differences in self-reported offending and found that "active male offender(s) committed more serious violent acts" than did active female offenders (see also Steffensmeier et al. 2005), but that girls' violent behavior most closely resembles their male peers' violent behavior between age 12 and 15. Similarly, Moffitt and her colleagues (2001) found the sex gap in aggression and delinquency to be narrowest at age 15. This is noteworthy in that, given the age of our sample (approximately age

14), we may be capturing youths at the point at which sex differences in violence are smallest or when the gender gap is narrowest.

Epidemiology by Race/Ethnicity

Looking at the UCR statistics in Table 4.1, we see that arrest rates for African American youths age 10–17 are consistently higher than the rates for white youths, and differences in these rates increase with the seriousness of the offense. Arrest rate ratios provide a good indication of the degree to which a race gap exists in arrests for violent offending, particularly for serious offending. While the ratio of arrests for simple assault was 3.12 arrests of African Americans to each arrest of a white, the ratio was much greater, at 8.67:1, for robbery. Since these findings could indicate law enforcement activity as opposed to greater offending by African American youths, however, we cannot definitively conclude that these youths are much more violent than white youths.

The relationship between race/ethnicity and offending is further blurred by the finding that, while great racial/ethnic differences in offending exist in official statistics, these differences diminish in self-report data (Elliott and Ageton 1980; Huizinga and Elliott 1986; Pope 1979; Walker, Spohn, and DeLone 2006; Williams and Gold 1972). Although self-report data from the Causes and Correlates studies appear to uphold the indication in law enforcement statistics of a larger race gap at the more serious end of the offense continuum (i.e., a greater proportion of minority than of white youths reported they had been involved in aggravated assault, robbery, rape, gang fights [Kelley et al. 1997]), these studies sampled youths in high-risk neighborhoods. Thus, their samples do not provide an adequate or equal comparison of racial/ethnic groups. The representative National Youth Survey showed little support for the greater involvement of minorities in either prevalence or frequency of offending once socioeconomic status was controlled (Huizinga and Elliott 1987).

A look at prevalence ratios in other nationally representative data sets provides further insight into the alternative picture of racial/ethnic differences in offending provided by self-reports. In the MTF in 1995, prevalence ratios for African Americans to whites for violence are much smaller than in UCR data. For aggravated assault (seriously hurting someone), for example, the ratio is 1.45:1, and for robbery, it is just 2.33:1, a considerably narrower gap than is found in arrest data. More recently, McNulty and Bellair (2003) examined the data used in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health and found that, although the prevalence of offending among minorities was greater, the ratio of minority-to-white offenders was much lower in the self-report data than in UCR data. For each white offender, there were 1.43 African American offenders and 1.5 Hispanic offenders. It should be noted that these are not direct comparisons, as items included in McNulty and Bellair's study (serious fighting, causing injury, pulling a knife or gun, and shooting or stabbing someone) are not the same as the violent offenses in the UCR. The data do give some sense, however, of the differences between official statistics and the "dark figure of crime" that is tapped by self-report data.

The State of Youth Violence

The different sources of information about trends in youth violence paint a remarkably similar picture, but the distribution of youth violence appears to vary by data source. Violent crime by juveniles, as measured by arrest rates, clearances, and victims' reports, peaked in 1993–1994 and has declined steadily since then. In fact, by 2002 arrest rates for three of the four violent index crimes (murder, forcible rape, and robbery) had declined to or near their levels in 1980. Although data from various self-report surveys are not directly comparable with law enforcement data, results from the YRBSS are consistent with law enforcement data indicating that violence-related behaviors are on the decline among youths. Data from the MTF surveys reveal disparate trends from 1982 to 2003, depending on the violent behavior in question.

When UCR data are disaggregated by sex, the gap between boys' and girls' juvenile offending appears to be narrowing, a finding that has contributed to claims that girls are becoming more violent. The NCVS and self-report data, however, show that the trend for the gender gap in violence from 1980 to 2003 is stable and that there has been no drastic change in offending among girls. What has changed is how female offenders are handled by the juvenile justice system. Examining trends in offending for different racial/ethnic groups is more difficult, given the limitations of the data. Available UCR and NCVS data appear to show that arrest rates among young minorities' are consistently higher than those for whites but that the decreases in serious violent offending after 1993–1994 were greater for African American than for white juveniles (i.e., the racial gap was narrowing).

In terms of who commits violence (epidemiology), self-report data deviate from official statistics. The latter indicate greater sex and race/ethnicity gaps in offending than do the former, although both data sources reveal that the gaps are wider as offenses become more serious, with boys and African Americans having higher prevalence rates than girls and youths of other racial backgrounds. It remains the case, however, that self-report data tend to offset the stark picture painted by UCR data. It is not the case that violent behavior is concentrated among minority males. Girls and white youths self-report involvement in a variety of violent offenses that are not captured in UCR statistics.

Epidemiology of Youth Violence in Our Sample

We now turn our attention to the first part of the second question posed at the outset of this chapter: "What is the state of youth violence in our sample?" We assess the prevalence and individual offending rates of self-reported violence among our sample of eighth-grade youths and examine whether the rates of violence are consistent across the eleven different sites included in our study. We then assess the second part of the question: whether the general patterns vary by sex and race/ethnicity.

TABLE 4.2 ANNUAL PREVALENCE AND INDIVIDUAL OFFENDING RATES (IORs) OF VIOLENT BEHAVIORS FOR THE TOTAL SAMPLE AND BY SEX

	Total ($N = 5{,}935$)		Male ($N = 2{,}830$)		Female ($N = 3{,}054$)		Male-to-female ratio	
Violent act	Prevalence (%)	IOR (mean)	Prevalence (%)	IOR (mean)	Prevalence (%)	IOR (mean)	Prevalence	IOR
Hit someone[a,b]	49	5.17	56	5.45	43	4.81	1.30	1.13
Attacked someone with a weapon[a,b]	12	3.92	16	4.37	9	3.18	1.78	1.37
Robbed someone[a]	5	5.13	8	5.37	3	4.33	2.67	1.24
Participated in a gang fight[a,b]	17	4.39	21	4.74	14	3.85	1.50	1.23
Shot at someone[a]	4	4.02	7	4.09	2	3.58	3.50	1.14
General violence[a,b]	54	7.76	61	8.84	48	6.39	1.27	1.38
Serious violence[a,b]	24	6.99	29	8.25	19	5.14	1.53	1.61

[a] $p < .01$, prevalence, boys versus girls; chi-square measure of association.

[b] $p < .01$, IOR, boys versus girls; *t*-test.

Annual Prevalence of Violent Behavior

Table 4.2 presents the prevalence of various violent behaviors in the previous year.[2] As expected, least common are the serious offenses of robbery (5% of the sample) and shooting at someone (4%). Aggravated assault (attacking someone with a weapon) and gang fighting were engaged in by 12 percent and 17 percent of youths, respectively. The most common violence-related act committed by these youths was hitting someone with the idea of hurting her or him, with about half (49%) having done so in the previous twelve months (Table 4.2, column 1). The extent to which hitting someone is widespread among youth is evident in the differences in our two indices of violence. For general violence, the proportion of youths who committed at least one of the five violent acts, including hitting, in the previous year was 54 percent. This compares with 24 percent of youth who had committed at least one of the four violent acts that make up the index of serious violent offending. These findings are comparable with those reported by high-school seniors in the MTF survey—for example, 4 percent had robbed someone, 12 percent had seriously hurt someone, and 20 percent had been in a group fight—but much greater than the arrest rates for juveniles for comparable offenses.[3]

[2] Annual prevalence was calculated using all cases for which any positive response was given to the question, "How many times in the past 12 months have you . . . ?" Thus, youths who gave such responses as "a lot" or "too many to count" were included as offenders in annual prevalence rates. Because of the unspecific nature of those responses, however, these cases were not included in calculating IORs. Similar proportions of the sample report having ever committed (i.e., "ever prevalence") these acts at some point in their lives (results not shown in table format).

[3] Remember, though, that our data are not nationally representative, while the MTF and UCR are.

Individual Offending Rates for Violence

Among youths who reported having engaged in violent behavior over the previous twelve months, individual offending rates (IORs), or the average number of offenses committed by each active offender, varied by type of violence (see Table 4.2, column 2).[4] For the individual violence measures, the highest incidence of offending was found among youths who had hit someone (an average of 5.17 times in the previous twelve months) and those who had committed robbery (an average of 5.13 times).[5] These offenses are followed by gang fights (4.39), shooting at someone (4.02), and attacking someone with a weapon (3.92).

Youths who had engaged in at least one of the five general violent crimes averaged 7.76 offenses, and those who engaged in at least one of the four serious violent crimes averaged 6.99 offenses. Thus, while the prevalence of more serious offenders may be low (about one-quarter of the sample), the youths who engage in these behaviors actually offend at relatively high rates.

Geographic Distribution of Violence

The multi-site design of our study allows us to examine the extent to which these general patterns in youth violence are consistent across community contexts—that is, is the proportion of youths involved in violence, and their frequency of violent behavior, similar in different cities? Findings not shown in table format (but see Peterson et al. 2007, table 4) indicate that prevalence rates for all types of violence vary significantly across the eleven study sites, with the greatest proportion of violent youths present in Kansas City, Missouri. Focusing on the violence indices, annual prevalence of general violence ranged from 45 percent of youths in Pocatello, Idaho, to 69 percent of youths in Kansas City. Prevalence figures for serious violence underscore this geographical difference. While only 13 percent of youths in Will County, Illinois, and 15 percent of youths in Pocatello had engaged in serious violence, three times as many youths in Kansas City (38%) had done so. Further, more than 30 percent of youths in Milwaukee, Philadelphia, and Phoenix had committed serious violent offenses.

Fewer differences by site were found in IORs than in prevalence rates, but the ranges are substantial in many cases. Youths in Providence, Rhode Island, for example, averaged 5.19 general violent offenses, compared with 10.43 such

[4]As noted in Chapter 3, we truncated the individual violence measures at twelve to control for the influence of outliers, or youths who report very high rates of offending. The two Violence indices were created by summing the truncated responses to the individual violence items; these indices were not themselves truncated at twelve.

[5]Although some may see "hitting someone" as a relatively innocuous behavior, and we have classified this behavior as "nonviolent" in later analyses, it is worth remembering that such assaults are restricted to those in which the offender intends harm to the victim, and youths who engage in this behavior do so frequently.

offenses by youths in Kansas City. Serious violent offending ranged from an average of 3.88 offenses in Providence to 8.65 and 8.69 in Kansas City and Omaha, respectively. Thus, we find considerable variation in the prevalence of youth violence (especially serious violence) across the eleven study sites; IORs also vary, but not as much as prevalence.

Who Are the Violent Offenders? Epidemiology by Sex in Our Sample

Our previous review of arrest and self-report data provides insight into sex differences in violent offending. In general, a greater proportion of boys than girls are engaged in violence, but there are discrepancies in the size of the sex gap between arrest and self-report data. Our sample is equally representative of the sexes and allows investigation of whether and how the prevalence and frequency of violence differ for girls and boys.

Annual Prevalence by Sex

Consistent with the UCR and with other self-report data, fewer girls than boys in our sample reported having committed each of the violent behaviors, and all of the differences were statistically significant (see Table 4.2, columns 3 and 5). Whereas more than 60 percent of boys had committed at least one of the five general violent crimes, just under half (48%) of girls had done so in the previous year. Similarly, about 30 percent of boys had committed at least one of the four serious violent offenses, compared with about 20 percent of girls. Prior work indicates that the sex gap in the prevalence of offending generally increases as the seriousness of the offense increases. Our data show this, as well (see Table 4.2, column 7). The ratios of male-to-female offending were smallest for simple assault (1.30:1) and being involved in gang fights (1.50:1); greater for attacking someone with a weapon (1.78:1); and greatest for robbery (2.67:1) and shooting at someone (3.50:1). That is, the proportion of male offenders compared with female offenders increases with the seriousness of the crime.

Individual Offending Rates by Sex

Among active offenders in our sample, however, the sex gap is not as wide. First, when we look at IORs (Table 4.2, columns 4 and 6), fewer significant differences between the sexes are present. Female and male offenders differ significantly on five of the seven measures: the average number of simple assaults, attacks with weapons, gang fights, and offenses in the general violent and serious violent indices. Although girls report fewer robberies (4.33) and incidents in which they have shot at someone (3.58) than do boys (5.37 and 4.09, respectively), these differences are not statistically significant. Second, the male-to-female ratios of IORs (Table 4.2, column 8) are not as great as the ratios for prevalence, and the

pattern differs. While the ratio is still smallest for simple assault (1.13 offenses for boys for every offense by a girl), the largest ratio is not for shooting at someone (as is the case for prevalence) but for aggravated assault. In all, however, boys, relative to girls, do not offend at a frequency greater than 1.38:1 for any of the acts of violence (with the exception of the serious violence index, for which the ratio is 1.61:1). These results indicate that significant differences exist between the sexes in terms of who has committed a violent act, but the sex differences in levels of offending among active offenders are not substantial, and girls and boys appear to be quite a bit more alike than law enforcement data suggest.

Who Are the Violent Offenders? Epidemiology by Race/Ethnicity in Our Sample

We have already seen in this sample that boys seem to be more involved than girls in prevalence but not rates of violent offending. What is the situation with regard to race/ethnicity in this sample? We begin with annual prevalence, then turn to IORs.

Annual Prevalence by Race/Ethnicity

Significant racial/ethnic differences in annual prevalence appear for all but one of the violent behaviors in question (robbery), and a greater proportion of African American youths than other youths reported having been violent in the previous months (not shown in table format). The exception is gang fights, for which Hispanics reported the greatest proportion. For all types of violence, the proportion of offenders is lowest among white youths, followed by youths of other racial/ethnic backgrounds and Hispanics. Figure 4.1 provides a visual display of these differences for serious violence.

The prevalence ratios comparing different groups with white offenders show that twice as many African American youths as white youths reported having shot at someone, attacked someone with a weapon, or engaged in serious violent offending. In addition, the prevalence of gang fighting was 2.36 times greater among Hispanic youths than among whites. The smallest prevalence ratios for African Americans (1.26:1) and Hispanics (1:1) to whites were for hitting someone. These findings suggest that the racial/ethnic gap in prevalence ratios for violent offending grows as the seriousness of the offenses increase—that is, the proportion of young minority offenders, compared with young white offenders, is greater for more serious than for less serious violence. Notice, though, that the gaps are much smaller in our self-report data than in the UCR data in Table 4.1.

Individual Offending Rates by Race/Ethnicity

Although there are many differences in annual prevalence of violence by race/ethnicity, these differences disappear when we look at IORs. That is, there are no

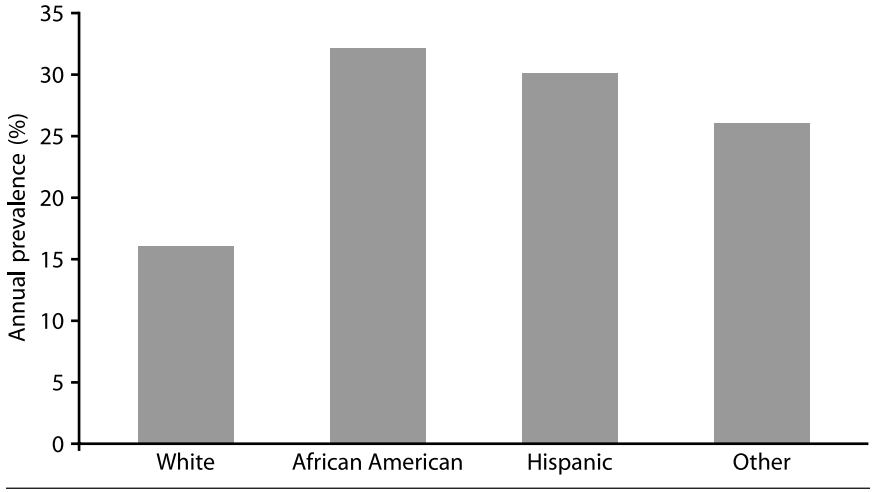

FIGURE 4.1 Annual prevalence of serious violent offending by race/ethnicity

statistically significant racial/ethnic differences in levels of offending once offending begins, with the exception of the general violent offense index. While a significantly smaller proportion of white youths than other youths had engaged in the various acts of violence, white youths who did commit violent acts offended at about the same levels as youths from other racial or ethnic groups. This similarity in offending is clear in Figure 4.2, which shows levels of serious violent offending.

Not only do IORs show a lack of significant differences; minority-to-white ratios for IORs are low. None of the ratios of African Americans or Hispanics

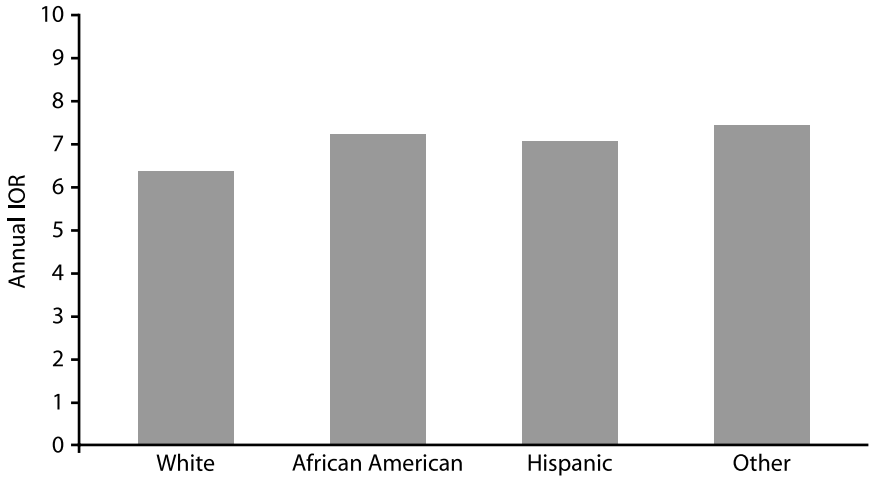

FIGURE 4.2 Annual individual offending rates (IORs) for serious violent offending by race/ethnicity

to whites is greater than 1.28:1. It is particularly interesting that, although the prevalence of African American to white youths is 2:1 for shooting at someone, the ratio of IORs for this offense is .98:1. In other words, although a greater number of the African American youths engaged in this behavior, there was virtually no difference in the rate of shooting at someone among these active offenders. Similarly, an equal proportion (for hitting someone) or greater proportion (for robbery and shooting at someone) of Hispanic youths than white youths were offenders, but among active offenders, white youths engaged in a similar number of offenses as did Hispanics.[6]

Summary of Epidemiology of Youth Violence

Although arrests for violence are not common in the youth population as a whole, at less than 1 percent (as estimated from arrest rate data in Table 4.1), engaging in violent behavior is not a rare occurrence. Almost one in four respondents in our multi-site sample reported having committed at least one serious violent act in the preceding twelve months. Consistent with law enforcement arrest data, these prevalence rates varied by both sex and race/ethnicity, with girls and white youths reporting the lowest levels of offending. One might thus conclude that the depiction of the "dark stranger"—that is, the male minority youth—is indeed an accurate reflection of the seriously violent juvenile offender. However, the picture is a bit blurred, and the results from our self-report sample call into question the extent to which violent juvenile offending can be characterized as a problem of minority males. While boys and racial/ethnic minorities are overrepresented among violent offenders (regardless of measurement) in our study, the differences are not as great as UCR data would suggest. It is also the case that the gap between girls and boys is larger for the prevalence of self-reported violence than for the frequency of offending—that is, while the likelihood of violent offending was greater for boys than for girls, among active offenders there were fewer sex differences in frequency of violent offending. Similarly, although we found a "racial gap" in the prevalence of self-reported violence, no racial/ethnic gap appeared in the frequency of violent offending among active offenders.

Risk Factors for Youth Violence

As we described in Chapter 2, the literature on factors known to contribute to adolescents' risk of violent offending is growing, given advances made in self-report and longitudinal research. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Study Group on Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders has

[6]We acknowledge that IORs for minority youths may be underestimated, in that there are differential rates of positive yet unquantifiable responses (e.g., "too many to count" or "a lot") across race/ethnicity. However, our other research supports a high level of gang or delinquent involvement among white youths who are active offenders, despite their lower prevalence of engagement (e.g., Freng and Winfree 2004).

contributed greatly to the knowledge base through its review of longitudinal research literature to summarize known risk factors for youth violence. In Chapter 2, we noted that research that differentiates the sex- and race/ethnicity-specific risk for violence is relatively sparse, partly due to the composition of the samples in many studies and partly to the exclusion of measures of more serious delinquent behaviors. Much of the research has been conducted with boys (the Pittsburgh Youth Study and the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development) and with high-risk samples (the Denver Youth Survey and Rochester Youth Development Study), although some insights into variation in risk factors by sex and race/ethnicity can be gained from other research. On the whole, risk factors for violence appear to be more similar than different for girls and boys, and the differences that do exist have been attributed to greater exposure to risk factors among boys than girls (Moffitt et al. 2001) or to a more cumulative negative effect of risk factors for girls than for boys (Howell 2009). For race/ethnicity, it has been suggested that differences in violence may be due to differential exposure to risk factors, differential influence of risk factors, or to different risk factors altogether (Farrington, Loeber, and Stouthamer-Loeber 2003).

In this section, we review what is known about risk factors for violence from this body of research and then present findings from our data. We organize our discussion around the five domains of risk factors introduced in Chapter 2: community, individual, family, peer, and school.

Community Risk Factors

Although our data do not allow us to examine the influence of community-level factors (beyond the role of the community itself) on violence in our sample, it is important to review what is known about the role of neighborhoods from other research. Independent of individual-, family-, peer-, or school-level factors, a variety of neighborhood or community characteristics have been found to influence youth violence. Youths who live in neighborhoods in which drugs or firearms are readily available are more likely to engage in violence than are youths from neighborhoods where they are not widely available (J. Hawkins et al. 2000; Herrenkohl et al. 2000). It is likely that this is linked to a general "tolerance" of crime in the community, as demonstrated by the roles that media portrayals of violence and community norms favorable to drug use and crime play in putting youths in such neighborhoods at greater risk for violence (J. Hawkins et al. 2000). Adolescents' exposure to violence and to racism in their communities also fuels their involvement in violence (J. Hawkins et al. 2000; Kaufman 2005; Patchin et al. 2006; Simons et al. 2003).

Factors drawn from the social disorganization perspective (Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Sampson and Groves 1989; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997; Shaw and McKay 1942) are also tied to greater levels of violence among youths in certain neighborhoods. Such risk factors include high residential transition

and mobility, economic deprivation, low levels of attachment to the neighborhood among residents, and community disorganization (J. Hawkins et al. 2000). In addition, Anderson (1999) argues that a "street code" governs interpersonal relations in certain neighborhoods (ones characterized by structural disadvantage and isolation). This street culture, based on maintaining respect, results in violence if the code is violated; even those residents who do not adopt the code are aware of the rules and act accordingly in their neighborhoods.

Although research on differences in community risk factors by sex is lacking, Ellickson and McGuigan (2000) found low neighborhood socioeconomic status to be a predictor of girls' but not boys' violence. Race/ethnic differences have received researchers' attention, with some indication that community risk factors do not vary by race/ethnicity in their effects on violence. Farrington, Loeber, and Stouthamer-Loeber (2003), for example, did not find that living in a bad neighborhood was specifically related to violence by race/ethnicity, although a significantly larger proportion of African American than white boys lived in bad neighborhoods. This finding is consistent with Shaw and McKay's (1942) argument that it is the structural conditions of a neighborhood, rather than the racial or ethnic composition of the population, that influence levels of crime—that is, conditions of social disorganization will produce crime no matter who lives in the neighborhood. Because minority youth are more likely than are white youths to reside in disadvantaged neighborhoods, they are more likely to engage in violent offending (DeCoster, Heimer, and Wittrock 2006; Krivo and Peterson 1996; McNulty and Bellair 2003).

Individual Risk Factors

Researchers have identified a number of individual factors that place youths at risk for violent behavior. Some factors have physiological or neurological bases; others involve precocious behaviors; and yet others are attitudinal in nature. Hyperactivity and other constitutional factors, including difficult temperament in early childhood, impulsiveness, cognitive impairments, low IQ, and biological deficits associated, for example, with pre- and peri-natal complications, brain injury, or exposure to neurotoxins, are linked to youth violence. Other early indicators of later violence include difficulty concentrating, especially in school; risk-taking tendencies; rebelliousness; aggressive behavior in childhood or early initiation of violence; and antisocial behavior (e.g., stealing, property destruction). In addition, holding favorable beliefs or attitudes toward deviant behavior (e.g., dishonesty, negative views of law enforcement) have been found to be associated with adolescent violence (J. Hawkins et al. 2000; Howell 2009).

Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1998) note that not all of these risk factors are necessarily predictors of later violence and that violence among adolescents may occur in the absence of some of these factors. They also discuss risk factors that differentiate overt (aggressive or violent) offenders from covert (characterized by property crimes) offenders. Anger, problem-solving deficits,

and attributional bias, for example, are associated with overt, rather than covert, offending, and there is some indication that high levels of testosterone and neurotransmitters and low levels of autonomic arousal differentiate overt from covert offenders.

Although little research has differentiated individual risk factors by sex, Loeber and his colleagues (2000) report that early conduct disorders appear to be more predictive of later problematic behavior for girls than for boys. In addition, mental health issues may give girls a distinct pathway to aggression and violence (Howell 2009). Low self-esteem in particular appears to predict violence, especially relational violence, among girls but not boys (Ellickson and McGuigan 2000). In regard to racial differences, Farrington, Loeber, and Stouthamer-Loeber (2003) found that hyperactivity and attention deficit problems and being shy or withdrawn were risk factors for African American, but not for white, boys in the Pittsburgh Youth Study's sample.

Family Risk Factors

The family is the primary socialization agent for children before school and peers take on importance and influence. Thus, family-based influences on youth violence are numerous in the risk factor literature. Adolescent violence is associated with poor parental management practices or skills (e.g., inconsistent or harsh discipline, permissiveness, poor supervision); low family bonds; low parental involvement with children; poor family communication and high conflict; maltreatment of children; and parents' criminal involvement or favorable attitudes toward drug use and violence (J. Hawkins et al. 2000; Howell 2009; Thornberry 1994; Widom 1989).

While girls typically report greater attachments to parents than do boys, some studies reveal that the protective effect of family bonding is greater for boys than for girls (Anderson, Holmes, and Ostresh 1999; Canter 1982). Blum, Ireland, and Blum (2003) found that some family factors (suicide in the family; parents' expectations regarding school; emotional distance; and family caring) predicted only girls' violence, while the size of the family predicted only boys' violence. In addition, having delinquent or criminal relatives, particularly siblings, appears to be more harmful for girls than for boys (J. Hawkins et al. 2000; Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber 1998), and experiences of abuse and neglect are associated more with girls' than boys' later violence (Rivera and Widom 1990). Research on family risk factors by race shows that living in a family with low socioeconomic status or on welfare, experiencing physical punishment by mothers, having fathers with behavioral problems, being born to young mothers, and having a broken family structure all contribute significantly to violence among white but not African American boys (Farrington, Loeber, and Stouthamer-Loeber 2003). Among the family characteristics examined by Farrington, Loeber, and Stouthamer-Loeber, only high parental stress was a unique risk factor for violence among African American youths.

Peer Risk Factors

Peers become more important and influential as youths reach the ages at which puberty begins, when they begin to differentiate themselves from their parents as individuals, or when they make the transition to middle school (Youniss and Smollar 1985). The role of peers in juvenile delinquency is well established in the literature. In fact, in self-report studies, association with deviant or delinquent peers is consistently one of the strongest predictors of an adolescent's own delinquency (J. Hawkins et al. 2000; Hawkins et al. 2003; Huizinga et al. 2003; Loeber et al. 2003; Thornberry et al. 2003; Tremblay et al. 2003). Other peer-related factors include limited or lack of association with pro-social peers and involvement in youth gangs (Battin et al. 1998; Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Esbensen, Huizinga, and Weiher 1993; Thornberry et al. 2003).

Some mixed evidence is available about whether the role of peers differs for girls and boys or by race/ethnicity. Giordano (1978), for example, found that serious delinquency was greater for girls in mixed-sex groups than for those in same-sex peer groups, while other research indicates that the sex ratio of the group is an important factor in both inhibiting and perpetuating youths' violent offending (Peterson, Miller, and Esbensen 2001). Henry, Tolan, and Gorman-Smith (2001) found that violence among Hispanic youths was predicted by peers' violence, but this relationship did not hold for African American youths. Haynie and Payne's (2006) comparisons of white, African American, Hispanic, and Asian youths, however, indicate that involvement with violent peers increases youths' violence, regardless of race/ethnicity. Similarly, association with pro-social peers was associated with reductions in violence for all racial/ethnic groups.

School Risk Factors

As with peers, school-related factors become increasingly influential for youths as they reach early adolescence. This does not mean, however, that school-related risk is limited to youths of middle-school age. In fact, early and persistent antisocial behavior in school is a significant risk factor for later violent behavior (Howell 2009). Other factors include academic failure or poor performance, lack of commitment and low bonding to school, truancy at age 12–14, and dropping out of school before age 15 (J. Hawkins et al. 2000; Howell 2009). Herrenkohl and his colleagues (2000) found that school transitions, particularly frequent transitions, especially produce risk.

School factors appear to be more relevant for girls' than for boys' behavior (J. Hawkins et al. 2000), with some exceptions. Blum, Ireland, and Blum (2003), for example, found that learning problems and lack of connectedness to school were associated with boys' but not with girls' violence. Finally, a significantly greater proportion of African American than white boys in the Pittsburgh Youth Study scored low on the California Achievement Test, and this low achievement was a risk factor unique to African American boys' violence, as was being old

(having been held back) for their grades (Farrington, Loeber, and Stouthamer-Loeber 2003).

Risk Levels in Our Sample

To provide context and comparison for the analyses of youth violence that follow, we begin the discussion of risk factors in our sample with the presentation of levels of risk for the general sample, and by sex and race/ethnicity, without accounting for involvement in violence or other offending. These data are presented in Table 4.3. There are significant differences between girls and boys on

TABLE 4.3 RISK FACTOR SCORES FOR THE TOTAL SAMPLE AND BY SEX AND RACE/ETHNICITY

Risk factor	Total sample ($N = 5,935$)	Male ($N = 2,830$)	Female ($N = 3,054$)	White ($N = 2,355$)	African American ($N = 1,544$)	Hispanic ($N = 1,098$)
Individual domain						
Impulsivity[a,b]	2.85	2.89	2.82	2.76	2.93	2.96
Risk seeking[a,b]	3.06	3.20	2.93	3.13	2.90	3.16
Guilt[a,b]	2.31	2.21	2.41	2.37	2.26	2.22
Use of neutralizations[a,b]	3.12	3.29	2.94	2.97	3.18	3.31
Social isolation[a,b]	2.44	2.28	2.59	2.49	2.29	2.43
Self-esteem[a,b]	4.01	4.05	3.97	3.99	4.19	3.90
Family domain						
Parental monitoring[a,b]	3.72	3.58	3.86	3.83	3.63	3.62
Attachment to mother[b]	4.85	4.84	4.86	4.87	4.94	4.81
Attachment to father[a,b]	4.45	4.67	4.25	4.56	4.39	4.35
Peer domain						
Pro-social peers[b]	2.97	2.95	2.99	3.15	2.81	2.76
Delinquent peers[a,b]	2.00	2.12	1.88	1.86	2.08	2.18
Commitment to positive peers[a,b]	3.80	3.67	3.93	3.82	3.84	3.70
Commitment to negative peers[a,b]	2.40	2.50	2.31	2.44	2.24	2.51
% Spending time without adults present[b]	76	77	75	81	72	72
% Spending time with drugs and alcohol present[b]	31	32	29	31	26	36
School domain						
Commitment to school[a,b]	3.57	3.47	3.66	3.52	3.69	3.47
Perception of limited educational opportunities[a,b]	1.88	1.92	1.84	1.80	1.81	2.11
Perception of negative school environment[a,b]	2.67	2.65	2.68	2.59	2.78	2.66

Note: Risk factor scores were determined as described in the Appendix. Higher scores indicate *greater* risk for the following measures: impulsivity, risk seeking, use of neutralizations, social isolation, delinquent peers, commitment to negative peers, spending time without adults present, spending time with drugs and alcohol present, perception of limited educational opportunities, and perception of negative school environment. Higher scores indicate *lower* risk for the following measures: guilt, self-esteem, attachment to mother, attachment to father, pro-social peers, commitment to positive peers, and commitment to school. Time scores are given as percentage of individuals reporting spending time under the stated condition.

[a] $p < .05$, sex; *t*-test.

[b] $p < .05$, race/ethnicity; ANOVA.

all of the individual-domain factors, and with few exceptions, girls are more "pro-social" than boys. The exceptions are that girls feel more socially isolated and they have lower levels of self-esteem than do boys. In the family realm, girls report significantly higher levels of parental supervision and lower levels of attachment to fathers than do boys, but there are no differences in attachments to mothers. In the peer and school domains, girls are less committed to negative peers, are more committed to positive peers, associate with fewer delinquent peers, are more committed to school, and have fewer perceptions of limited educational opportunities than do boys. Girls do, however, perceive their school environments in a more negative light. In general, then, girls appear to be "better off" than boys, with the exceptions of levels of social isolation, self-esteem, attachment to father, and perceptions of the school environment. There were no significant differences by sex in levels of maternal attachment, associations with pro-social peers, or routine activities (hanging out with peers unsupervised or where drugs and alcohol are available).

When comparing youths from different racial/ethnic backgrounds, it is not the case, as some might expect, that African Americans are generally the "worst off." On half of the measures (nine out of eighteen), African American youths experience the least risk: the lowest levels of risk seeking and of social isolation; the highest levels of self-esteem; the greatest attachment to mothers; the highest commitment to positive peers and lowest commitment to negative peers; lower rates of unsupervised socializing with peers and where drugs and alcohol are available; and the highest levels of commitment to school. White youths are significantly the best off in terms of impulsivity, guilt, use of neutralizations, parental monitoring, attachment to father, association with pro-social and delinquent peers, and perceptions of educational opportunity and school environment. For the general sample, Hispanic youths are at highest risk on all but three (social isolation, spending time without adults present, and perception of negative school environment) risk measures.

Risk Factors for Violence in Our Sample

To understand how these risk factors relate to juvenile offending, particularly violent offending, in our sample, we move now to the results presented in Tables 4.4 and 4.5. In doing so, we introduce yet another way to examine the distribution of violence in our sample: categorizing youths according to types of offender. Here we divide the sample into three categories: (1) youths who had not committed any property or violent offenses in the previous year (non-offenders);[7]

[7] Property offenses included avoiding paying for things such as movies, damaging property, illegally spray painting walls or buildings, stealing something worth less than $50, stealing something worth more than $50, entering or trying to enter a building to steal something, stealing or trying to steal a motor vehicle, selling marijuana, and selling other illegal drugs. Violent offenses included the five "general violence" items used throughout this chapter: hitting someone with the idea of hurting her or him, attacking someone with a weapon, robbing someone, participating in gang fights, and shooting at someone.

(2) youths who had committed at least one property offense and who might have hit someone with the intention to hurt him or her but who had committed no serious violent offenses (nonviolent offenders); and (3) youths who had committed at least one of the four serious violent offenses (serious violent offenders), whether or not they had committed any property or hitting offenses (for comparison with findings presented earlier, the third category represents the "serious violent" offenders).[8]

Individual Risk Factors

We compared the non-offending, nonviolent, and serious violent youths in our sample on six individual risk factors. As shown in Table 4.4, there were statistically significant differences among these groups of youths on all of these factors, and across all measures (with one exception) the pattern was the same: Non-offenders experienced the least risk, followed by nonviolent offenders, and serious violent offenders reported the greatest risk. Deviating from this pattern was social isolation, for which nonviolent offenders reported the highest levels. Specifically, youths who reported having committed a serious violent offense also reported the highest levels of impulsive and risk-seeking tendencies. They were less likely than other youths to report feeling guilt for potential involvement in deviant activities; they had lower levels of self-esteem; and they were the most likely to use neutralizing definitions for behavior such as lying, stealing, and fighting.

Family Risk Factors

Consistent with previous research, family factors differentiated the serious violent offenders from other youths in our sample, as well (Table 4.4). Youths in our sample who had committed serious violent offenses reported significantly lower monitoring of their behavior by their parents and lower levels of attachment to their mothers and fathers than did youths who had committed no delinquent offenses or who had committed only nonviolent offenses.

Peer Risk Factors

Youths who had engaged in serious violent offending not only associated with more delinquent peers than did other youths, but they also were more committed to these deviant peers (Table 4.4). Similarly, they had fewer pro-social peers, and they were less committed to those peers than were other youths. While the majority of all youths in our sample reported hanging out with peers where no adults were present, a greater proportion of serious violent youths (87%) had done so

[8] In previous tables, "serious violent" offenders, who had engaged in at least one of the four more serious behaviors, were a subset of the "general violent" offenders, who had committed at least one of the five behaviors. Here, seriously violent youths are distinct from youths who have engaged only in hitting.

TABLE 4.4 RISK FACTOR SCORES BY OFFENDER TYPE FOR THE TOTAL SAMPLE AND BY SEX

Risk factor	Non-offenders ($N = 1,572$)	Nonviolent offenders ($N = 2,725$)	Serious violent offenders ($N = 1,385$)	Non-offenders		Nonviolent offenders		Serious violent offenders	
				Male ($N = 564$)	Female ($N = 993$)	Male ($N = 1,336$)	Female ($N = 1,370$)	Male ($N = 790$)	Female ($N = 584$)
Individual domain									
Impulsivity[a,c,d]	2.58	2.84	3.15	2.57	2.58	2.83	2.85	3.19	3.09
Risk seeking[a,b,c,d]	2.51	3.10	3.58	2.58	2.48	3.17	3.03	3.70	3.42
Guilt[a,b,c,d]	2.68	2.33	1.88	2.62	2.72	2.29	2.38	1.79	2.01
Use of neutralizations[a,b,c]	2.52	3.14	3.67	2.66	2.45	3.24	3.04	3.79	3.51
Social isolation[a,b,c,d]	2.40	2.48	2.43	2.22	2.50	2.33	2.61	2.23	2.69
Self-esteem[a,b,c]	4.14	3.99	3.92	4.19	4.12	4.07	3.92	3.97	3.86
Family domain									
Parental monitoring[a,b,c,d]	4.07	3.74	3.34	3.95	4.14	3.67	3.81	3.20	3.53
Attachment to mother[a,b,c]	5.35	4.79	4.40	5.37	5.35	4.86	4.72	4.45	4.34
Attachment to father[a,b,c]	4.88	4.40	4.09	5.21	4.71	4.68	4.12	4.34	3.77
Peer domain									
Pro-social peers[a,b,c]	3.39	2.99	2.51	3.43	3.38	3.03	2.94	2.51	2.51
Delinquent peers[a,b,c,d]	1.40	1.91	2.75	1.42	1.38	1.92	1.90	2.87	2.59
Commitment to positive peers[a,b,c]	4.21	3.83	3.34	4.06	4.29	3.78	3.88	3.23	3.48
Commitment to negative peers[a,b,c,d]	1.84	2.39	3.01	1.88	1.82	2.39	2.40	3.10	2.90
% Spending time without adults present[a,c]	61	80	87	61	61	78	82	88	86
% Spending time with drugs and alcohol present[a,c,d]	8	28	61	7	9	25	31	62	59
School domain									
Commitment to school[a,b,c,d]	3.96	3.56	3.20	3.87	4.01	3.53	3.59	3.13	3.31
Perception of limited educational opportunities[a,c]	1.70	1.85	2.12	1.73	1.67	1.84	1.85	2.13	2.09
Perception of negative school environment[a,b,c]	2.52	2.61	2.91	2.48	2.55	2.56	2.67	2.89	2.93

Note: Risk factor scores were determined as described in the Appendix. For brief overview of scoring, see note to Table 4.3.

[a] $p < .05$, offender type; ANOVA.

[b] $p < .05$, sex; [c] $p < .05$, offender type; [d] $p < .05$, sex * offender type; two-way ANOVA.

than non-offending (61%) and nonviolent (80%) youths. These differences are much greater when looking at whether adolescents hang out with peers where alcohol and drugs are available. While only 8 percent of the non-offenders reported socializing where substances were present, more than 60 percent of serious violent youths reported having done so. The difference between serious violent and nonviolent youths (28%) was also substantial on this measure.

School Risk Factors

Consistent with other research, school factors appear to be related to violent offending in our sample (Table 4.4). The pattern of increasing risk from non-offenders to serious violent offenders mirrored that on all other measures, and youths who had engaged in serious violence were significantly less committed to school than were their peers. They also had greater perceptions than did other youths that their educational opportunities were limited and that their school environments were negative.

Controlling for Sex

Table 4.4 also displays findings regarding risk factors for violence by the type and sex of the offender. Across the four domains, we see statistically significant sex differences across types of offenders for each of the risk factors, except impulsivity, routine activities, and perceptions of educational opportunities. In other words, regardless of whether they were non-offenders, nonviolent offenders, or serious violent offenders, boys were more risk seeking, had lower levels of guilt, made greater use of neutralizations, were less socially isolated, had higher self-esteem, experienced less parental monitoring, and had greater attachment to their parents than girls.

In addition, we can examine the relationship or interaction between sex and offending status to determine whether there are differences among male non-offenders, female non-offenders, male nonviolent offenders, female nonviolent offenders, male serious violent offenders, and female serious violent offenders. In Table 4.4, we see significant interaction effects in terms of nine of the eighteen risk factors: impulsivity, risk seeking, guilt, social isolation, parental monitoring, association with and commitment to delinquent peers, time spent where drugs and alcohol are available, and commitment to school. In other words, the relationship between sex and risk depends on whether a youth is a non-offender, a nonviolent offender, or a serious violent offender. For example, we see only minor differences in impulsivity and delinquent peers between male and female non-offenders and male and female nonviolent offenders. Among serious violent offenders, however, boys showed much higher levels of impulsivity and association with or commitment to negative peers than did girls. For these nine variables, the general pattern of risk, from highest to lowest, is as follows: male serious violent offenders, female serious violent offenders, male nonviolent offenders, female

nonviolent offenders, male non-offenders, and, finally, female non-offenders. This means that girls who had engaged in serious violence were at greater disadvantage than were nonviolent and non-offending boys, and girls who were nonviolent offenders experienced greater risk than did non-offending boys.

Controlling for Race/Ethnicity

Regardless of the type of offender, significant differences exist between the racial/ethnic groups on all but one risk factor: attachment to father (see Table 4.5). In addition, regardless of race, there were significant differences among the types of offenders on all risk factors except social isolation.

The interaction between race/ethnicity and offender type is also significant for all but one risk factor: unsupervised socializing with peers. Although the general pattern is for risk to increase from non-offenders to nonviolent offenders to serious violent offenders, the racial/ethnic pattern of risk differs by offender type across risk factors: It was not always the case, for example, that white youths experienced the least risk while minority youths experienced the greatest risk. In fact, as we move from non-offenders to serious violent offenders, we see that whites experience increasing rates of risk than their counterparts in those offender types. Thus, although white youths were less prevalent among serious violent offenders, whites who did commit serious violent offenses were at greater disadvantage than were their African American and Hispanic counterparts. At the other end of the spectrum—among non-offenders—some minority youths did not engage in offending behavior, either violent or nonviolent, even when they faced greater risk than their white counterparts.

It is also important to remember that our data did not allow us to examine the numerous community-level risk factors that others have found to be important correlates of youth violence. Since minority youths are more likely than white youths to live in disadvantaged neighborhoods, their rates of violence are likely to be higher, as our findings demonstrate. Thus, although white serious violent offenders are at greater risk than are African American or Hispanic serious violent offenders for the four domains we explored, it is likely that unmeasured community factors are contributing to the greater prevalence of violence among minority youths in our sample. One might conclude from previous discussion in this chapter that the geographic distribution of youth violence is due to the racial/ethnic makeup of the sample as it is distributed across sites. That is, one might argue it is logical that most of the violence is concentrated in cities such as Kansas City, Phoenix, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia. There is greater prevalence of violence among minority youths than among white youths in our sample, and more minority youths live in those cities; thus, those cities should have higher rates of violence. By concluding this without further examination, however, one might miss an important finding. Results from additional analyses (not shown, but see Peterson et al. 2007, table 6) indicate that community context is important to consider. For example, 31 percent of white youths in Kansas City

TABLE 4.5 RISK FACTOR SCORES BY OFFENDER TYPE AND BY RACE/ETHNICITY

	Non-offenders			Nonviolent offenders			Serious violent offenders		
Risk factor	White ($N = 728$)	African American ($N = 307$)	Hispanic ($N = 276$)	White ($N = 1,222$)	African American ($N = 649$)	Hispanic ($N = 445$)	White ($N = 362$)	African American ($N = 476$)	Hispanic ($N = 319$)
Individual domain									
Impulsivity[a,b,c]	2.43	2.82	2.71	2.80	2.88	2.96	3.23	3.06	3.15
Risk seeking[a,b,c]	2.54	2.45	2.58	3.25	2.79	3.19	3.89	3.31	3.61
Guilt[a,b,c]	2.75	2.57	2.59	2.33	2.36	2.28	1.80	1.97	1.85
Use of neutralizations[a,b,c]	2.37	2.73	2.74	3.08	3.14	3.33	3.80	3.51	3.76
Social isolation[a,c]	2.38	2.31	2.47	2.52	2.33	2.46	2.60	2.20	2.37
Self-esteem[a,b,c]	4.19	4.26	3.97	3.94	4.20	3.92	3.75	4.16	3.85
Family domain									
Parental monitoring[a,b,c]	4.22	3.89	3.93	3.78	3.69	3.64	3.24	3.40	3.38
Attachment to mother[a,b,c]	5.46	5.31	5.33	4.76	4.95	4.77	4.09	4.69	4.44
Attachment to father[b,c]	5.03	4.62	4.90	4.47	4.48	4.19	3.88	4.17	4.20
Peer domain									
Pro-social peers[a,b,c]	3.60	3.15	3.12	3.10	2.86	2.80	2.44	2.59	2.42
Delinquent peers[a,b,c]	1.34	1.51	1.46	1.87	1.89	2.10	2.85	2.62	2.83
Commitment to positive peers[a,b,c]	4.26	4.12	4.08	3.79	3.98	3.78	3.10	3.56	3.30
Commitment to negative peers[a,b,c]	1.83	1.84	1.91	2.52	2.13	2.44	3.37	2.62	3.08
% Spending time without adults present[a,b]	67	54	53	85	74	74	93	81	88
% Spending time with drugs and alcohol present[a,b,c]	10	7	8	33	18	31	71	49	64
School domain									
Commitment to school[a,b,c]	3.98	3.99	3.85	3.44	3.77	3.49	2.94	3.44	3.17
Perception of limited educational opportunities[a,b,c]	1.56	1.74	1.93	1.82	1.74	2.05	2.16	1.91	2.34
Perception of negative school environment[a,b,c]	2.46	2.67	2.47	2.56	2.70	2.61	2.93	2.90	2.88

Note: Risk factor scores were determined as described in the Appendix For brief overview of scoring, see note to Table 4.3.

[a] $p < .05$, race/ethnicity; [b] $p < .05$, offender type; [c] $p < .05$, race/ethnicity * offender type; two-way ANOVA.

reported having committed a serious violent offense in the previous year, compared with only 11 percent of white youths in Pocatello and Will County. Similarly, 11 percent of African American youths in Providence reported having committed a serious offense during the previous year, compared with 39 percent of African American youths in Kansas City. Twenty-two percent of Hispanic youths in Providence reported having committed a serious offense, while half of the Hispanic respondents in Milwaukee indicated they had done so.

Context is important in another respect. It is not the case that minority youths are always more violent than are white youths. Whites in Kansas City, for example, had higher prevalence rates for serious violence than did African Americans in five cities (Omaha, Orlando, Philadelphia, Providence, and Torrance) and than Hispanics in seven cities (Las Cruces, Omaha, Orlando, Philadelphia, Pocatello, Providence, and Torrance). These additional analyses provide some indication that community factors, and not just race/ethnicity, are important to consider in understanding youths' violent offending.

Summary of Risk Factors for Violence

The risk factor literature has identified a number of correlates of youth violence. Due in part to different measurement of risk factors and differential inclusion of risk factors in various studies, consensus is lacking on the role of many of the risk factors discussed. Agreement does, however, appear to exist on the following:

- A variety of neighborhood or community characteristics have been found to influence youth violence—for example, youths who live in neighborhoods in which drugs or firearms are readily available are more likely to engage in violence than are youths from neighborhoods in which these items are not widely available.
- A number of individual factors (including attitudinal, physiological, and neurological factors) place youths at risk for violent offending.
- Family factors such as poor parental management practices tend to place youths at greater risk.
- Association with deviant or delinquent peers is consistently one of the strongest predictors of an adolescent's own delinquency.
- School-related risk factors linked to youth violence include academic failure, truancy, and lack of commitment to school.

Results from our study support and extend these findings by examining risk factors for violence by sex and race/ethnicity. It is here that we find patterns one might not expect. Although boys generally experience more risk than girls, and levels of risk increase from non-offenders to serious violent offenders, examination of the interaction between sex and offender type, particularly for social isolation, showed some deviations from this pattern. In general, larger differences in risk levels between girls and boys appeared among the two offender groups

than among non-offenders. When looking at risk factors for violence by race/ethnicity and offender type, a few patterns can be discerned. Among offending youths (nonviolent or violent), African Americans are best off when compared with their white and Hispanic counterparts, and there is a pattern of white youths' experiencing more risk and African American youths' experiencing less risk relative to their counterparts within offender types as we move from non-offenders to serious violent offenders. A couple of tentative conclusions can be drawn. First, African American and Hispanic non-offenders have higher levels of risk than do white non-offenders; thus, even in the face of greater risk, some minority youth resist offending. Second, white youths require a "greater push" to be delinquent and especially violent, while minorities require fewer risk factors to become involved in these behaviors. Third, it is possible that we are able to more effectively measure risk factors related to offending among whites than among African Americans and Hispanics. For example, exposure to violence is a risk factor that has been found to explain differences in offending between whites and African Americans (Paschall, Flewelling, and Ennett 1998). Others have suggested that community values, such as Anderson's (1999) code of the street, exert an influence on youths and that inner-city minority youths are exposed to such values in differing degrees.

Summary and Conclusion

At the outset of this chapter, we posed three questions: What is the state of youth violence in America? What is the state of youth violence in our sample, and is there variation in violent offending by sex and race/ethnicity? And do youths who commit violent acts differ in terms of risk factors from other youths, especially other delinquents, and how do risk factors for violence vary by sex and race/ethnicity?

First, we know from multiple sources (UCR, NCVS, and self-report data) that violence by juveniles increased in the 1980s, peaked around 1994, and has been on the decline nationally since then. Data sources differ, however, in their pictures of who commits this violence. UCR data tend to portray violent youths largely as minority boys, but self-report data reveal that a significant proportion of female and white youths are engaged in violent acts. Estimates of the prevalence of violence are also greater in self-report data than in law enforcement data; nearly one-quarter of our sample of middle-school students, for example, had engaged in at least one serious violent behavior in the previous year.

Second, in our sample of eighth-grade students from eleven cities, violence was not necessarily uncommon. More than half of youths (54%) had committed a general violent offense (including "hitting someone with the idea of hurting them"), while one-fourth had engaged in serious violence (attacking someone with a weapon, robbing someone, being involved in gang fights, or shooting at someone). Differences in prevalence were found by sex and race/ethnicity, with girls and whites less likely than their counterparts to engage in violence. Although

differences between boys and girls are much smaller in our (and other) self-report data than in law enforcement statistics, our data are consistent with UCR data that show a larger sex gap as the seriousness of offenses increases—for example, boys and girls are more similar to each other in the prevalence of assault than they are in the prevalence of robbery. Among active offenders, however, there are fewer differences between the sexes. We found a similar pattern for race/ethnicity. Self-report data suggest a smaller racial gap in offending than do UCR data, and although whites have lower rates for the prevalence of violence, there are no racial differences in incidence of offending. In other words, youth offenders of all racial/ethnic backgrounds commit violence at relatively equal rates.

Third, and finally, our examination of risk factors for violence indicates that serious violent offenders are at greater risk than other youths, including other delinquent youths. Regardless of the type of offender (non-offender, nonviolent offender, or serious violent offender), boys are at significantly greater risk for all risk factors except social isolation, self-esteem, and attachment to parents, for which girls are at greater disadvantage. Taking offender type into account, the general pattern of risk, from greatest to least, is male then female serious violent offenders, male then female nonviolent offenders, and, finally, male then female non-offenders. For race/ethnicity, the patterns were less clear. Regardless of offender type, there were significant differences among the three racial/ethnic groups on all eighteen risk factors, except attachment to father. The pattern for which group experienced the most and least risk, however, differed by risk factor. Taking offender status into account, we found the highest levels of risk among white youths classified as serious violent offenders. With some exceptions, the general pattern of risk, from greatest to least, was white, Hispanic, African American serious violent offenders, followed by Hispanic, white, and African American nonviolent offenders, and then Hispanic, African American, and white non-offenders.

Our analyses in this chapter lead us to conclude that the stereotypical picture of juvenile offenders contrasts with reality in that girls commit a substantial amount of violence; white youths are involved in violence, although less so than other racial/ethnic groups; sex and race gaps in offending are greater for prevalence than for individual offending rates and greater in arrest than in self-report data; and risk factors for violence vary to some extent by sex and to a larger extent by race/ethnicity. In the next chapter, we explore another form of youth violence, looking at the distribution of gang membership and associated risk factors, controlling, as always, for sex and race/ethnicity.

5
Gang Membership

"Youth gangs" and "violence" are interwoven terms that evoke concern, if not fear, throughout the population. To some extent, it would be fair to characterize the early 1990s as a period of gang hysteria in the United States. "Bloods" and "Crips" became terms familiar even to rural residents who had never ventured into "gang-infested" urban centers. While some of this concern about youth gangs was brought about by media coverage of the relatively short-lived crack epidemic and the predicted emergence of a new breed of "super-predators" (DiIulio 1995), other factors contributed to the interest in youth gangs. Importantly, the increase in gang violence was quite real. For instance, the annual number of gang-motivated homicides in Chicago increased from 51 to 240 between 1987 and 1994, while gang-related homicides more than doubled, from 387 to 803, in Los Angeles County from 1987 to 1992 (Howell 1999).

Furthermore, evidence that girls were more active in gangs than generally believed contributed to wider discussion of the "new breed of female offenders" (Chesney-Lind 1993; Chesney-Lind, Shelden, and Joe 1996) and led to greater interest in the role of girls in gangs (Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn 1999; Deschenes and Esbensen 1999a, 1999b; Esbensen and Deschenes 1998; Fleisher 1998; Maxson and Whitlock 2002; J. Miller 1998, 2001; Moore and Hagedorn 2001). The emergence of gangs in rural and non-urban communities during the 1990s; the growing diversity of gang membership, including the emergence of racially heterogeneous gangs (Howell, Moore, and Egley 2002; Starbuck, Howell, and Lindquist 2001); and the apparent relationships among violence, drug sales, and gang membership (Battin-Pearson et al.

1998; Decker 2000; Esbensen et al. 2002; Esbensen and Winfree 1998; Howell and Decker 1999; Klein, Maxson, and Cunningham 1991) fueled interest in youth gangs at the end of the twentieth century.

Collective youth violence, however, is not a new phenomenon. Whether we visit the writings of Shakespeare and his description of the Montagues and Capulets in *Romeo and Juliet* or the media images portrayed in the movie *Colors* (1988), the group nature of adolescence has been documented for centuries. The prominence of and attention accorded to youth gangs and associated violence, however, tends to fluctuate across time. In fact, after a relatively prominent gang problem in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, some writers by the early 1980s were asking whether the gang problem had disappeared (see Bookin-Weiner and Horowitz 1983). As if in response to this question, gang activity, including violent offending, reemerged in the 1980s and 1990s. In this chapter, we take a closer look at youths who are affiliated with gangs and examine some of the common stereotypes associated with youth gangs. Specifically, we examine the extent to which gang membership is related to certain demographic characteristics, and we explore the extent to which gang members differ from other youths. We will thus seek to answer, among others, the following questions:

- What is the prevalence of youth gang membership?
- Are youths in gangs disproportionately minority boys from single-parent families?
- Are youths in gangs more violent than other youths?
- What risk factors are associated with gang membership, and do these vary by sex or race/ethnicity?

One underlying theme of these four questions is the extent to which youths in gangs differ from non-gang youths. For example, are there demographic differences? Are gang members more violent than other youths who also engage in violence but do not belong to gangs? And is it possible to identify differences that enable us to predict who will become gang members, thereby suggesting strategies by which to prevent youths from joining gangs? Before exploring these issues, we turn to a brief review of the history of youth gangs in the United States.

History of Gang Research

Historically, gang research has been characterized by ethnographic examinations providing invaluable information based on in-depth interviews and observations (see, e.g., Campbell 1991; Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Fleisher 1998; Hagedorn 1988; J. Miller 2001; Moore 1991; Vigil 1988). Notwithstanding the rich and descriptive accounts of gangs and gang members, several issues have been raised with respect to the validity and reliability of these ethnographic studies. Given that most of this research was conducted in particular cities, and usually involved members of only one gang in those cities, to what extent can the findings be

generalized? Concerns also have been raised about the validity of data collected generally by white, middle-aged researchers attempting to understand gang members who were primarily young and members of racial/ethnic minorities. For example, Campbell (1986) and others suggest that male researchers systematically excluded girls. Further concern surrounds the potential impact the presence of the researcher had on subjects' behavior. (For discussion of these and other methodological issues, see Bursik and Grasmick 1995b; Campbell 1986; Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Fleisher 1998; J. Miller 2001.)

More recently, researchers have turned to law enforcement statistics and survey data to complete the picture of gang membership. Law enforcement statistics have provided the ability to examine gangs at the national level. However, both definitional and measurement issues, including how to identify gang members and gang-related crime; limits on technology; differences in local and federal agencies' purposes and policy emphases; absence of uniform definitions, which complicates comparisons across jurisdictions; organizational changes; and local effects on law enforcement's response to gang-related crime influence the estimates provided by these data (Bursik and Grasmick 1995b; Curry, Ball, and Decker 1996). However, Maxson and Klein (1990, 1996) found that, although definitions may affect estimates of gang-related crime, the characteristics of the gang-related crime did not differ substantially.

During the past twenty years, several large-scale surveys have provided new insights to youth gangs. These studies were not designed as gang studies, but the researchers did include questions that allowed them to examine a number of issues of interest to both policymakers and researchers. Of particular importance was their ability to investigate similarities among youths who were involved in gangs and those who were not (Esbensen, Huizinga, and Weiher 1993; Hill et al. 1999; Thornberry et al. 2003); factors associated with joining gangs and length of gang membership (Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Thornberry et al. 1993); and the role of girls in gangs (Esbensen and Deschenes 1998; Esbensen, Deschenes, and Winfree 1999; Peterson, Miller, and Esbensen 2001).

The Prevalence of Gangs in the United States

In Chapter 4, we reviewed trends in American youth violence. With respect to youth gang activity, no comparable review can be offered. Reporting and recording of gang membership and gang-related crime is a relatively new practice for law enforcement agencies and one that is still evolving, especially with regard to definitional standards. Until the 1990s, surprisingly little was known about the prevalence of youth gangs in society. While gang research has existed since the early twentieth century, no national surveys had been taken and no national clearinghouse had been established to gather and distribute information about gangs. In an attempt to remedy this situation, Walter Miller conducted a survey of law enforcement agencies in twelve cities in 1975. He found that six of the agencies reported gang problems in their locales; based on this survey, he estimated that

there were 28,500–81,500 gang members in 760–2,700 gangs in the United States. In 1982, Miller conducted interviews with representatives of 173 agencies at twenty-six sites and projected that there were 97,940 gang members in 2,285 gangs in 286 cities. While narrowly focused on large cities and providing crude estimates of the actual gang phenomenon, Miller's early efforts laid the foundation for subsequent national surveys (W. Miller 2001). In 1988, Spergel and Curry (1990, 1993) initiated a survey of law enforcement agencies in approximately 100 cities suspected of having a youth-gang presence. They reported sixty-eight cities experiencing gang-related crime. A larger focus of that study was to identify promising responses to youth gangs, which led Spergel and Curry to conduct more extensive surveys with law enforcement agencies in thirty-five of these cities. Based on these data, they estimated the number of gangs at 1,439, with 120,636 members (see Spergel and Curry 1990; Curry, Ball, and Decker 1996).

By the 1990s, gangs appeared to have spread, and researchers started to include previously ignored areas beyond large cities. In 1992, Curry, Ball, and Fox (1994) conducted another survey that included 122 sites, representing both large and small cities and eleven counties. With this expanded coverage of sites came an increase in the estimated number of youth gangs (4,881) and of gang members (249,324). Two years later, in 1994, Curry, Ball, and Decker (1996) surveyed an even larger and more representative sample of locales. That sample, consisting of 428 jurisdictions, included all cities with populations exceeding 150,000 ($N = 115$), a sample of cities with populations between 25,000 and 150,000, and the eleven counties included in the 1992 survey. Based on this survey, 57 percent of all jurisdictions reported gang problems, with estimates of 378,807 gang members and 8,625 gangs. In 1996, the National Youth Gang Center (NYGC) began conducting annual surveys of law enforcement agencies across the United States in an attempt to document and track the emergence and prevalence of youth gangs. The NYGC survey in 2000 estimated 772,500 gang members in 24,500 gangs (Egley and Arjunan 2002). From 1996 through 2001—when estimates have put the number of gang members at 846,428 and the number of gangs at 30,818—the NYGC has reported a steady decline in the prevalence of youth gangs (Egley 2002; Egley, Howell, and Major 2004). Since 2001, however, the NYGC has reported an increase in the number of youth gangs and gang members, although the numbers have not yet reached their 1996 peak (Egley and O'Donnell 2008).

With the apparent spread of gangs to small towns and rural counties (although without historical data, it is impossible to conclude that the appearance of gangs in these areas is due to the emergence of a new phenomenon rather than the discovery of an existing one), concerns were raised that gangs based in Chicago and Los Angeles were establishing "satellites" throughout the United States. An important finding from a survey of law enforcement officers refuted this common belief. Maxson (1998) found gangs were not establishing satellite affiliates across the country; instead, the proliferation of gangs could be attributed mainly to social and familial movement—that is, 57 percent of respondents

in law enforcement surveys cited social reasons for the migration of gang members, compared with 32 percent who indicated that gang members' mobility was attributed to expanding their illegal activities into a new city. An important finding from this research was that gangs developed in response to local conditions, not as part of a national conspiracy to establish drug distribution networks. In a publication using NYGC data, Egley and Ritz (2006) replicated the findings reported by Maxson.

To highlight the extent to which youth gangs are found throughout the country, we provide a summary of the prevalence of youth gang membership in our study. While the prevalence rate of gang membership for our sample was 9.1 percent, there was considerable variation across cities. In descending order, the prevalence of gang membership in our sample was:

- Milwaukee: 15.4 percent
- Phoenix: 12.6 percent
- Omaha: 11.4 percent
- Las Cruces: 11.0 percent
- Kansas City: 10.1 percent
- Orlando: 9.6 percent
- Philadelphia: 7.7 percent
- Torrance: 6.3 percent
- Providence: 6.0 percent
- Pocatello: 5.6 percent
- Will County: 3.8 percent

These eleven sites, as discussed in Chapter 3, represent diverse communities, including rural areas and small towns. Our findings support those reported by the NYGC that gangs exist outside large metropolitan areas.

Definitional Issues: What Is a Gang, and Who Is a Gang Member?

Along with growing awareness of the presence of gangs across the United States came an emphasis on achieving agreement regarding what constitutes a gang and a gang member. It is reasonable to state that considerable confusion surrounds the study of gangs, and that much of this confusion is due to the lack of a common definition. Reliance on different methodological approaches to the study of gangs and different sampling strategies add to the confusion. Complementing the emergence of law enforcement data on youth gangs, researchers studying general adolescent samples also began to explore youth gangs. For instance, Huizinga (1997), using a restrictive definition of gang membership (self-nomination and reporting that the gang engaged in illegal activities), found that 15 percent of the sample in the Denver Youth Survey reported gang affiliation at some point during the study period. Thornberry and colleagues (2003), who used a more inclusive definition of gang-member status (self-nomination only), reported that 30.9 percent of the school-based sample in the Rochester Youth Development Study had been affiliated with a gang at some point before the end of high school.

At this point, we will concentrate on the implications for gang research and gang-related policy of not having a standard definition of youth gangs and gang

membership.[1] Research on the extent and nature of the "gang problem" faces three possible outcomes: (1) accurately stating the gang problem with the "best definition" for the research question; (2) underestimating the gang problem with a definition that is far too narrow; or (3) overestimating the gang problem with a definition that is too broad, which will capture individuals, groups, and behavior that are of little interest to the intended audience.

The possibility of underestimating or overestimating gang membership is far from a trivial matter. Resource allocation and public concern (fear of gang crime) are largely shaped by reports of the magnitude of the problem. Estimates of gang members in the United States in the mid-1990s ranged from about 660,000 to as many as 1.5 million (Curry, Ball, and Decker 1996), numbers that at least one gang expert characterized as "probably conservative because many jurisdictions deny, often for political and image reasons, that there is a problem, especially in the early stages of youth gang development in a community" (Huff 1998, 1). Public policies, particularly law enforcement practices, respond in very direct ways to these numbers, whether the estimates are for the nation as a whole or for a single community. How gang membership is defined has a great impact on the number of gangs and gang members reported.

So what is a gang, and who is a gang member? While these questions may seem irrelevant, definitions of these terms are of the utmost importance. In addition to the issue of accurately estimating the size of the gang problem is the concern of accurately assessing the characteristics of gang members. Quite different estimates exist with regard to the demographic composition of youth gangs. Law enforcement data paint a picture of inner-city minority boys, generally from single-parent households (National Youth Gang Center 1999). Ethnographic and other qualitative studies of older and more homogenous samples tend to confirm this picture (Campbell 1984; Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Hagedorn 1988; Vigil 1988). These images pervade media outlets (Esbensen and Tusinski 2007), often influencing policymakers' decisions (Decker and Kempf-Leonard 1991). Surveys involving younger samples, however, call into question the extent to which these stereotypes accurately depict members of youth gangs (Bjerregaard and Smith 1993; Esbensen and Huizinga 1993). Clearly, the definitions of "gang" and "gang members" used by researchers and policymakers have important implications for both research results and the ways in which policymakers use those findings.

Unfortunately, considerable disagreement exists regarding what constitutes a gang (Ball and Curry 1995; Decker and Kempf-Leonard 1991; Klein 1969; Miller 1975, 1980). Two widely used benchmarks for assessing whether a given social group is a gang are youth status, defined as an age classification ranging

[1] Another important issue that we will not pursue in this book, but one that has considerable significance for law enforcement and social policy, is: What is a "gang-related" crime? Is it any crime committed by a gang member, or does it refer to only those crimes committed in the interest of a gang? For a discussion of this issue, see Maxson and Klein (1990, 1996).

from ten to the early twenties or even older, and the involvement of group members in law-violating behavior or, at a minimum, deviant behavior.

Thrasher (1963 [1927]) proposed a definition that continues to influence gang research, according to which the following characteristics distinguish gangs from other groups: a sense of organization and solidarity that sets the group apart from a mob; a tendency to respond to outside threats; the creation of a shared esprit de corps; and identification of some geographic area or territory that it will defend, through force if necessary. Nowhere in his definition, however, did Thrasher mention delinquent or law-violating behavior as a criterion for a gang. Certainly, he acknowledged that the criminal gang was one type, but he also stressed that among his 1,313 gangs, some were good and some were bad (Thrasher 1963 [1927]).

Some fifty years after Thrasher, Klein (1971, 13) argued persuasively for the self-definition of gang members and for the necessity of including illegal activity as a criterion for classification as a gang. According to his proposed definition, which has since received considerable support, a gang is

> any denotable adolescent group of youngsters who (a) are generally perceived as a distinct aggregation by others in their neighborhood, (b) recognize themselves as a denotable group (almost invariably with a group name), and (c) have been involved in a sufficient number of delinquent incidents to call forth a consistent negative response from neighborhood residents and/or law enforcement agencies.

Bursik and Grasmick (1995a) stressed the importance of including criminal activity in the definitional criteria of gang membership; they noted that the first two criteria are easily met by a number of social groups, including Greek fraternities. However, including involvement in delinquency introduces a possible circular relationship in examining the degree to which gangs are involved in violence. If one of the defining characteristics of a gang is its delinquent involvement, then can delinquency also be said to be a consequence of being in the gang? Thus, some disagreement still exists concerning the inclusion of illegal activity as a requisite for gang membership (Ball and Curry 1995; Short 1968).

The bulk of gang research tends to include a merger of Thrasher's and Klein's elements, including being a social group, using symbols, engaging in verbal and nonverbal communications to declare "gang-ness," a sense of permanence, identifiable territory or turf, and, finally, crime. During the past few years, some degree of consensus appears to have emerged with regard to definitional issues. For instance, a group of researchers interested in studying gangs cross-nationally has adopted the following definition to guide their research: "A gang (or a troublesome youth group corresponding to a street gang elsewhere) is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose own identity includes involvement in illegal activity" (Klein, Weerman, and Thornberry 2006, 418).

Issues associated with the importance of clearly defining the terms "youth gang" and "gang member" can also be seen in our sample. Previous work (Esbensen, Winfree, He, and Taylor 2001) examined the impact of various definitions of gang membership on the prevalence of gang members. Five types of gang members were created. The first two types were identified by use of single items: "Have you ever been a gang member?" and "Are you now in a gang?" Three increasingly restrictive definitions of gang membership were then created. The third type, "delinquent gang" member, included respondents who indicated that *their gang* was involved in at least one of the following illegal activities: getting in fights with other gangs; stealing things; robbing other people; stealing cars; selling marijuana; selling other illegal drugs; or damaging property. The fourth type, "organized gang" member, included delinquent gang members who also indicated that their gang had some level of organization. Specifically, the survey respondents were asked whether the following described their gang: "There are initiation rites; the gang has established leaders; the gang has symbols or colors." The last characteristic used to determine gang membership was an indicator of whether individuals considered themselves "core" or "peripheral" members.

The impact of definitional criteria on the prevalence of youth gang membership is quite pronounced. Depending on which of the five different definitions of gang member is used, anywhere from 2 percent to 17 percent of the sample would be regarded as involved in a gang. Almost 17 percent of the respondents indicated that they had ever belonged to a gang; only 8.8 percent of the total sample—but 9.1 percent of respondents who answered the gang question—said they were current gang members. As the definition of "gang" became more restrictive, the number of youths reporting involvement decreased: 7.9 percent reported belonging to a "delinquent gang"; 4.6 percent were in "organized delinquent gangs"; and only 2.3 percent were "core" members of an organized delinquent gang.

A cursory examination of the demographic characteristics associated with each definition of "gang" revealed that these characteristics varied slightly with the definitions. Comparing the single-item "Are you now in a gang" classification with the more restrictive definition requiring "core" membership, the percentage of gang members who were female increased from 37 percent to 46 percent; the percentage of white gang members increased from 24 percent to 30 percent; and the percentage of gang members whose parents had less than a high-school education increased slightly, from 16 percent to 18 percent. Despite these modest differences, we want to emphasize the relative stability of gang member demographics across the different definitions. Based on this assessment of self-identification as a definition of gang membership, we conclude that this approach provides a robust measure of gang status. While we concur with Klein and others about the role of illegal activity in defining gangs, throughout this book, unless noted otherwise, we will use the single-item definition ("Are you now in a gang?") to identify gang-affiliated youths in our analyses. This reliance on a single item of

self-nomination has the advantage of not introducing the issues associated with using illegal activity as an indicator of gang membership and subsequently explaining criminal behavior as a consequence of gang membership. Another rationale for our decision to use this definition is based on the finding that, for youths in this study, the term "gang" connotes something unique and distinguishable. First, the vast majority (89%) of youths who indicated that they were currently in a gang also indicated that their gang was involved in delinquent activity. Second, there were virtually no attitudinal and behavioral differences between the "now in a gang" youths and the "delinquent gang" youths. Due to the similarities between these two groups, we have chosen to use the less restrictive definition to increase the number of gang-affiliated youths in the sample.

Girls in Gangs

As has violent youth crime, gang membership traditionally has been viewed as a male phenomenon, and girls have often been excluded from gang research (Campbell 1991; Chesney-Lind 1993), resulting in little knowledge about sex differences in violent offending and the role of gang membership in girls' violent behavior. This lack of research has resulted in several misconceptions about girls' involvement in gangs and in violent crime. Recent research, however, has begun to address the gap in the literature (Deschenes and Esbensen 1999a, 1999b; Joe and Chesney-Lind 1995; Joe-Laidler and Hunt 1997; Maxson and Whitlock 2002; J. Miller 1998, 2001; Miller and Brunson 2000; Miller and Decker 2001; Moore and Hagedorn 2001; Peterson, Miller, and Esbensen 2001).

Current estimates of the percentage of gang members who are female vary significantly. Prevalence estimates derived from law enforcement consistently paint a picture of gangs as virtually male groups, reporting that girls make up less than 10 percent of gang members (Curry, Ball, and Fox 1994; Goldstein and Glick 1994; Huff 1998). For example, a survey of sixty-one large and small police departments yielded a total of 9,092 female gang members, representing less than 4 percent of the total (Curry, Ball, and Fox 1994). Similarly, Goldstein and Glick (1994, 9), summarizing law enforcement data, state: "Males continue to outnumber female gang members at a ratio of approximately 20 to 1."

A different picture emerges from studies that do not depend on the filtering of data by law enforcement. As early as 1967, Klein and Crawford (1995) reported that their case workers' daily contact reports identified 600 male and 200 female gang members. In other words, 25 percent of the Los Angeles gang members identified by case workers in the 1960s were female. This estimate is consistent with results from recent general surveys. Some 22 percent of girls in Bjerregaard and Smith's (1993) high risk-sample (living in socially disorganized neighborhoods) were gang members. These sixty girls accounted for 31 percent of the self-reported gang members in that survey. Cohen and her colleagues (1995) found that girls accounted for approximately 21 percent of self-proclaimed gang

members. Esbensen and Huizinga (1993) report that girls made up 20–46 percent of the gang members annually during their four years of interviews with high-risk youth in Denver. When their longitudinal sample was age 11–15, 46 percent of the gang members were female. By the time the oldest sample members had reached age 19, girls accounted for only 20 percent of the gang members. These findings provide some evidence for the belief that girls enter and leave gangs earlier than boys (Thornberry et al. 2003).

Consistent with the self-report studies conducted in the 1990s, in our sample girls accounted for approximately one-third (37%) of gang members. An alternative method to report the sex composition of gangs is to examine the percentage of girls and boys who report gang membership. From this perspective, we found that slightly more than 6 percent of the girls had indicated that they were currently in a gang, compared with almost 12 percent of the boys. Both reporting approaches reveal that boys are about twice as likely as girls to belong to gangs.

Why the Difference?

Different pictures of girls' involvement in gangs emerge depending on one's data source. Two primary sources of the discrepancy can be identified: the research methodology used to produce the data and the age of the sample members studied. Case studies, observational studies, and studies that rely on law enforcement data tend to produce lower estimates of girls' involvement, while general surveys tend to find a higher level of gang involvement for girls. This may well be an artifact of differential recording policies for boys and girls. For example, the operating manual for the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department indicates that a male youth should be classified as a gang member when he "claims" gang affiliation. The same manual, however, questions the validity of girls' self-nomination: "These same females will say they are members of the local Crips gang; however, evidence has shown that this is not so" (Operation Safe Streets 1995, 40).

The second methodological issue, age of sample, may be the more significant factor. In the Denver Youth Survey (Esbensen and Huizinga 1993) and the Rochester Youth Development Study (Thornberry et al. 2003), the researchers reported a lower percentage of female gang members as the sample aged. Additional evidence exists to suggest that girls mature out of gangs at an earlier age than do boys (Fishman 1995; Harris 1994; Moore and Hagedorn 1996). According to Harris (1994), girls are most active in gangs between age 13 and 16. Harris (1994, 300) suggests, "By 17 or 18, [the] interests and activities of individual members are directed toward the larger community rather than toward the gang, and girls begin to leave the active gang milieu." Thus, gang samples consisting of older adolescents or gang members in their twenties are apt to produce a substantially different picture from studies that focus on youths of middle-school and high-school age.

Race/Ethnicity and Gang Membership

Despite questions about the generalizability and reliability of ethnographic gang studies, they have proved to be a rich source of information about the racial and ethnic composition of gangs (e.g., Campbell 1991; Hagedorn 1988; Moore 1991; Vigil 1988, 2002). This depth of coverage, however, may be responsible for engendering one of the greatest myths of gang research: the assumption that gang members are mostly youths from minority racial or ethnic backgrounds (Fagan 1989; Howell 2007; Spergel 1990). Police-based studies often support this conclusion. The national survey conducted by Curry, Ball, and Fox (1994) indicated that approximately 90 percent of gang members are African American or Hispanic. Spergel (1995, 59) concluded his review by stating that the "dominant proportions of blacks and Hispanics identified as gang members based on police reporting seem hardly to have changed, although the numbers have increased in the past twenty years." As with gang research in general, much of what is known about race/ethnicity and gangs is derived from case studies of specific gangs or cities. However, most of this research has not included sufficiently diverse samples, making the examination of gang membership by race/ethnicity difficult. As researchers expand their efforts to include a more representative sample of the general population, the problem is likely to be redefined. The NYGC survey in 2002 provides an example of how expanding the sample can affect the apparent parameters of the gang problem (Egley, Howell, and Major 2004). With wider coverage of the U.S. population, the description of the demographic—especially the racial/ethnic—composition of gang members has changed. For instance, Starbuck, Howell, and Linquist (2001) describe suburban, small-town, and rural gangs as being more racially/ethnically mixed.

In our study, 24 percent of gang youths were white; 31 percent were African American; 25 percent were Hispanic; and 19 percent were some other race/ethnicity. Among the non-gang youths, the racial/ethnic distribution was 44 percent, 25 percent, 17 percent, and 14 percent, respectively. Given the unequal size of the racial and ethnic groups in this study, it is instructive to examine the percentage within each racial/ethnic group that reported gang membership. From this approach, we see that white youths are about one-half as likely as youths from other racial or ethnic backgrounds to report current gang membership—for example, 5.4 percent of white youths, 10.9 percent of African American youths, and 12.2 percent of Hispanic youths reported being current gang members.

When we examine the racial and ethnic composition within each of the eleven sites in our cross-sectional study, we find that the gang-affiliated youths look remarkably similar to the youths in their particular community (Esbensen and Lynskey 2001). Thus, in Pocatello and Will County, which are predominantly white communities, the majority of gang members are white; in Kansas City, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia, the sample is primarily African American, as are the self-identified gang members; in Las Cruces and Phoenix, the majority of the sample is Hispanic, and the majority of gang members report being Hispanic. It

is important to note, however, that while the gang-affiliated youths tend to reflect the racial and ethnic composition of their communities, there is nonetheless an over-representation of minority youths in the gang samples.

Gang Violence

Gang violence, especially homicide, became highly visible in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1994, for example, Los Angeles experienced 370 gang homicides—an average of one gang homicide each and every day—accounting for 44 percent of all homicides in that city that year (Maxson and Klein 2001). Despite a decrease in gang violence at the end of the century, gang homicides still accounted for 1,061 deaths nationwide in 1998 (Curry, Maxson, and Howell 2001) and have shown slight increases since 2002. In spite of this attention to gang homicide in particular, and to gang violence in general, it is important to note that gangs and gang members are engaged in a number of activities other than violent crime. In fact, throughout most of the day gang members are like other adolescents—going to school, working, hanging out, and eating with family or friends (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Esbensen, Huizinga, and Weiher 1993; Fleisher 1998; Klein 1995). Criminal activity and violence in particular are relatively rare occurrences in the context of other gang activities. However, it is still a widely documented finding that gang members are responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime, although not all of this criminal activity involves violence. For example, between 1987 and 1990, 17,085 criminal offenses were classified as street gang-related in Chicago. Of these, 288 (fewer than 2%) were homicides, more than half (8,828) were classified as non-lethal violent offenses (assaults and batteries), one-third of the offenses (5,888) were for the sale and possession of drugs, and the remaining 2,081 offenses included all other types (Block and Block 2001).

It should also be noted that there is considerable variation in the activities of different gangs. Some gangs are best classified as drug gangs, others as violent gangs, and yet others as lacking specialization. "Levels of gang violence differ from one city to another . . . , from one community to another . . . , from one gang to another . . . , and even among cliques within the same gang" (Howell 1998, 9). The one constant is that most gangs and gang members engage in violent crime at a rate higher than that of non-gang youths in the same environment.

Gang membership increases involvement in delinquent activity of all kinds (Battin-Pearson et al. 1998; Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Huizinga 1997; Thornberry and Burch 1997). Comparisons of gang and non-gang youths consistently and historically have produced significant differences in both the prevalence and frequency of offending between these two groups. This finding has been found to hold in European studies, as well (see, e.g., Bendixen, Endresen, and Olweus 2006; Esbensen and Weerman 2005; Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina 2006). According to self-report surveys, gang-affiliated youths account for approximately 70 percent of all self-reported violent offending in adolescent samples (Huizinga et al. 2003; Thornberry et al. 2003). In research involving 15-year-old youths,

TABLE 5.1 ANNUAL PREVALENCE AND INDIVIDUAL OFFENDING RATES (IORs) BY GANG STATUS

	Non-gang ($N = 5,226$)		Gang ($N = 522$)	
Violent act	Prevalence (%)	IOR (mean)	Prevalence (%)	IOR (mean)
Hit someone	44	4.8	78	7.2
Attacked someone with a weapon	9	3.4	47	5.0
Robbed someone	3	4.6	26	5.9
Participated in a gang fight	11	3.1	79	6.4
Shot at someone	2	3.3	30	4.6
General violence	49	6.1	94	17.7
Serious violence	17	4.7	84	12.6

$p < .05$, all comparisons, gang versus non-gang; *t*-test.

Battin-Pearson and her colleagues (1998) report that gang members committed twice as many violent acts as did youths who were not gang members but had delinquent friends. Compared with youths who did not have delinquent friends, the gang-affiliated youths reported committing seven times as many violent acts during the previous year (Battin-Pearson et al. 1998).

Table 5.1 provides information regarding the percentage of gang and non-gang youths in our sample who had committed the specified crimes during the preceding year. These annual prevalence rates reveal that the gang youths are much more likely than non-gang youths to engage in a variety of violent offenses. Ninety-four percent of the gang members reported having committed at least one of the five general violent offenses, compared with 49 percent of the non-gang youths. As reported in the previous chapter, when simple assault ("hitting someone with the idea of hurting them") is excluded from consideration, violent offending is relatively rare among this general sample of adolescents. Controlling for gang membership, however, reveals that serious violence is much more common among gang youths, and the difference between gang and non-gang youths becomes increasingly significant as we move to more serious crimes (see Table 5.1). For instance, 84 percent of gang members reported having committed at least one of the four behaviors included in the serious violence measure (attacking someone, using a weapon or force to get money, participating in gang fights, and shooting at someone), while only 17 percent of non-gang youths reported such behavior. The differences are even more pronounced when we examine the individual items. The prevalence rate for aggravated assault for gang members is five times greater than that for non-gang youths (47% versus 9%). Almost nine times as many gang youths reported having committed a robbery (26% versus 3%); fifteen times as many indicated that they had shot at someone (30% versus 2%); and seven times as many reported having been involved in gang fights (79% versus 11%). Clearly, based on these self-reports, gang-affiliated youths not only are involved in crime; they are involved in a wide array of violent offenses.

While prevalence rates inform us about the percentage of youths involved in a particular act, they do not provide information about the incidence of offending. To better understand the volume of crime attributed to gang youths, we examine individual offending rates (IORs), or the average number of offenses committed by each active offender (see Table 5.1). To reduce the influence of youths who reported exceedingly high rates of offending, we truncated the individual items at twelve (see Chapter 3). Thus, these analyses can be considered conservative estimates of offending rates. Hitting someone with the intention to hurt him or her is a relatively common offense in this sample and occurs with some regularity. The kinds of behavior included in these responses ranged from relatively minor affronts, such as slapping someone, punching a sibling in the arm, and pulling a friend's hair, to more serious offenses, such as beating someone up or punching someone in the face. The average number of hitting offenses reported by the non-gang offenders was 4.8, compared with 7.2 for gang youths. Comparable IORs for the remaining offenses for non-gang youths were 3.4 for aggravated assault, 4.6 for robbery, 3.1 for gang fights, and 3.3 for shooting at someone. For gang-affiliated youths, the figures were 5.0, 5.9, 6.4, and 4.6, respectively. The summary index of serious violent offending allows us to examine the relative number of crimes committed by gang and non-gang youths. This sample of adolescents reported having committed 9,128 serious violent offenses (excluding the simple assault item). Of these, gang youths committed 54 percent of the offenses and the non-gang youth accounted for 46 percent of serious offenses. Thus, while gang youths made up less than 9 percent of the sample, they accounted for slightly more than half of all of the reported violent offenses. This estimate is considerably lower than that provided by Thornberry and colleagues (2003). In that study, however, gang youths accounted for 30 percent of the sample, while gang youths make up less than 9 percent of our sample.

Gang Girls' Involvement in Violence

Early reference to girls' involvement in gangs was usually restricted to their sexual activities or to their categorization as tomboys; attention was rarely paid to their participation in the violent activities of the gang. Contemporary researchers have moved beyond the stereotypical notion of female gang members as auxiliary members or gun or drug holders and have documented girls' involvement in a variety of activities (Campbell 1991; Fishman 1995; Huizinga 1997; Miller 1998; Miller and Decker 2001). Evidence is also mounting that gang membership increases the prevalence and frequency of serious and violent crime among both boys and girls (Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Esbensen and Winfree 1998; Fagan 1990; Thornberry et al. 1993). However, differences by sex among gang members may still exist. Bjerregaard and Smith (1993) found that rates of serious delinquency were lower among female than male gang members, even though both male and female gang members had higher rates of delinquency than non-gang members. Interestingly, results from the Denver Youth Survey reveal that, while

TABLE 5.2 ANNUAL PREVALENCE AND INDIVIDUAL OFFENDING RATES (IORs) BY GANG STATUS AND BY SEX

	Non-gang				Gang			
	Male ($N = 2,403$)		Female ($N = 2,785$)		Male ($N = 325$)		Female ($N = 188$)	
Violent act	Prevalence (%)	IOR (mean)	Prevalence (%)	IOR (mean)	Prevalence (%)	IOR (mean)	Prevalence (%)	IOR (mean)
Hit someone	51[a,d]	5.0[d]	38[c]	4.6[a,c]	79[d]	7.5[d]	78[c]	6.6[b,c]
Attacked someone with a weapon	10[a,d]	3.9[d]	7[c]	2.8[a,c]	53[b,d]	5.2[d]	37[c]	4.3[c]
Robbed someone	4[a,d]	4.9	2[c]	3.9	33[b,d]	6.0	15[c]	5.2
Participated in a gang fight	13[a,d]	3.4[d]	9[c]	2.8[a,c]	81[d]	6.6[d]	75[c]	5.9[c]
Shot at someone	3[a,d]	3.5	1[c]	2.7	35[b,d]	4.6	21[c]	4.1
General violence	56[a,d]	6.8[d]	43[c]	5.3[a,c]	94[d]	19.6[d]	94[c]	14.2[b,c]
Serious violence	21[a,d]	5.6[d]	15[c]	3.6[a,c]	85[d]	14.0[d]	81[c]	9.8[b,c]

[a] $p < .05$, non-gang boys versus non-gang girls; [b] $p < .05$, gang boys versus gang girls; chi-square test for prevalence; *t*-test for IOR.

[c] $p < .05$, gang girls versus non-gang girls; [d] $p < .05$, gang boys versus non-gang boys; chi-square test for prevalence; *t*-test for IOR.

female gang members account for only a small percentage of all active offenders, they account for more instances of violent crime than non-gang boys (Huizinga 1997).

Homicide does appear to be the domain of male gang members (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Miller and Decker 2001). This does not mean, however, that girls are not active in other forms of violent offending. Ethnographic accounts suggest that female gang members can be as violent and aggressive as their male counterparts (Campbell 1991; J. Miller 2001; Moore 1991; Vigil 1988). Because girls are less likely than boys to use firearms and more likely to use weapons such as knives or razors, however, the results of their violent behavior are often less lethal than are boys'.

Our analyses indicate that gang-affiliated girls commit a wide variety of offenses, similar to the pattern shown by gang-affiliated boys. In Table 5.2, we report prevalence rates and IORs for boys and girls while controlling for gang status. Among non-gang youths, the prevalence rate for boys for each type of violent offense is greater to a statistically significant degree than the prevalence rate for girls. This is also the case for the summary indices, with 21 percent of non-gang boys and 15 percent of non-gang girls committing at least one of the four serious violent offenses. With respect to the IORs for non-gang youths, the boys reported higher rates for all but robbery and shooting at someone. Interestingly, though, neither the prevalence rates nor IORs are as great as is reported in arrest data. In fact, the ratio of offending between non-gang boys and girls ranges from a low of 1:09 for hitting someone to 1.39:1 for attacking someone. For the summary index that excludes hitting, non-gang boys committed 1.89 offenses for every offense committed by non-gang girls. (This ratio is derived by multiplying the prevalence rate by the IOR for both boys and girls and dividing the

number of offenses by boys by the number of offenses by girls.) Recall from Chapter 4 that arrest data generally reveal male-to-female ratios of violent offending in the range of 4–5:1.

Gang membership tends to reduce the effect of sex/gender. The prevalence rates for hitting someone, gang fighting, and the two summary measures are virtually identical for male and female gang members, and the IORs for the four serious violent offending items are not different to a statistically significant degree. Gang-affiliated girls are almost as involved in violent offending as are gang-affiliated boys; the ratio of serious violent offending for male gang members relative to female gang members is 2.56:1. However, controlling for the differential rate of involvement in gangs—girls account for 37 percent of gang members—reduces the ratio to 1.61:1. That is, for every ten violent offenses committed by female gang members, male gang members commit sixteen.

Another important issue to consider is the sexual composition of the gang. In a prior publication using the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) data, Peterson, Miller, and Esbensen (2001) examined the influence of the sexual composition of the gang on members' behavior. They found that girls who belonged to gangs that were made up mostly of boys reported offending rates that were higher than those for boys in all-male gangs. Those findings suggest that it is important for research on gangs to consider contextual effects in addition to individual effects; this, however, falls outside the scope of this chapter.

We notice that gang membership has significant effects when we compare male non-gang members with male gang members. Not only are the prevalence rates considerably higher for the gang-affiliated boys; so are the offending rates of active offenders. For instance, 53 percent of the gang boys reported having attacked someone with a weapon an average of 5.2 times in the previous twelve months; 10 percent of the non-gang boys reported having committed this offense an average of 3.9 times. The only offenses for which the IORs show no statistically significant differences are robbery (6.0 and 4.9) and shooting at someone (4.6 and 3.5).

The differences between gang girls and non-gang girls are even greater than those for the boys. The difference in prevalence rates ranges from a low of 2:1 (78% versus 38%) for simple assault to 20:1 (21% versus 1%) for shooting at someone. As was the case with the boys, the IORs for female active offenders were not significantly different for robbery or shooting at someone.

Gang Membership, Race/Ethnicity, and Violent Offending

In addition to the racial/ethnic composition of gangs, it is important to explore whether the extent of involvement in delinquent activity varies by race/ethnicity within the gang. That is, are minority youths who belong to gangs more delinquent than white gang members? The majority of investigations of gang offending have been restricted to ethnically or racially homogeneous gangs. Thus, the

issue of racial/ethnic differences in offending has rarely been explored. Of the studies that have examined differential rates of offending by race/ethnicity among adolescents (Curry and Spergel 1992; Elliott and Ageton 1980; Huizinga and Elliott 1987; Lyons, Henggeller, and Hall 1992; McNulty and Bellair 2003; Sellers, Winfree, and Griffiths 1993; Winfree, Mays, and Vigil-Bäckström 1994), relatively few have explored whether differences in offending exist within a gang. Two studies that compared Hispanic and white gang members produced mixed results. Lyons, Henggeller, and Hall (1992) found Hispanic youths to have slightly lower rates of self-reported offending, whereas Winfree, Mays, and Vigil-Bäckström (1994) found no difference between the two groups of gang members. In their comparison of African American and Hispanic gang members in Chicago, Curry and Spergel (1992) found higher offending rates among African American boys.

In our sample, the prevalence rates for violent offending among non-gang youths varied by race/ethnicity. African American non-gang members reported the highest rates of involvement in violent offending for simple assault, assault, robbery, and both summary indices. The serious violent offending index, for example, reveals that 26 percent of African American youths reported having committed at least one of the four offenses, compared with 11 percent of white and 21 percent of Hispanic youths.

For gang youths, gang membership appears to provide an equal opportunity for all. Regardless of race/ethnicity, there are no statistically significant differences in the prevalence of violent offending. Approximately the same percentage of youths within each racial/ethnic group reported having engaged in each offense during the previous twelve months. The two summary indices reflect this lack of variation in offending: Approximately 93 percent of each group had committed at least one of the five offenses, while approximately 84 percent of each group had committed at least one of the four serious violent offenses. Furthermore, the rate of offending is quite similar across racial/ethnic groups. It is only with respect to gang fights and general violence that white gang members reported lower levels of offending than did African American gang youths.

The analyses of prevalence rates and IORs controlling for race/ethnicity allow us to draw two general conclusions. First, among non-gang youths, the prevalence of violent offending varies by race/ethnicity, but once youths commit a violent offense, there are only small differences in the rate at which they offend. Second, among gang youths, gang membership is an equalizer, and race/ethnicity has virtually no effect on the prevalence or rate of offending.

Risk Factors for Gang Membership

In Chapter 2, we provided an overview of the risk factor literature as it pertained to youth violence in general. In this chapter, we focus on risk factors linked specifically to gang membership. Two relatively recent reviews provide additional coverage to that provided here (Howell and Egley 2005; Klein and Maxson 2006).

In this book, we assume that gangs already exist, and our concern is to explain why individuals join gangs and how these gang youths differ from non-gang youths. We are not dismissing the importance of accounting for the emergence of gangs; in fact, this is a precursor to the question of joining. It is not enough to deal only with gang members. We also need to determine the factors in the community context that explain the emergence of gangs and interact with individual-level factors. This macro-level work is necessary to frame micro-level explanations, because even in high-risk communities, most youths are resilient and do not become violent offenders or gang members. Thus, the next sections examine how these risk factors are related to gang membership.

Community Risk Factors

The community is the domain that has been examined most frequently in regard to both the emergence of gangs and the factors associated with joining gangs. Numerous studies indicate that poverty, unemployment, the absence of meaningful jobs, and social disorganization contribute to the presence of gangs (Curry and Thomas 1992; Fagan 1990; Hagedorn 1988; Huff 1990; Vigil 1988). There is little debate that gangs are more prominent in urban areas and that they are more likely to emerge in economically distressed neighborhoods. However, as previously stated, the recent surveys conducted by the NYGC have identified youth gangs in rural and suburban communities (Egley, Howell, and Major 2004; Starbuck, Howell, and Lindquist 2001). The traditional image of American youth gangs, however, is characterized by urban social disorganization and economic marginalization; the housing projects or barrios of Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York are viewed as the stereotypical homes of youth gang members. The publication of Wilson's (1987) account of the underclass—those members of society who are truly disadvantaged and most affected by changes in social and economic conditions—has renewed interest in the social disorganization perspective advanced by Thrasher (1963 [1927]) and Shaw and McKay (1942). Los Angeles barrio gangs, according to Vigil (1988) and Moore (1991), are a product of economic restructuring and street socialization. Vigil (1988, 2002) describes the multiple marginality (the combined disadvantages of low socioeconomic status, street socialization, and segregation) experienced by male and female gang members residing in socially disorganized areas. In addition to the pressures of marginal economics, these gang members experience the burden of having marginal ethnic and personal identities. These juveniles look for identity and stability in the gang and adopt the *cholo* subculture—customs that are associated with an attachment to and identification with gangs—that includes alcohol and drug use, conflict, and violence.

These conditions, which have resulted in a lack of education and employment and in lives of poverty without opportunities (Short 1996), are compounded for girls who experience the additional burden of sexual discrimination and traditional role expectations (Fishman 1995). Socio-structural conditions

alone, however, cannot account for the presence of gangs. Fagan (1990, 207) comments: "Inner-city youths in this study live in areas where social controls have weakened and opportunities for success in legitimate activities are limited. Nevertheless, participation in gangs is selective, and most youths avoid gang life." Therefore, addressing structural factors is not the only plausible strategy for gang prevention or intervention. Identifying individual, family, peer, and school factors that contribute to or interact with structural factors is essential in informing these strategies.

Demographic Characteristics

The stereotypical image of American youth gang members portrays them as young boys who live in the inner city and belong to a racial or ethnic minority group. Confronting this picture, however, are relatively recent research findings suggesting that gangs have emerged in non-urban areas; that girls make up approximately one-third of the membership of youth gangs; and that gang members tend to mirror the racial/ethnic composition of the communities in which they live.

In addition to sex and race/ethnicity, several characteristics are often ascribed to gang-affiliated youths, including residing in single-parent households and hailing from lower-class backgrounds. Our findings question the applicability of such stereotypes. Gang youths are found in two-parent, single-parent, and recombined families. Using parents' educational attainment as a proxy for social class, we note that while fewer parents of gang youths (57%) have more than a high-school education than do the parents of non-gang youths (68%), most of the parents of gang youths have more than a high-school education. In his insightful book on American youth gangs, Klein (1995, 75–76; emphasis added) summarized the characteristics of gang youth this way:

> In regard to who joins street gangs, then, first, it is not sufficient to say that gang members come from lower-income areas, from minority populations, or from homes more often characterized by absent parents or reconstituted families. It is not sufficient because most youths from such areas, such groups, and such families do *not* join gangs.

Thus, while it would be erroneous to conclude that demographic characteristics can explain gang affiliation, individual factors are nonetheless associated with gang membership—that is, minority youths residing in single-parent households appear to be at greater risk for joining gangs than are white youths from two-parent households. Previously, we noted that white youths tend to be slightly under-represented in the gang sample, while African American and Hispanic youths are somewhat over-represented. Likewise, gang members are more likely to be male, less likely to reside in two-parent households, and more likely to have parents with a high-school education or less. To reiterate our caution,

possessing these characteristics does not mean that those youths *will* become involved with gangs; it means only that there is an elevated risk that such youths will become involved. If demographic factors do not allow for the identification of gang youths, are there other characteristics that help to distinguish gang youths from non-gang youths? We turn now to examination of individual-level risk factors.

Individual Risk Factors

Are gang youths substantively different from non-gang youths? Some researchers—notably, Yablonsky (1970 [1962])—claim that gang youths are more socially inept, have lower self-esteem, and in general have sociopathic characteristics compared with non-gang youths. To what extent are such characterizations accurate reflections of adolescent gang members? Recent surveys in which gang and non-gang youths' attitudes were compared found numerous differences between the two groups, although relatively few of these differences were consistent across studies. (For an excellent review, see Klein and Maxson 2006.) This lack of consistent findings, however, may reflect differences in survey methods and the content of questions rather than a true lack of similarity across studies. Comparisons between gang and non-gang youths have been reported from Rochester (Bjerregaard and Smith 1993), Denver (Esbensen, Huizinga, and Weiher 1993), Seattle (Hill et al. 1999), and San Diego (Maxson, Whitlock, and Klein 1998). These studies used different questions and different sampling methods and reported slightly different findings. In the Seattle study, Hill and colleagues (1999) found that gang youths held more antisocial beliefs, while Maxson, Whitlock, and Klein (1998) found that gang members had more delinquent self-concepts, greater tendencies to resolve conflicts by using threats, and experienced more critically stressful events. On a more generic level, both the Seattle and San Diego studies found significant differences between gang and non-gang youths within multiple contexts—that is, in individual, school, peer, family, and community characteristics.

Extending the comparative approach in the Denver study, Esbensen, Huizinga, and Weiher (1993) examined gang youth, serious youthful offenders who were not gang members, and non-delinquent youths. The findings indicated that the non-delinquent youths were different from the delinquent and gang youths in that non-delinquent youths reported lower levels of commitment to delinquent peers, lower levels of social isolation, lower tolerance for deviance, and higher levels of commitment to positive peers.

In another report from the Seattle study, Battin-Pearson and colleagues (1998) compared non-gang youths, transient gang youths (members for one year or less), and stable gang youths (members for two or more years). Both the transient and stable gang members differed significantly from the non-gang youths on a variety of attitudinal and behavioral measures. However, few distinctions between the transient and stable gang members were found. The measures

TABLE 5.3 RISK FACTOR SCORES BY GANG STATUS FOR THE TOTAL SAMPLE AND BY SEX

			Non-gang		Gang	
Risk factor	Non-gang ($N = 5,226$)	Gang ($N = 522$)	Male ($N = 2,403$)	Female ($N = 2,785$)	Male ($N = 325$)	Female ($N = 188$)
Individual domain						
Impulsivity[b]	2.81	3.25	2.83	2.78	3.26	3.23
Risk seeking[a,b]	2.99	3.70	3.12	2.88	3.79	3.57
Guilt[a,b]	2.38	1.66	2.30	2.46	1.58	1.80
Use of neutralizations[a,b]	3.02	3.90	3.18	2.88	4.04	3.67
Social isolation[a]	2.45	2.39	2.28	2.59	2.25	2.64
Self-esteem[a,b]	4.03	3.82	4.08	3.99	3.88	3.72
Family domain						
Parental monitoring[a,b]	3.79	3.16	3.66	3.90	3.04	3.36
Attachment to mother[b]	4.91	4.26	4.91	4.90	4.30	4.21
Attachment to father[a,b]	4.50	3.91	4.74	4.30	4.12	3.60
Peer domain						
Pro-social peers[b]	3.04	2.36	3.04	3.04	2.35	2.38
Delinquent peers[a,b]	1.87	3.10	1.95	1.80	3.20	2.93
Commitment to positive peers[a,b]	3.89	3.04	3.78	3.98	2.94	3.22
Commitment to negative peers[b]	2.28	3.50	2.34	2.22	3.52	3.48
% Spending time without adults present[b]	75	88	75	75	89	87
% Spending time with drugs and alcohol present[b]	26	76	25	26	75	78
School domain						
Commitment to school[a,b]	3.64	2.95	3.56	3.71	2.88	3.07
Perception of limited educational opportunities[a,b]	1.84	2.28	1.86	1.82	2.32	2.18
Perception of negative school environment[a,b]	2.63	3.02	2.60	2.65	2.97	3.09

Note: Risk factor scores were determined as described in the Appendix. Higher scores indicate *greater* risk for the following measures: impulsivity, risk seeking, use of neutralizations, social isolation, delinquent peers, commitment to negative peers, spending time without adults present, spending time with drugs and alcohol present, perception of limited educational opportunities, and perception of negative school environment. Higher scores indicate *lower* risk for the following measures: guilt, self-esteem, attachment to mother, attachment to father, pro-social peers, commitment to positive peers, and commitment to school. Time scores are given as percentage of individuals reporting spending time under the stated condition.

[a] $p < .05$, sex; [b] $p < .05$, gang status.

on which differences occurred tended to represent individual and peer-level measures (e.g., personal attitudes and delinquency of friends).

Table 5.3 provides a summary of comparisons between gang and non-gang youths in our sample. With regard to individual-level risk factors, we note that the gang youths scored considerably higher than did the non-gang youths on five of the six indicators. For example, the gang youths were more impulsive (3.25) than the non-gang youths (2.81). Similarly, relative to youths who do not belong to gangs, the gang members were more likely to engage in risky behavior, less likely to feel guilty for committing illegal acts, and had lower self-esteem. Importantly, on each of the three scales measuring moral disengagement or neutraliza-

tion techniques, the gang youths indicated a high level of agreement that lying, stealing, and fighting are appropriate under a number of circumstances.

Analyses controlling for sex are reported in Table 5.3. In most instances, there are both sex and gang effects. That is, the attitudinal differences between gang boys and gang girls are statistically significant, as are the differences between the non-gang boys and girls. In addition, there are significant differences between the attitudes of gang boys and non-gang boys and between gang girls and non-gang girls. Interestingly, if we rank the four groups (gang membership by sex), we find that on four of the six individual-level measures, the non-gang girls had the lowest risk factor score, followed by the non-gang boys, the gang girls, and, finally, the gang boys. This pattern does not hold for social isolation and self-esteem. Non-gang girls reported higher self-esteem than both gang boys and gang girls. For social isolation, we find a difference by sex, with the boys (both gang and non-gang) indicating lower levels of social isolation than their female counterparts. This is the only risk factor for which we found no unique gang effect.

To highlight the combined effect of sex and gangs, we examine the neutralization scale in greater detail. Not only did the gang youths report significantly greater acceptance of violating rules or laws governing lying, stealing, and hitting than did the non-gang youths, but the gang girls showed considerably more acceptance than did the non-gang boys. Whereas non-gang girls and boys have mean scores of 2.88 and 3.18, respectively, on the five-point scale (remember that a score of 1 equals strong disagreement and a score of 5 means strong agreement), the mean scores for gang girls and boys are 3.67 and 4.04. Additional analyses of individual items included in these composite scales (not reported in table format) revealed that, regardless of sex, more than 90 percent of the gang youths agreed or strongly agreed with each of the following statements: "It's okay to get in a physical fight with someone if they hit you first"; "It's okay to get in a physical fight with someone if you have to stand up for or protect your rights"; and "It's okay to get in a physical fight with someone if they are threatening to hurt your friends or family." Among the non-gang youths there was a significantly lower level of agreement with these statements, with agreement varying between 60 percent and 66 percent for non-gang girls and 72 percent to 78 percent for non-gang boys.

A closer examination of the items on the perceptions of guilt scale also reveals interesting results. For the three items measuring the extent to which the respondents would feel guilty if they hit someone, attacked someone with a weapon, or robbed someone, a sizable percentage of the gang members indicated that they would not feel guilty about committing these acts. For example, 66 percent of gang boys and 52 percent of gang girls reported that they would not feel guilty about hitting someone; more than half of the gang boys and one-third of the gang girls expressed no guilt associated with attacking someone with a weapon. By comparison, 27 percent of the non-gang boys and 17 percent of the non-gang girls would not feel guilty if they hit someone, while 17 percent and 10 percent, respectively, would not feel guilty if they attacked someone with a weapon. Thus, while there are differences by sex in these findings, gang membership exerts a

TABLE 5.4 RISK FACTOR SCORES BY GANG STATUS AND BY RACE/ETHNICITY

	Non-gang			Gang		
Risk factor	White ($N = 2,182$)	African American ($N = 1,311$)	Hispanic ($N = 932$)	White ($N = 125$)	African American ($N = 160$)	Hispanic ($N = 130$)
Individual domain						
Impulsivity[b,c]	2.71	2.91	2.92	3.41	3.09	3.22
Risk seeking[a,b,c]	3.07	2.83	3.08	4.06	3.42	3.68
Guilt[b,c]	2.43	2.34	2.30	1.59	1.74	1.68
Use of neutralizations[b,c]	2.90	3.10	3.23	4.10	3.76	3.86
Social isolation[a]	2.48	2.30	2.45	2.55	2.17	2.35
Self-esteem[a,b,c]	4.01	4.20	3.93	3.67	4.09	3.74
Family domain						
Parental monitoring[b,c]	3.89	3.68	3.68	3.03	3.25	3.28
Attachment to mother[a,b,c]	4.95	4.96	4.87	3.77	4.71	4.36
Attachment to father[b,c]	4.61	4.41	4.42	3.70	4.21	3.94
Peer domain						
Pro-social peers[a,b,c]	3.21	2.86	2.83	2.21	2.54	2.28
Delinquent peers[b,c]	1.78	1.97	2.03	3.24	2.93	3.09
Commitment to positive peers[a,b,c]	3.90	3.94	3.78	2.83	3.15	3.21
Commitment to negative peers[a,b,c]	2.35	2.11	2.35	3.81	3.16	3.45
% Spending time without adults present[a,b]	80	71	70	94	82	89
% Spending time with drugs and alcohol present[a,b]	28	21	28	79	68	83
School domain						
Commitment to school[a,b,c]	3.58	3.76	3.56	2.71	3.21	2.93
Perception of limited educational opportunities[a,b,c]	1.76	1.77	2.07	2.33	2.13	2.37
Perception of negative school environment[b,c]	2.55	2.74	2.62	3.09	3.00	2.94

Note: Risk factor scores were determined as described in the Appendix. For brief overview of scoring, see note to Table 5.3.

[a] $p < .05$, race/ethnicity; [b] $p < .05$, gang status; [c] $p < .05$, race/ethnicity * gang status; two-way ANOVA.

greater impact. These findings, as will be discussed in Chapter 9, suggest potential strategies for reducing youth violence, as well as gang membership.

Gang membership exerts an independent effect on each of the individual-level risk factors. Within each racial/ethnic group, the difference between gang and non-gang youths on all but one risk factor is statistically significant (see Table 5.4). The effect of gang membership, however, is most pronounced for white youths. In these analyses, the white gang members reported the most extreme scores on each of the six individual-level risk factors—greater than either the African American and Hispanic gang youths (remember that lower scores on guilt and self-esteem reflect greater risk). One question that cannot be addressed in the current analyses, however, is whether these differences in risk factors preceded a youth's gang membership or reflect a socialization effect associated with belonging to the gang.

Family Risk Factors

Family risk factors for gang membership include several of the factors discussed in the section on demographic characteristics (i.e., family structure and social class). In addition to these family social characteristics, potential risk factors in this domain include attachment to parents, parental monitoring and supervision, discipline practices, family violence, and having a family member who is involved in a gang (Bowker and Klein 1983; Brewer et al. 1995; Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Howell 1998; Thornberry, Huizinga, and Loeber 1995). The literature in this area is consistent with the more voluminous research assessing risk factors for delinquency and violent offending.

The three indicators of family risk factors examined are attachment to the father, attachment to the mother, and parental monitoring (the extent to which parents are aware of the child's activities). Gang youths reported significantly lower levels of parental monitoring than did non-gang youths, and girls reported higher levels of monitoring than did boys. Specifically, non-gang boys (3.66) reported significantly higher levels of parental monitoring than did gang girls (3.36). With regard to race/ethnicity (Table 5.4), as we witnessed with the individual-level risk factors, gang membership appears to have a more pronounced effect on the white youths than on the African American and Hispanic youths. White non-gang members reported the highest level of parental monitoring, while white gang members reported the lowest level. The effect of gang membership is not as great for African American and Hispanic youths, although the difference between gang and non-gang youths within each of these groups is statistically significant.

Attachment is measured through responses to two separate scales, one assessing attachment to mothers and the other assessing attachment to fathers. In all instances, attachment to mothers is greater than attachment to fathers, regardless of sex, race/ethnicity, and gang affiliation. Significant differences in both types of attachment exist between gang and non-gang youths, with the non-gang youths reporting significantly higher levels of attachment to both mothers and fathers than do gang members. No differences, however, are found between girls and boys with regard to attachment to mothers. Differences emerge when we control for gang membership, with both gang boys and gang girls reporting significantly lower levels of attachment to fathers and mothers than did non-gang boys and girls. Analyses of the relationship between race/ethnicity and attachment to parents produce less consistent results than those associated with previous risk factors. Of particular interest is the effect of gang membership for white youths: White gang youths reported significantly lower levels of attachment to both parents than did African American and Hispanic gang youths. No differences exist among the non-gang youths with regard to attachment to mothers, whereas the white non-gang boys reported the highest level of attachment to fathers.

Peer Risk Factors

One consistent finding from research on gangs, as is the case for research on delinquency in general, is the overarching influence of peers on adolescent behavior (Battin-Pearson et al. 1998; Bjerregaard and Smith 1993; Curry and Spergel 1992; Hill et al. 1999; Menard and Elliott 1994; Thornberry, Huizinga, and Loeber 1995; Warr 2002). For example, Battin-Pearson and colleagues (1998) reported that the strongest predictors of sustained gang affiliation were a high level of interaction with antisocial peers and a low level of interaction with pro-social peers. Researchers have examined the influence of peers using a variety of measures, including exposure to delinquent peers, attachment to delinquent peers, and commitment to delinquent peers. Regardless of how peer affiliation is measured, the results are the same: Association with delinquent peers is one of the strongest predictors (risk factors) of gang membership.

Each of the four peer-level risk factors reported in Tables 5.3 and 5.4 reveals statistically significant differences between gang and non-gang youths. And as in prior research, the magnitude of the differences is quite pronounced. Gang-affiliated youths reported significantly lower levels of interaction with pro-social peers and greater levels of association with delinquent peers than did non-gang youths. The mean response of 3.04 for involvement with pro-social peers indicates that one-half of the friends of non-gang respondents were involved in conventional activities such as obeying school rules, taking part in family activities, and being thought of as good students. The mean score of 2.36 for gang youth means that just a few of their friends were involved in such conventional activities. Conversely, with respect to involvement with delinquent peers, the gang youths indicated that more than half of their friends engaged in delinquent activity, while very few of the non-gang youths' friends were involved in illegal behavior. This same pattern of peer effects holds for sex and race/ethnicity.

These indicators of friends' behavior may be highly correlated with the respondent's own behavior. An alternative method for assessing the influence of peers is to examine responses to items that tap peer commitment. Recall that two scales measuring commitment to peers were included in this study. Commitment to negative peers assesses the likelihood that respondents would associate with friends who were getting them into trouble at home, at school, or with the police. In Table 5.3, we see that the gang youths reported significantly higher levels of commitment to negative peers and lower levels of commitment to positive peers.

When controlling for sex, the girls' responses are slightly more pro-social than those of the boys, but the gang effect is considerably greater than the sex effect. In each comparison, the gang girls scored significantly higher on the risk factors than did the non-gang boys. As the earlier analyses showed, the gang experience can be seen as an equalizer—that is, as minimizing the effect of sex and race/ethnicity on risk factors.

Differences in peer risk factors by race/ethnicity are less consistent but do persist. White non-gang members reported the highest levels of association with

pro-social peers and the lowest levels of association with delinquent peers. We found the opposite pattern for white gang youths: They had the fewest positive peers and the most delinquent peers. African American youths, regardless of gang status, reported lower levels of commitment to negative peers relative to their white and Hispanic counterparts. Hispanic gang members reported the highest levels of commitment to positive peers.

One remaining risk factor for gang membership is involvement in unstructured or unsupervised activities. Hanging out with friends where no adults are present and being in places where drugs and alcohol are available are the two measures to assess this risk factor. When we control for gang status, we find a significant gang effect: Gang youths (regardless of sex or race/ethnicity) reported higher prevalence rates of being in these situations, especially with respect to hanging out where drugs and alcohol are available. One finding worth noting is that African American youths—gang and non-gang—reported lower rates of spending time where drugs and alcohol are available than did their white and Hispanic counterparts.

School Risk Factors

Gang researchers examine school factors less frequently than other factors. However, they have found that these factors are consistently associated with the risk of joining gangs. Research indicates that gang youths are less committed to school than are non-gang youths (Bjerregaard and Smith 1993; Esbensen and Deschenes 1998; Hill et al. 1999; Maxson, Whitlock, and Klein 1998). Some sex differences have been reported. In the Rochester study, for example, expectations for educational attainment predicted gang membership for girls but not for boys (Bjerregaard and Smith 1993). Studies that examine juveniles' cultural and racial/ethnic backgrounds also attest to the role of school factors in explaining gang membership (Campbell 1991; Cernkovich and Giordano 1992; Fleisher 1998; Taylor et al. 1994).

As in prior research, the gang youths in our sample reported significantly lower levels of commitment to school than did non-gang youths. The non-gang youths were more likely than the gang youths to agree that they tried hard in school, liked school, and generally finished their homework. We also found unique gang and sex effects: Non-gang youths were more committed to school than were gang youths, and girls were more committed to school than were boys.

As in the earlier analyses controlling for race/ethnicity and gang membership, we found differences by race/ethnicity as well as for race/ethnicity–gang interactions. African American gang youths had higher levels of commitment to school than did white and Hispanic gang members. And, as was the case in each of the other domains, it was the white gang members who reported the lowest levels of commitment to school.

Our other two indicators of the school domain—perceived limited educational opportunities and school environment—produce significant differences

among gang and non-gang youths. The gang youths saw more restricted educational opportunities than did the non-gang youths, and the gang youths were more likely to view their school environments as hostile and unsafe. While there were differences by sex and race/ethnicity within the gang and non-gang samples, these differences were not as pronounced as those reported in the other domains.

Summary of Risk Factor Analyses

The analyses reported in Tables 5.3 and 5.4 reveal that gang and non-gang youths differ on all of the risk factors discussed and that the same pattern of differences holds by sex and race/ethnicity. Gang members reported greater levels of risk to a statistically significant degree on the following risk factors than did their non-gang counterparts:

- *Individual:* impulsivity, risk seeking, perceptions of guilt, neutralizations, and self-esteem
- *Family:* parental monitoring, attachment to fathers, and attachment to mothers
- *Peer:* commitment to negative peers, commitment to positive peers, association with pro-social peers, association with delinquent peers, unsupervised and unstructured activity with friends, and hanging out where drugs and alcohol available
- *School:* commitment to school, perceived limited educational opportunities, and perceived negative school environment

The gang youths reported significantly lower levels of parental monitoring than did the non-gang youths. That is, the parents of gang youths were less likely than the parents of non-gang youths to know where their children were and with whom they were associating. In a similar vein, the gang youths were considerably more likely than the non-gang youths to have friends who engaged in delinquent behavior and to have few friends who took part in pro-social school and community activities. There are also significant differences in attitudinal measures such as perceived guilt and use of neutralizations. Specifically, gang youths reported that they would experience considerably less guilt if they broke the law than was the case for the non-gang youths. And gang members were much more likely than non-gang members to believe that it was OK to lie, steal, and fight in a variety of circumstances.

Summary and Conclusion

At the outset of this chapter, we said that we would address the four questions through our review of the literature and analysis of our data set: What is the prevalence of youth gang membership? Are gang youths disproportionately

minority boys from single-parent families? Are gang youths more violent than other youths? And what risk factors are associated with gang membership, and do they vary by sex and race/ethnicity? We believe that the growing body of research to which ours contributes suggests that some of the persistent stereotypes about gang members are inaccurate. While gangs are more likely to be found in inner cities experiencing economic disadvantage, this supports neither the accuracy nor the validity of the commonly articulated beliefs that gangs are found only in such disadvantaged areas and that all youths in such areas are involved with gangs.

Contrary to these stereotypes, gangs can be found in a wide range of communities, and only a small minority of youths, regardless of community characteristics, join gangs. Youths who join gangs also tend to resemble the youths from the communities in which they live. Gang members are male and female, reside in single-parent as well as two-parent households, and are not exclusively racial/ethnic minorities. Nonetheless, personal and family demographic characteristics are associated with elevated risks for gang affiliation.

There is little doubt surrounding the belief that gang-affiliated youths are more violent than non-gang youths. In our sample, the gang youths accounted for less than 9 percent of all youths, yet they accounted for more than half of all of the serious violent offenses reported. A higher percentage of gang members than non-gang youths reported having committed each specific type of offense, and of those active offenders, the gang youths reported having committed more actual offenses. It is important to note that the gang girls also reported high levels of involvement in violent offending. Furthermore, while the prevalence rates for violent offending did differ by race/ethnicity, gang membership eliminated such differences. Gang members, regardless of race/ethnicity, are high-rate offenders.

The risk factor analyses reported in this chapter consistently paint a picture of gang members as being significantly different from non-gang members within each domain. They are more impulsive, have less parental monitoring, are more committed to negative peers, and possess lower levels of commitment to school. Importantly, the gang youths also reported experiencing less guilt associated with illegal activity, and they indicated greater tolerance for the use of physical force to resolve differences.

We conclude this chapter by reflecting on the work of two widely acclaimed gang researchers, Cheryl Maxson and Malcolm Klein. Troubled by the common images of American youth gangs perpetuated by media accounts (i.e., highly organized groups with clearly established leadership and membership roles that were running the illegal drug markets and exporting their gangs to satellite cities around the country), they undertook a study to try to find these stereotypical gangs. Based on a large-scale survey of law enforcement agencies, they found that most of the reported gangs did not fit the stereotype of youth gangs that originated in the 1950s (Maxson and Klein 1995). In fact, they were able to place most American youth gangs into one of five categories: traditional, neo-traditional, compressed, collective, and specialty gangs. Neo-traditional gangs have a relatively

short history; are territorial; engage in a variety of crimes; and have more than fifty members. Compressed gangs also have a brief history; have a narrow age range of members; may or may not be territorial; have versatile crime patterns; and have fewer than fifty members. These two gang types appear to be more common and account for a large number of new gangs and gang members, especially in the new or "emerging" gang cities such as some of those included in our sample. Thus, American youth gangs apparently do not come in one size or shape. However, one attribute shared by gang-affiliated youths, regardless of gang type, is participation in violence. Furthermore, those youths who join gangs appear to be qualitatively different from non-gang youths for virtually all of the risk factors examined in this chapter. We put these findings into perspective by citing Klein's (2001, 10) assertion that, not only are the individuals who belong to gangs different, but gangs are "qualitatively different from other youth groups." For this reason, it is important to continue to study gangs and gang members so we can better understand and respond to the problems associated with gang affiliation.

6
Violent Victimization

We now turn our attention to violent victimization, a topic that receives considerably less media and research interest than violent offending. While one form of youth victimization, school violence, has received some attention, much of this concern has been dedicated to deadly yet rare shootings on school property. We do not minimize the significance of school violence, but in this chapter we are interested in violent victimization in any setting. Thus, we examine the prevalence of and risk factors associated with three types of victimization: assault, aggravated assault, and robbery. We will examine each of these types of victimization separately, as well as two composite measures similar to National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) categories: (1) *total violent victimization,* which includes all three types of victimization; and (2) *serious violent victimization,* which includes only aggravated assault and robbery. For comparison, we also place youth into three mutually exclusive categories: non-victims, simple assault victims, and serious violence victims (aggravated assault or robbery). The following questions guide our analyses:

- What is the scope of violent victimization among youths?
- How do sex, race/ethnicity, gang membership, and community influence the youths' experiences of victimization?
- What are the risk factors associated with violent victimization?
- How do sex, race/ethnicity, and gang membership influence the risk factors associated with violent victimization?

Data Sources on Violent Victimization of Youths

Just as there are varying definitions of "youth violence," so, too, are there numerous sources that provide information on the topic. Some aggregate-level information about victimization is available from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), and the Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR). The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), established in 1973, is the most commonly used source of victimization data. One of the main strengths of the NCVS is that it provides information about a nationally representative sample of households and individuals. Information on hospital and emergency room visits provides another source of victimization data. Other large-scale sources of data can be found from various self-report surveys, such as the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Monitoring the Future (MTF) program housed at the University of Michigan. In addition, regular summary reports are issued by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (see, e.g., Snyder and Sickmund 1999, 2006) and the CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.[1]

Epidemiology of Youth Violent Victimization

Several of these sources suggest that violence is a significant concern for youths. Recent results from the MTF show that approximately 70 percent of high-school seniors regularly worry about crime and violence. Concern is higher for girls (78%) and African Americans (77%) than for boys (65%) and whites (65%; Johnston, Bachman, and O'Malley 2003). Information provided by the CDC further illustrates youths' concern about violence: Data from the YRBSS in 2003 show that 5.4 percent of youths did not attend school one or more days during the preceding month because of safety concerns on their way to, from, or at school (Centers for Disease Control 2004). However, as youth violence declined following the peak offending years of 1993–1994 (Blumstein and Rosenfeld 1999; Cook and Laub 1998, 2002; Lynch 2002), so did youths' concerns about crime and violence (Centers for Disease Control 2004; Johnston, Bachman, and O'Malley 2003).

As the data used in this book were collected in 1995, it is important to examine the nature and scope of violent victimization at that time. MTF data for 1995 show that approximately 30 percent of high-school seniors reported having been threatened without a weapon or injury; 18 percent reported having been threatened (but not injured) by a person with a weapon; 16 percent reported having

[1]See http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm#cius (UCR); http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cjisd/ucr.htm (NIBRS); http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/ojstatbb/ezashr (SHR); http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/cvict.htm#ncvs (NCVS); http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/YRBS/index.htm (YRBSS); http://www.monitoringthefuture.org (MTF); http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/yvoverview.htm (CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control).

TABLE 6.1 ANNUAL PREVALENCE AND INDIVIDUAL VICTIMIZATION RATES (IVRs) FOR THE TOTAL SAMPLE AND BY SEX

	Total sample ($N = 5,935$)		Male ($N = 2,830$)		Female ($N = 3,054$)	
Violent act	Prevalence (%)	IVR (mean)	Prevalence (%)	IVR (mean)	Prevalence (%)	IVR (mean)
Have been hit[a,b]	44	3.6	53	3.7	36	3.4
Have been attacked[a,b]	10	2.7	14	3.0	7	2.3
Have been robbed[a,b]	8	2.8	12	3.0	4	2.1
Total violent victimization[a,b]	48	4.4	58	4.8	39	3.8
Serious violent victimization[a,b]	15	3.4	20	3.8	9	2.6

[a] $p < .05$, prevalence, boys versus girls; *t*-test.

[b] $p < .05$, IVR, boys versus girls; *t*-test.

been injured by an unarmed person; and 5 percent reported having been injured by someone with a weapon during the prior year (Johnston, Bachman, and O'Malley 1995). YRBSS data from the same period illustrate that approximately 39 percent of students had been in a physical fight, with 4 percent of students nationwide having received injuries serious enough to require treatment by a medical professional (Centers for Disease Control 2004). Additional data from the NCVS for 1995 show a rate of non-fatal violent victimization (robbery, rape, assault) of 107 per 1,000 youths age 12–15 and approximately 107.7 per 1,000 youths age 16–19, higher than for any other age ranges. The highest rates were for simple assault, at 79.9 for youths age 12–15 and 68.6 for youths age 16–19, and for aggravated assault, at 15.4 for youths age 12–15 and 24.4 for youths age 16–19. Much lower were rates for robbery, at 9.5 for youths age 12–15 and 9 for youths age 16–19, and for rape/sexual assault, at 2.2 for youths age 12–15 and 5.7 for youths age 16–19. Most of these victimizations were attempted (not completed) and did not result in injury (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1997).

Violent Victimization among Our Sample

It is important to keep in mind that, unlike the figures highlighted above, our sample is not nationally representative. As we discussed in earlier chapters, the results reported throughout this chapter must be viewed with this limitation in mind. It is also important to remember, however, that the large scope and diversity of youth included in the study present an important picture that supplements information from other sources of data.

So what does the scope of victimization look like in our sample? Table 6.1 presents the prevalence of victimization and individual victimization rates for the total sample of youths, as well as separately for girls and boys. Slightly fewer than one-half of these youths (48%) had experienced one or more general violent victimizations (assault, aggravated assault, or robbery) during the previous year, and approximately one-sixth of the youths (15%) had been the victim of

serious violence (aggravated assault or robbery). The most common form of violent victimization was assault. In earlier chapters, we discussed the multiple meanings that this measure comprises, from a punch by a sibling to an all-out fight with another individual. Nevertheless, we see a relatively high proportion of students who had been assaulted. Robbery and aggravated assault victimizations were less common. Approximately one in ten youths (10%) had experienced one or more aggravated assault victimizations, and approximately one in twelve youths (8%) had been robbed during the prior twelve months.

In Chapter 4, we introduced individual offending rates (IORs). In this chapter, we refer to the number of victimizations experienced by youths as individual victimization rates (IVRs). Of the victimized youths, we can see that the number of experiences they reported in the previous year also differed by type of violence. Victimized youths reported having been victims of any violent offense approximately 4.4 times in the previous year. Again, this appears to be driven by assault victimizations, for which youths reported having been assaulted approximately 3.6 times during the previous year. Even when assaults were excluded, victimized youths reported having been seriously victimized multiple times during the previous year, experiencing approximately 3.4 acts of serious violence, with victims of robbery or aggravated assault reporting having been victimized nearly three times during that period.

Sex Differences in Violent Victimization

Violent victimization is not distributed evenly across the general youth population. Rather, it differs for youths of different ages, sexes, and races/ethnicities. Boys typically experience more serious violent victimization than do girls, although the magnitude of the differences varies by age and type of victimization. The NCVS data for 1995, for example, reveal that the rate per 1,000 for any type of violent victimization was approximately 128.3 for boys age 12–15 and 125 for boys age 16–19, compared with 84.7 and 89.7 for girls (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1997). The annual rates for assault (simple and aggravated) and robbery for boys were higher than those for girls, according to the NCVS data. In addition, self-reports from the MTF and YRBSS showed that boys were more likely than girls to have experienced one or more such violent victimizations during the prior year (Centers for Disease Control 2004; Johnston, Bachman, and O'Malley 1995). For example, YRBSS data show that approximately 46 percent of boys had been involved in a physical fight, and 5.7 percent had been injured badly enough to require treatment by a doctor or nurse, compared with 30.6 percent and 2.5 percent of girls (Centers for Disease Control 2004). Conversely, rape and sexual assault were more commonly reported by girls than by boys, according to both NCVS (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1997) and YRBSS data (Centers for Disease Control 2004).

The findings from the youths in our sample present consistent information for simple assault, aggravated assault, and robbery. As illustrated in Table 6.1,

boys were more likely than girls to have been victimized by violence, regardless of whether we are examining prevalence or IVRs. In short, boys were more likely to have been violently victimized, and they experienced more violent victimizations, during the prior twelve months.

The magnitude of differences between girls and boys, however, depends on which type of violent victimization is examined. For both girls and boys, the highest prevalence rates and IVRs were for the total violence measure. More than one-half of the boys (58%) reported having been a victim of violence in the preceding year, compared with approximately one-third of the girls (39%). In addition, among victims of violence during the previous year, boys reported having been victimized 4.8 times, while girls reported 3.8 violent victimizations. Clearly, many of these experiences for both boys and girls involved an assault. Fifty-three percent of boys and 36 percent of girls reported having been a victim of simple assault during the previous year, with male victims averaging approximately 3.7 assaults and female victims averaging 3.4 assaults during that time.

It may be instructive to examine these differences using ratios of boys to girls. Sex ratios for the annual prevalence of total violent victimization show that there were approximately 1.5 male victims for each female victim. Boys who were victimized during the previous year also reported one more violent incident (4.8) than did female victims (3.8), a ratio of 1.26:1. For assault during the previous year, however, the average number of violent victimizations experienced by male and female victims was similar.

When only serious victimizations were examined, the sex differences were more pronounced. Approximately 20 percent of boys had been victims of serious violence during the previous year, compared with 9 percent of girls. Fourteen percent of boys reported having been victims of aggravated assault and 12 percent had been robbed, compared with 7 percent and 4 percent of girls. Sex ratios for serious victimization show a similar pattern: More than two boys had been victimized for each female victimized by serious violence. The gap between boys and girls was largest for robbery victimizations, with approximately three male victims for each female victim.

Examination of IVRs revealed a pattern similar to the results for prevalence. Male victims reported approximately four serious victimizations during the previous year, compared with an average of 2.6 victimizations for girls. In other words, boys who had been victims of serious violence reported 1.5 victimizations for each victimization of a girl. These differences were also true for aggravated assault and robbery.

Racial/Ethnic Differences in Violent Victimization

Several studies have examined racial differences between African American and white youths. For example, MTF data from 1995 show that African American youths were more likely than white youths to have been threatened (but not injured) by someone with a weapon (26.8% versus 16.4%) and without a weapon

(31.6% versus 29.6%). African American youths were also more likely than white youths to have been injured purposefully during the prior year by someone with a weapon (6.8% versus 3.9%) and without a weapon (18.6% versus 14.7%). These results illustrate a clear pattern: African American youths are more likely to be the victims of armed and unarmed threats and physical violence (Johnston, Bachman, and O'Malley 1995). YRBSS data show a similar picture, as 41.6 percent of African American youths had been involved in a physical fight during the previous year, and 4.4 percent had been injured badly enough to require treatment by a doctor or a nurse, compared with 36 percent and 3.4 percent of white youths (Centers for Disease Control 2004).

Other sources present a more complex picture. For example, NCVS data for 1995 show that the violent victimization rate for African American youths age 12–15 was higher than that for white youths (120.4 and 106.8 per 1,000, respectively), but the pattern was reversed for youths age 16–19 (110.5 per 1,000 for white youths, compared with 100 per 1,000 for African American youths). These patterns can be partially explained by the relatively higher rate of threatened or attempted violence, rather than completed violence, experienced by white youths. In other words, rates of completed violent victimization of African Americans (46.7 for youths age 12–15 and 43.3 for youths age 16–19) were much higher than for whites (30.5 for youths age 12–15 and 37 for youths age 16–19). The highest violent victimization rates for both white and African American youths age 12–19, in order, were for simple assault, aggravated assault, robbery, and rape/sexual assault. Additional racial/ethnic differences existed between offense types and age groups. For example, the victimization rates for simple assault were highest for white youths age 12–15 and lowest for African American youths age 16–19, while rates for robbery were highest for African American youths age 16–19 and lowest for white youths aged 16–19 (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1997).

Few studies have compared violent victimization of Hispanic youths with that of their white and African American peers. YRBSS data for 1995 reveal that Hispanic youths were more likely than both African Americans and whites to have been involved in and injured during a physical fight during the prior month (Centers for Disease Control 2004). Conversely, results from a study of the NCVS figures for 1993–2000 (Rennison 2002) show that the average annual violent victimization rate for youths age 12–17 was 98 per 1,000 for whites, 100 per 1,000 for African Americans, and 90 per 1,000 for Hispanics. It is important to note, however, that treatment of race/ethnicity as a risk factor for violent victimization often simplifies the picture by not taking into account other important differences, such as socioeconomic status or characteristics of neighborhoods where people live (Sampson and Lauritsen 1994). While descriptions of such differences highlight which groups are at increased (or decreased) risk, these differences should not be interpreted as being caused by a person's race or ethnicity.

What do our results show? Table 6.2 includes information about annual prevalence rates for victimization and annual IVRs for each racial/ethnic group in our sample. Although statistically significant, the differences in prevalence

TABLE 6.2 ANNUAL PREVALENCE AND INDIVIDUAL VICTIMIZATION RATES (IVRs) BY RACE/ETHNICITY

	White ($N = 2,355$)		African American ($N = 1,544$)		Hispanic ($N = 1,098$)	
Violent act	Prevalence (%)	IVR (mean)	Prevalence (%)	IVR (mean)	Prevalence (%)	IVR (mean)
Have been hit	46	3.8	44	3.2	41	3.3
Have been attacked[a]	8	2.6	13	2.7	12	2.7
Have been robbed[a]	7	2.7	11	2.6	6	2.6
Total violent victimization[a]	48	4.4	50	4.1	45	4.2
Serious violent victimization[a]	12	3.2	19	3.2	15	3.4

[a] $p < .05$, prevalence; ANOVA.

between racial/ethnic groups are relatively small for the total violence measure (a low of 45% for Hispanic youths and a high of 50% for African American youths). Interestingly, the IVRs for total violent victimization are similar across racial/ethnic groups: Regardless of race/ethnicity, victims averaged approximately four experiences of violent victimization during the prior year. As was the case for the sample as a whole, simple assault victimizations account for the majority of these victimizations for all racial/ethnic groups. Also interesting to note is the lack of differences among racial/ethnic groups in prevalence rates or IVRs for assault. In other words, youths of different racial/ethnic groups are *similar* in the likelihood that they will be assaulted. In addition, the number of times a victim has been assaulted is *similar* across white, African American, and Hispanic youths. This is important because it highlights that using a "general victimization" measure does not show many differences in victimization among youths of different racial/ethnic groups.

When we examine only the most serious types of victimization—robbery and aggravated assault—we see that the percentage of youths who had experienced this type of victimization is much lower. It is for these serious offenses, however, that we see the largest differences among the racial/ethnic groups. African American youths reported the highest prevalence for serious victimization, while white youths reported the lowest. Approximately one in five African American youths reported having been the victim of serious violence, compared with approximately one in eight white youths. Hispanic youths' prevalence of serious victimization was lower than that of African Americans but greater than that of whites. Regardless of race/ethnicity, however, IVRs for serious victimization were virtually identical for white, African American, and Hispanic youths at just over three victimizations.

Differences among racial/ethnic groups were more apparent when we examined robbery and aggravated assault separately. African American youths reported the highest prevalence of victimization for each of these offenses (11% and 13%, respectively). The percentage of youths who had been the victims of aggravated assault was similar between Hispanics and African Americans (12% and 13%)—

much higher than the percentage of whites (8%). The percentage of Hispanic youths who had been robbed was similar to that of white youths (6% and 7%, respectively). In addition, IVRs for robbery and aggravated assault were virtually identical for whites, African Americans, and Hispanics.

Gang Membership and Violent Victimization

In Chapter 5, we reviewed the resurgence of interest in youth gangs during the past twenty years. Much of the gang literature has concentrated on offending by gang members, with relatively little attention paid to the other side of the coin: victimization. Recently, however, studies have begun to explore the link between gang membership and the risk of victimization (Miller 1998; Miller and Decker 2001; Peterson, Taylor, and Esbensen 2004; Taylor et al. 2008; Taylor, Peterson, Esbensen, and Freng 2007). While we examine the overlap between violent offending, violent victimization, and gang membership in greater detail in the next chapter, it makes sense to provide an introduction to gangs and victimization here, as the issue typically has been ignored or the relationships have been misunderstood. For example, contrary to popular myths that youths join gangs for and receive protection, gang membership has been found to *increase* the risk of violent victimization.

Victimization of gang members may come from two sources. First, gang members may become victims of predatory offending by others; and second, gang members may be victimized by members of their own gang. Gang members may be targets of retaliation from rival gangs (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Miller and Decker 2001; Sanders 1994). In addition, gang members' participation in certain activities, such as drug selling (e.g., Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Howell and Decker 1999; Maxson 1995), may make them targets of violent victimization (e.g., robbery of their drugs or cash) from others due to their inability or unwillingness to report victimizations or to be taken seriously by police (Jacobs 2000). Conversely, gang members may be victimized by members of their own gangs as part of initiation rituals (Decker and Van Winkle 1996) or as punishment for violating rules (Padilla 1995). These processes make violence a routine part of gang life (Decker and Van Winkle 1996, 117), stark evidence of which is that of ninety-nine gang members interviewed in the early 1990s in Decker and Van Winkle's St. Louis study, twenty-eight had died a violent death by the middle of 2003 (Scott H. Decker, personal communication, June 2, 2003).

As can be seen from Table 6.3,[2] violent victimization is significantly more common among gang members than it is among non-gang youths. All of the comparisons reported in Table 6.3 reflect statistically significant differences

[2]For more detailed examination of the link between gang membership and victimization using these data, see Peterson, Taylor, and Esbensen 2004; Taylor et al. 2008; Taylor, Peterson, Esbensen, and Freng 2007.

TABLE 6.3 ANNUAL PREVALENCE AND INDIVIDUAL VICTIMIZATION RATES (IVRs) BY GANG STATUS

	Non-gang ($N = 5,226$)		Gang ($N = 522$)	
Violent act	Prevalence (%)	IVR (mean)	Prevalence (%)	IVR (mean)
Have been hit[a,b]	43	3.4	60	4.9
Have been attacked[a,b]	8	2.3	38	3.8
Have been robbed[a,b]	7	2.4	21	4.1
Total violent victimization[a,b]	46	4.0	70	7.6
Serious violent victimization[a,b]	12	2.8	44	5.2

[a] $p < .05$, prevalence, non-gang versus gang; *t*-test for independent samples.

[b] $p < .05$, IVR, non-gang versus gang; *t*-test for independent samples.

between gang and non-gang youths. Compared with non-gang youths, gang members reported higher prevalence rates and IVRs. These findings hold for each individual item and for the composite measures. Our results suggest that gang members are more likely than non-gang members to be victimized and to experience higher levels of victimization.

Seventy percent of gang members had been violently victimized during the prior year. Assault was a particularly common experience for gang members, with 60 percent having been assaulted during the prior year. Serious violent victimizations were also relatively common, with one in five gang members having been robbed and approximately two in five reporting having been victims of aggravated assault. Overall, approximately 44 percent of gang members reported having been victims of serious violence during the prior year.

In addition, the magnitude of the differences between gang and non-gang youths is large. Gang members were nearly 1.5 times as likely as non-gang members to have experienced any violent victimization and approximately 3.7 times as likely to have experienced serious violent victimization during the previous year. An examination of the IVRs also illustrates that gang members who had been violently victimized experienced approximately 1.9 times as many incidents of general or serious violent victimization in the prior year as non-gang victims of violence.

Types of Victims

In the preceding sections, we discussed three specific measures and two composite indices of victimization. This approach is similar to that used by the NCVS. Another approach is to identify youths who have experienced different types of victimization. That is, rather than examining "total violent victimization," lumping together victimization by assault, aggravated assault, and robbery, we examine three mutually exclusive types of victim: (1) *non-victims,* or youths who did not experience any of the three types of victimization during the prior year;

(2) *assault victims,* or youths who had been victims of assault only; and (3) *serious violence victims,* or youths who had been victims of robbery or aggravated assault. This is useful for two reasons. First, it takes an approach similar to that used in prior chapters by creating mutually exclusive categories. And second, it makes a clear distinction among non-victims, assault victims, and serious violence victims. As we saw earlier, simple assault is by far the most common type of victimization experienced by the youth in our sample. Separating assault victims from victims of more serious violence (aggravated assault or robbery) provides additional clarification of the patterns described in the previous sections.

Using this approach, 54 percent of the youths in our sample were classified as non-victims; 34 percent were classified as assault victims; and 12 percent were classified as victims of serious violence. Comparisons by sex, race/ethnicity, age, and living arrangements showed significant differences across these demographic groupings. Boys were slightly more likely than girls to have been victims of assault (38% versus 30%) but twice as likely to have been victims of serious violence (17% versus 8%). Girls were more likely than boys to have been non-victims (62% versus 44%). Looking at this another way, although boys made up approximately 48 percent of our sample, they accounted for 66 percent of the serious violence victims. Conversely, girls made up about 52 percent of our sample but approximately 61 percent of the non-victims.

Comparisons of youths of different racial/ethnic groups show few differences in terms of who were non-victims (52% of African Americans, 54% of Hispanics, and 55% of whites). Differences did appear, however, when looking at those classified as victims. African American youths were nearly twice as likely as white youths to have been victims of serious violence (16% versus 9%). Hispanics again were more likely than whites, but less likely than African Americans, to report having been victims of serious violence. We again see the (dis)proportionate composition of these groupings, as whites accounted for approximately 47 percent of the sample but only 36 percent of serious violence victims, while African American youths made up 31 percent of the sample but 40 percent of the serious violence victims. In other words, African American youths constituted a disproportionate share of the serious violence victims in our sample. By contrast, for Hispanics, the percentage of each victim type was similar to their representation in the sample (22%).

Community Context and Violent Victimization

Prior research has illustrated the importance of social context in the risk of victimization (Miethe and McDowall 1993; Roundtree, Land, and Miethe 1994; Sampson and Wooldredge 1987). Furthermore, in Chapter 4 we reported significant differences in rates of violent offending across the eleven communities included in our study. A question of concern is: To what extent, if any, did community or social context affect violent victimization in our sample? As was the

case for violent offending, significant community-level differences exist in violent victimization. Whereas only 7 percent of the youths in Will County, Illinois, were serious violence victims, approximately 22 percent of the youths in Kansas City were so classified. Conversely, approximately 61 percent of the youths in Providence, Rhode Island, were non-victims, compared with 44 percent of the youths in Milwaukee. Interestingly, 40 percent of the youths in Will County were assault victims, followed closely by 39 percent of the youths in Milwaukee and 38 percent of the youths in Torrance, California. No significant community-level differences appeared, however, in terms of the number of victimizations experienced by victims. In other words, youths who resided in different cities experienced different likelihoods of being victimized, but victims at each site had experienced similar levels of victimization during the prior year.

Boys were more likely than girls to be serious violence victims at all of the sites. Interestingly, the comparison of percentages for boys and girls illustrates less consistent patterns in violent victimization. A larger percentage of boys than girls had been victims of assault at seven sites; the percentages of boys and girls who had been victims of assault at three sites (Kansas City, Philadelphia, and Phoenix) were relatively equal; and a larger percentage of girls than boys had been assault victims at one site (Milwaukee). Thus, it appears that the largest sex differences appear at each end of the victimization spectrum. Girls are more likely than boys to be non-victims, and boys are more likely than girls to be serious violence victims. In addition, sex differences appear to vary across communities.[3]

Summary of Differences in Violent Victimization

Violent victimization appears to be a relatively common experience among this group of youths. Approximately one-half (48%) had experienced a form of violent victimization during the previous year, and 15 percent had been a victim of serious violence. Thus, violent victimization is again found to be much more prevalent in our sample than other data sources, such as the MTF, would suggest. Simple assault victimizations were by far the most common, with fewer aggravated assaults and robbery victimizations. This finding is consistent with those using other sources of data, such as the MTF, YRBSS, and NCVS. Overall, approximately one in six youths had experienced one or more serious violent victimizations during the previous year. The risk varied significantly by sex, race/ethnicity, gang membership, and community, with boys, African Americans, gang members, and youth living in large cities at particularly high risk of serious violent victimization.

[3]Unfortunately, the overlap between community and race/ethnicity and between community and gang membership makes it difficult to ascertain community-level differences for these subgroups. For a descriptive account of racial/ethnic and community-level differences, see Taylor, Esbensen, Peterson, and Freng 2007.

Risk Factors for Violent Victimization among Youths

One of our key interests in this book is to examine the extent to which risk factors are linked to various forms of youth violence. In Chapters 4 and 5, we examined risk factors associated with violent offending and gang membership. Given that research has demonstrated the overlap between victimization and offending (Esbensen and Huizinga 1991; Loeber, Kalb, and Huizinga 2001; Sampson and Lauritsen 1990; Schreck, Stewart, and Osgood 2008), we believe that risk factors associated with offending will also be linked with victimization. Interestingly, a separate body of literature focusing on risk factors and victimization has evolved since 1980. Sampson and Lauritsen (1994), for example, reviewed extant research in the three key domains of the individual, the situational, and the contextual level. Their work found that a variety of factors, such as age, sex, and involvement in "high-risk" activities (such as the use of alcohol and drugs), was strongly related to the risk of victimization. Other factors, such as race, received less support once other risk factors were taken into account. (This is consistent with the community effects reported in the previous section of this chapter.)

We now turn to a discussion of the findings related to the key risk factors outlined in Chapter 2 and how these factors are associated with youths' risk of violent victimization. Table 6.4 presents information about risk factors from the individual, family, peer, and school domains for the total sample, as well as separately by sex, across the three categories of victimization. Table 6.5 presents similar information for members of different racial and ethnic groups, and Table 6.6 presents the information for gang members and non-gang members.

Individual Risk Factors

As discussed in previous chapters, individual-level factors include variables such as guilt, use of neutralizations, and levels of self-control. While the associations between guilt, neutralizations, and victimization have received little empirical scrutiny, some authors have revised and extended Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) general theory of crime (i.e., self-control theory) to encompass victimization. While Gottfredson and Hirschi focused exclusively on offending, Schreck (1999) provided a framework to understand the relationship between individual factors related to self-control and the risk of victimization.

Schreck's (1999) reconceptualization of Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory suggests that people with low self-control will be more likely to experience criminal victimization, just as they are more likely to be involved in offending. Levels of impulsivity, for example, may affect individuals' consideration of long-term implications of their behavior, including the consequences of engaging in dangerous activities. This may be particularly problematic in people who also seek risks, as dangerous activities are often viewed as exciting and fun. This approach suggests that individuals with low levels of self-control will find themselves in

dangerous situations, thus increasing their chances of being victimized. A recent study using the longitudinal data from the National Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program (Schreck, Stewart, and Fisher 2006) highlighted the importance of low self-control in victimization.

The findings from our sample (shown in Table 6.4) reveal that self-control is, indeed, an important factor in violent victimization.[4] Assault victims showed significantly higher levels of impulsivity and risk seeking (i.e., lower self-control) than did non-victims. In addition, serious violence victims reported the lowest levels of self-control (i.e., the highest levels of impulsivity and risk seeking). The differences among these categories are all statistically significant. Thus, our results are consistent with the growing body of research that identifies self-control as an important correlate of victimization.

Table 6.4 also shows differences among the types of victim on other individual-level risk factors: guilt, use of neutralizations, social isolation, and self-esteem. Serious violence victims reported the lowest levels of guilt, greatest use of neutralizations, highest levels of social isolation, and lowest levels of self-esteem. In addition, non-victims reported the highest levels of guilt, least use of neutralizations, lowest levels of social isolation, and highest levels of self-esteem. Post hoc comparisons (not illustrated in the tables) show that, with the exception of social isolation, differences between serious violence victims and both assault victims and non-victims are statistically significant.

This is only part of the picture, however. Keeping in mind the review conducted by Sampson and Lauritsen (1994), what happens to factors such as sex, race/ethnicity, and gang membership when theoretical risk factors are taken into account? We can see that the differences in individual risk factors among the three victim types remain important, even when sex (Table 6.4), race/ethnicity (Table 6.5), and gang membership (Table 6.6) are taken into account. Again, we found the lowest levels for each individual risk factor for non-victims and the highest levels for serious violence victims. With the exception of impulsivity, sex differences remain strong. In other words, boys had lower levels of guilt and social isolation than girls, regardless of victimization status. Boys also showed greater risk seeking and use of neutralizations and higher self-esteem than girls, regardless of victimization status. Significant interaction effects between victimization status and sex are also present for guilt and neutralizations.

The results for race/ethnicity are more complex (see Table 6.5). Racial/ethnic differences in levels of each of the individual risk factors are significantly different, even when victimization status is taken into account. However, interaction effects between race/ethnicity and victim status for each of the individual risk factors makes this pattern quite complicated; in fact, no discernable pattern is

[4]Remember that we are using the cross-sectional data from the National Evaluation of the G.R.E.A.T. program here. These are not the same data used in Schreck, Stewart, and Fisher 2006. The consistency in findings across the two studies provides additional support for the important link between self-control and victimization.

TABLE 6.4 RISK FACTOR SCORES BY VICTIM TYPE FOR THE TOTAL SAMPLE AND BY SEX

Risk factor	Non-victim ($N = 2,923$)	Assault victim ($N = 1,860$)	Serious violence victim ($N = 673$)	Non-victim		Assault victim		Serious violence victim	
				Male ($N = 1,121$)	Female ($N = 1,777$)	Male ($N = 975$)	Female ($N = 871$)	Male ($N = 440$)	Female ($N = 225$)
Individual domain									
Impulsivity[a,b]	2.77	2.84	3.19	2.80	2.75	2.82	2.85	3.18	3.18
Risk seeking[a,b,c]	2.85	3.15	3.52	2.98	2.78	3.23	3.06	3.59	3.36
Guilt[a,b,c,d]	2.43	2.31	1.94	2.32	2.50	2.27	2.35	1.87	2.09
Use of neutralizations[a,b,c,d]	2.93	3.16	3.62	3.13	2.80	3.25	3.06	3.70	3.46
Social isolation[a,b,c]	2.36	2.50	2.52	2.14	2.49	2.35	2.67	2.36	2.82
Self-esteem[a,b,c]	4.06	3.99	3.94	4.13	4.02	4.05	3.93	3.98	3.88
Family domain									
Parental monitoring[a,b,c,d]	3.84	3.74	3.30	3.68	3.95	3.68	3.80	3.19	3.52
Attachment to mother[a,b,d]	5.04	4.75	4.44	5.04	5.04	4.84	4.65	4.42	4.48
Attachment to father[a,b,c,d]	4.58	4.44	4.13	4.82	4.43	4.73	4.10	4.35	3.78
Peer domain									
Pro-social peers[a,b,d]	3.08	2.97	2.60	3.08	3.09	3.03	2.90	2.57	2.66
Delinquent peers[a,b,c,d]	1.79	2.00	2.67	1.90	1.72	2.00	2.00	2.75	2.49
Commitment to positive peers[a,b,c,d]	3.93	3.84	3.33	3.78	4.03	3.79	3.89	3.25	3.49
Commitment to negative peers[a,b,c]	2.24	2.40	2.95	2.33	2.18	2.41	2.39	2.97	2.89
% Spending time without adults present[a,b]	71	79	86	73	71	77	81	87	84
% Spending time with drugs and alcohol present[a,b]	22	32	60	22	21	29	34	59	60
School domain									
Commitment to school[a,b,c]	3.70	3.55	3.23	3.59	3.76	3.50	3.60	3.19	3.24
Perception of limited educational opportunities[a,b]	1.81	1.87	2.16	1.84	1.79	1.86	1.87	2.17	2.13
Perception of negative school environment[a,b,c,d]	2.58	2.68	2.94	2.54	2.60	2.62	2.75	2.94	2.95

Note: Risk factor scores were determined as described in the Appendix. Higher scores indicate *greater* risk for the following measures: impulsivity, risk seeking, use of neutralizations, social isolation, delinquent peers, commitment to negative peers, spending time without adults present, spending time with drugs and alcohol present, perception of limited educational opportunities, and perception of negative school environment. Higher scores indicate *lower* risk for the following measures: guilt, self-esteem, attachment to mother, attachment to father, pro-social peers, commitment to positive peers, and commitment to school. Time scores are given as percentage of individuals reporting spending time under the stated condition.

[a] $p < .05$, victim type; ANOVA. [b] $p < .05$, victim type; [c] $p < .05$, sex; [d] $p < .05$, victim type * sex; two-way ANOVA.

TABLE 6.5 RISK FACTOR SCORES BY VICTIM TYPE AND BY RACE/ETHNICITY

	Non-victim			Assault victim			Serious violence victim		
Risk factor	White ($N = 1,177$)	African American ($N = 715$)	Hispanic ($N = 566$)	White ($N = 807$)	African American ($N = 449$)	Hispanic ($N = 320$)	White ($N = 200$)	African American ($N = 222$)	Hispanic ($N = 137$)
Individual domain									
Impulsivity[a,b,c]	2.65	2.88	2.88	2.77	2.92	2.93	3.18	3.09	3.28
Risk seeking[a,b,c]	2.89	2.75	2.96	3.27	2.94	3.25	3.72	3.20	3.62
Guilt[a,b,c]	2.50	2.33	2.35	2.34	2.31	2.19	1.96	2.01	1.87
Use of neutralizations[a,b,c]	2.75	3.09	3.15	3.09	3.17	3.36	3.53	3.52	3.85
Social isolation[a,b,c]	2.36	2.22	2.43	2.57	2.34	2.44	2.71	2.31	2.42
Self-esteem[a,b,c]	4.08	4.21	3.92	3.95	4.20	3.87	3.76	4.23	3.94
Family domain									
Parental monitoring[a,b,c]	3.99	3.69	3.73	3.80	3.67	3.64	3.28	3.43	3.28
Attachment to mother[a,b,c]	5.10	5.10	4.92	4.77	4.82	4.71	4.23	4.74	4.52
Attachment to father[a,c]	4.74	4.44	4.42	4.50	4.45	4.35	4.03	4.17	4.26
Peer domain									
Pro-social peers[a,b,c]	3.30	2.84	2.87	3.09	2.85	2.71	2.66	2.70	2.45
Delinquent peers[a,b,c]	1.66	1.91	1.97	1.90	2.06	2.21	2.67	2.52	2.81
Commitment to positive peers[a,b]	3.97	3.94	3.84	3.83	3.94	3.69	3.25	3.51	3.29
Commitment to negative peers[a,b,c]	2.26	2.18	2.31	2.47	2.14	2.57	3.14	2.59	3.06
% Spending time without adults present[a,b,c]	77	69	63	84	72	79	90	80	90
% Spending time with drugs and alcohol present[a,b,c]	23	20	26	33	23	39	62	49	69
School domain									
Commitment to school[a,b,c]	3.68	3.74	3.61	3.47	3.73	3.43	3.04	3.53	3.17
Perception of limited educational opportunities[a,b,c]	1.71	1.78	2.04	1.82	1.76	2.06	2.11	1.98	2.42
Perception of negative school environment[a,b,c]	2.49	2.70	2.57	2.60	2.78	2.74	2.96	2.93	2.83

Note: Risk factor scores were determined as described in the Appendix. For brief overview of scoring, see note to Table 6.4.

[a] $p < .05$, victim type; [b] $p < .05$, race/ethnicity; [c] $p < .05$, victim type * race/ethnicity; two-way ANOVA.

evident. For instance, for impulsivity, we found the highest levels for Hispanic serious violence victims, followed by white serious violence victims and African American serious violence victims, then Hispanic and African American assault victims, followed by Hispanic and African American non-victims. White assault victims and white non-victims had the lowest levels of impulsivity. If we look within victim type, we find that, among serious violence victims, African Americans reported the lowest level of risk for all six individual risk factors. The pattern within the other two types of victims is less clear. Among the assault victims, white youths ranked highest on risk seeking and social isolation; Hispanic youths reported the lowest levels of guilt associated with norm violations; and African American youths had the highest self-esteem. Absence of a clear pattern is again the case for the non-victim group. African Americans reported the lowest levels of risk seeking and the highest levels of self-esteem, while the white youths reported the lowest levels of impulsivity and the greatest amount of guilt.

Differences in individual risk factors between gang and non-gang members remain important, even when victimization status is taken into account (see Table 6.6). Regardless of victimization status, gang members showed significantly higher levels of impulsivity, risk seeking, and use of neutralizations. Conversely, gang members showed lower levels of guilt, social isolation, and self-esteem than did non-gang members. Gang membership and victimization status also interact for guilt: Non-gang non-victims reported the highest levels of guilt, followed by non-gang assault victims, non-gang serious violence victims, gang assault victims, gang non-victims, and gang serious violence victims.

Family Risk Factors

Family risk factors include concepts such as youths' emotional attachment to parents and parental monitoring of youths' activities. While much research identifies a link between family factors and offending, recent research (Esbensen, Huizinga, and Menard 1999; Schreck and Fisher 2004) has also illustrated the role of family factors on victimization. What do our results show?

Findings from Tables 6.4–6.6 illustrate that family factors are associated with victimization status. Non-victims reported the highest levels of parental monitoring and greatest attachment to both mothers and fathers. Conversely, serious violence victims reported the lowest levels of each of these family factors. With the exception of attachment to father (which is not significantly different by victimization type when gang membership is taken into account), these findings are robust, as they apply to the entire sample of youths (Table 6.4), as well as when factors such as sex (Table 6.4), race/ethnicity (Table 6.5), and gang membership (Table 6.6) are taken into account.

What about differences by sex, race/ethnicity, and gang membership? These results reveal a number of interesting patterns. Regardless of victim status, boys reported the lowest levels of parental monitoring and highest levels of attachment to father; the sex differences in attachment to mother, however, are not

TABLE 6.6 RISK FACTOR SCORES BY VICTIM TYPE AND BY GANG STATUS

	Non-victim		Assault victim		Serious violence victim	
Risk factor	Non-gang ($N = 2,667$)	Gang ($N = 142$)	Non-gang ($N = 1,717$)	Gang ($N = 113$)	Non-gang ($N = 452$)	Gang ($N = 200$)
Individual domain						
Impulsivity[a,b]	2.74	3.14	2.81	3.24	3.09	3.37
Risk seeking[a,b]	2.81	3.53	3.12	3.62	3.34	3.88
Guilt[a,b,c]	2.47	1.75	2.35	1.77	2.12	1.55
Use of neutralizations[a,b]	2.88	3.72	3.11	3.80	3.39	4.14
Social isolation[b]	2.36	2.37	2.51	2.35	2.59	2.41
Self-esteem[a,b]	4.07	3.93	4.00	3.76	3.99	3.81
Family domain						
Parental monitoring[a,b]	3.88	3.28	3.77	3.37	3.45	2.96
Attachment to mother[a,b]	5.08	4.46	4.77	4.41	4.59	4.05
Attachment to father[b]	4.61	3.91	4.47	3.99	4.23	3.85
Peer domain						
Pro-social peers[a,b]	3.12	2.47	3.01	2.38	2.76	2.26
Delinquent peers[a,b,c]	1.72	2.92	1.94	2.76	2.33	3.42
Commitment to positive peers[a,b]	3.98	3.30	3.88	3.32	3.60	2.76
Commitment to negative peers[a,b]	2.16	3.36	2.32	3.33	2.62	3.67
% Spending time without adults present[a,b]	70	86	79	87	83	92
% Spending time with drugs and alcohol present[a,b]	19	67	29	69	46	88
School domain						
Commitment to school[a,b]	3.74	3.07	3.58	3.08	3.45	2.76
Perception of limited educational opportunities[a,b]	1.79	2.16	1.85	2.17	2.04	2.41
Perception of negative school environment[a,b]	2.55	2.95	2.66	2.96	2.86	3.12

Note: Risk factor scores were determined as described in the Appendix. For brief overview of scoring, see note to Table 6.4.

[a] $p < .05$, victim type; [b] $p < .05$, gang status; [c] $p < .05$, victim type * gang status; two-way ANOVA.

significant when victim status is taken into account. Thus, it appears that family factors are related to victimization for both boys and girls, although important differences are present. Specifically, parental monitoring was lower, and attachment to father was higher, for the boys than for the girls, regardless of whether victimization had occurred, indicating important sex differences in these factors. Attachment to mothers, however, was similar for the male and female nonvictims, lower for female assault victims than for male assault victims, and higher for female serious violence victims than for male serious violence victims. This suggests that it is victimization status, rather than sex, that is most important in determining levels of attachment to mothers.

Racial/ethnic differences in levels of parental monitoring and attachment to mothers remain salient even when victimization status is taken into account. We found no significant differences, however, for attachment to fathers. Importantly,

differences in race/ethnicity and victimization status in all three family risk factors again interact. For instance, white non-victims showed the highest levels of parental monitoring, followed by white assault victims, Hispanic and African American non-victims and African American and Hispanic assault victims, African American serious violence victims, and white and Hispanic serious violence victims. When we examine patterns of risk within victim type, as was the case in the individual domain, no clear pattern emerges. Within the serious violence victim category, African American youths revealed the highest level of parental monitoring and the greatest attachment to mothers, while the white youths reported the lowest levels of attachment to fathers and Hispanics reported the highest. Among assault victims, the white youths showed the highest levels of parental monitoring. And contrary to the pattern for serious violence victims, among the assault victims the Hispanic youths had the lowest levels of attachment to fathers and the whites had the highest. Clearly, these relationships are again quite complex.

Differences between gang and non-gang members are also important but more straightforward. Regardless of victimization status, gang members reported lower levels of parental monitoring, attachment to mothers, and attachment to fathers than did non-gang members.

Peer Risk Factors

Peer factors such as involvement with and commitment to pro-social and delinquent peers have been found to correlate not only with juvenile offending but also with victimization (Esbensen and Huizinga 1991; Esbensen, Huizinga, and Menard 1999; Schreck, Fisher, and Miller 2004). In addition, two prominent perspectives in victimology—routine activities and lifestyles perspectives (e.g., Cohen and Felson 1979; Cohen, Kluegel, and Land 1981; Hindelang, Gottfredson, and Garofalo 1978)—have fostered research that has highlighted the important role of peers in victimization. This includes factors such as time spent without adult supervision and time spent where drugs and alcohol are present.

The findings in our sample are again consistent with prior research. Those classified as non-victims were the most involved with and committed to pro-social peers, the least involved with and committed to delinquent peers, the least likely to spend time without adults present, and the least likely to spend time where drugs and alcohol were present. These patterns were reversed for serious violence victims, while assault victims fell in the middle. In short, these results support that non-victims are the least involved in high-risk peer activities, while victims of serious violence are the most involved. These findings again hold true when sex (Table 6.4), race/ethnicity (Table 6.5), and gang membership (Table 6.6) are taken into account.

What about differences by sex, race/ethnicity, and gang membership? Interestingly, when victimization status is taken into account, differences between girls' and boys' involvement with pro-social peers, time spent without adults present,

and time spent with drugs and alcohol available are reduced to insignificant levels. In short, it appears that the sex differences in these situational risk factors are associated with sex differences in victimization rather than sex differences in levels of risk factors. Regardless of victimization status, however, boys tended to report greater involvement with and commitment to delinquent peers and lower commitment to positive peers than girls. There are important interactions, however, between sex and victimization status regarding involvement with delinquent and positive peers and commitment to positive peers. Female and male non-victims reported similar involvement with pro-social peers, significantly higher than that of any other group. Interestingly, however, male assault victims reported greater involvement with pro-social peers than did female assault victims, while female serious violence victims reported greater involvement with pro-social peers than did male serious violence victims. Involvement with delinquent peers, however, was higher among male than female serious violence victims; similar between male and female assault victims; and lowest among female non-victims. Commitment to positive peers was highest among female non-victims, followed by female assault victims, male assault victims and male non-victims, female serious violence victims, and male serious violence victims.

The examination of race/ethnicity, peer factors, and victimization risk reveal a number of interesting findings that again are quite complex. There are significant racial/ethnic differences in each of the peer factors even when victimization status is taken into account. Again, however, a number of significant interaction effects complicate this picture. For example, Hispanic serious violence victims were the most likely to spend time where drugs and alcohol were present (69%), followed by white serious violence victims (62%), African American serious violence victims (49%), Hispanic assault victims (39%), white assault victims (33%), Hispanic non-victims (26%), African American assault victims and white non-victims (23%), and African American non-victims (20%).

The picture for gang membership, however, is again clear. Gang members reported more involvement with and commitment to negative peers, as well as lower levels of commitment to positive peers and involvement with pro-social peers, than did non-gang members. Gang members were also more likely than non-gang members to spend time without adults present and to spend time where drugs and alcohol were available. We found significant interactions between gang membership and victimization status in terms of involvement with delinquent peers. Gang-affiliated victims of serious violence reported the greatest involvement with delinquent peers, followed by gang non-victims, gang assault victims, non-gang serious violence victims, non-gang assault victims, and non-gang non-victims.

School Risk Factors

School risk factors related to victimization include concepts such as school climate, youths' commitment to education, and perceptions that educational

opportunities are unavailable to them (e.g., Gottfredson and Gottfredson 1985; Welsh 2001). Are the same patterns true in our sample? The answer again is yes. The serious violence victims showed the lowest levels of commitment to school, the greatest perceptions that their educational opportunities were limited, and the greatest perceptions that the school environment was poor. Non-victims reported the opposite (the highest levels of commitment to school, the lowest levels of perception that their educational opportunities were limited, and low levels of perceiving the school environment as negative), while assault victims ranked between the non-victims and the serious violence victims on each of these risk factors. These findings hold for the total sample (Table 6.4) and when sex (Table 6.4), race/ethnicity (Table 6.5), and gang membership (Table 6.6) are taken into account.

Again, however, we can see important differences by sex, race/ethnicity, and gang membership. Even when differences by victimization status are taken into account, differences between girls and boys; whites, African Americans, and Hispanics; and gang and non-gang members remain significant. Boys reported significantly lower levels of commitment to school than did girls, while girls reported more negative perceptions of their school environment than did boys. However, we found no significant differences between girls and boys in levels of perception of limited educational opportunities once we took victimization status into account. In addition, victimization status and sex interact in terms of perceptions of the school environment. Negative perceptions of the school environment were highest for female and male serious violence victims, followed by female assault victims, male assault victims and female non-victims, and male non-victims. Differences between gang and non-gang members are clear. Compared with non-gang members, gang members reported lower levels of commitment to school, increased perceptions of obstacles to educational success, and less favorable perceptions of their school environment.

The relationship between race/ethnicity, victimization status, and school risk factors is, again, more complex. Racial/ethnic differences in each of the three school risk factors remain, even when victim status is taken into account. Consistent with findings for the other risk factor domains, we find significant interaction effects between race/ethnicity and victim status for each of the school risk factors. Taking a rank-ordering approach, we see that school commitment was highest among African American non-victims and assault victims, followed by white and Hispanic non-victims, African American serious violence victims and white and Hispanic assault victims, Hispanic serious violence victims, and white serious violence victims. We can discern some consistency in these rather complex relationships. For instance, within all three victim types, African Americans reported the highest levels of commitment to school, while Hispanic youths expressed the greatest concern about their educational opportunities. Overall, however, as was the case for the other risk factor domains, the racial/ethnic differences in school risk factors are quite complicated.

Summary of Differences in Risk Factors for Violent Victimization

Consistent with the findings concerning actual experiences of victimization, girls and boys were significantly different for nearly all of the risk factors examined, even when victimization experiences were controlled. In addition, victims of both sexes reported higher levels of risk factors than non-victims for all comparisons. The results regarding gang membership were equally apparent: Gang youths showed risk factors at significantly greater levels than did non-gang youths.

The findings regarding race/ethnicity and risk factors for violent victimization suggest a more complex picture. While significant racial/ethnic differences for risk were apparent, even when victimization status was taken into account, the pattern of which group is at the highest (or, conversely, lowest) risk is difficult to determine. Although differences are apparent, our results suggest that there is no consistent pattern of levels of exposure to risk factors for violent victimization by race/ethnicity. The picture is further complicated when victimization status is included. The presence of multiple interactions between race/ethnicity and victimization for multiple risk factors suggests a complex interplay among race/ethnicity, risk factors related to violent victimization, and violent victimization experiences. We discuss the importance of this issue later in the book.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has focused on youth violent victimization. We began by identifying a number of important sources of information about youth violent victimization, including governmental and non-governmental sources. Agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention routinely produce information on the topic. In addition, self-report surveys such as the Monitoring the Future project provide a good source of knowledge. Each of these sources has strengths and limitations that must be kept in mind when examining their materials. Drawing inferences from multiple sources such as these, however, is essential to understanding the nature and scope of youth violent victimization in the United States.

These sources suggest that youths are at high risk of violent victimization relative to other age groups. In addition, risks differ across demographic groupings such as sex and race/ethnicity. These sources suggest that boys are generally at higher risk than girls for most types of violent victimization other than sexual assault. Racial/ethnic differences, however, are widely debated. The information from these sources generally suggests that African American and Hispanic youths are at greater risk of *serious* violent victimization than white youths. When less serious forms of violent victimization are examined, however, the racial/ethnic differences are less pronounced. This is an important point, as these less serious

forms of violence represent the bulk of the "youth violence problem," at least in terms of its scope. Finally, a growing body of work illustrates the enhanced risk of violent victimization for youth gang members relative to their non-gang peers. While the most serious offenses generally capture public attention, it appears that gang members are at increased risk of violent victimization, regardless of its seriousness.

Our analyses generally support the findings of prior works on youth violent victimization. Approximately 50 percent of our sample of eighth-graders reported having experienced one or more violent victimizations during the preceding year. While simple assault was the most common type of victimization reported, a surprising number of youths reported having been victimized through more serious offenses, such as aggravated assault (10%) and robbery (8%), during that period. Overall, 15 percent of the eighth-grade youths reported having experienced one or more aggravated assaults or robberies during the prior year. In addition, youth victims reported an average of 4.4 general violent victimizations and 3.4 serious violent victimizations during the prior year.

Victimization experiences varied, however, according to sex, race/ethnicity, gang membership, and community of residence. Violent victimization was clearly more common for boys than for girls and for gang members than for youths who were not in gangs. These findings held for both general and serious violent victimization, as well as for prevalence rates and annual IVRs. Differences by race/ethnicity were less consistent. The percentage of youths from different racial/ethnic backgrounds who had experienced one or more violent victimizations was significantly different for all types of violence except simple assault; however, the average number of violent victimizations experienced by youths of different racial/ethnic backgrounds during the prior year was similar for all types of violence. Community context was also found to be related to victimization risk, with youths residing in larger cities typically at higher risk of violent victimization.

We concluded with a discussion of risk factors associated with youth violent victimization identified in prior works. Consistent with previous chapters, we focused on four domains: individual, family, school, and peers. Our examination of risk factors related to victimization also revealed interesting patterns. Generally, victims reported greater exposure to the risk factors than non-victims did for each of these domains. This finding held true regardless of sex, race/ethnicity, or gang membership. There were, however, important differences for girls and boys, members of different racial/ethnic groups, and gang and non-gang members. Even when victimization status was taken into account, exposure to risk factors was found to differ by sex, race/ethnicity, and gang membership.

7

The Co-occurrence of Violence and the Cumulative Effect of Multiple Risk Factors

In this chapter, we discuss three issues concerning youth violence: (1) the overlap among the three types of violence discussed in Chapters 4–6; (2) the cumulative effect of risk factors, or the extent to which multiple risk factors or the presence of risk factors in multiple domains increases the probability of youth violence; and (3) the extent to which risk factors have independent influences on violence when other factors are taken into account. Importantly, we continue to examine the unique roles of sex and race/ethnicity when addressing these issues. In Chapters 4–6, we examined three types of violence commonly associated with youth—violent offending, gang membership, and victimization—as if they were uniquely different types of experiences. Interestingly, though, there is considerable similarity in the results reported in all three chapters. With respect to risk factors associated with each of the three forms of youth violence, the findings, with just one exception, are virtually identical: Each of the risk factors correlated with youth violence is also correlated with youth gang membership and violent victimization. Table 7.1 provides a summary of these bivariate relationships. Given the consistency of these relationships, in this chapter we will explore the extent to which these three forms of violence have similar causal factors.[1]

[1]We acknowledge the limitations in using cross-sectional data in causal analyses but have chosen to use the cross-sectional G.R.E.A.T. data rather than the longitudinal G.R.E.A.T. data because the former provide a larger, more diverse and representative sample. Results from logistic regression analyses reported in this chapter, however, may be viewed more appropriately as correlational than as causal.

TABLE 7.1 RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH YOUTH VIOLENCE

Risk factor	Violent offending	Gang membership	Violent victimization
Individual domain			
Impulsivity	x	x	x
Risk seeking	x	x	x
Guilt	x	x	x
Use of neutralizations	x	x	x
Social isolation	x		x
Self-esteem	x	x	x
Family domain			
Parental monitoring	x	x	x
Attachment to mother	x	x	x
Attachment to father	x	x	x
Peer domain			
Pro-social peers	x	x	x
Delinquent peers	x	x	x
Commitment to positive peers	x	x	x
Commitment to negative peers	x	x	x
Spending time without adults present	x	x	x
Spending time with drugs and alcohol present	x	x	x
School domain			
Commitment to school	x	x	x
Perception of limited educational opportunities	x	x	x
Perception of negative school environment	x	x	x

Co-occurrence of Violent Offending, Gang Membership, and Violent Victimization

When a youth is involved in violent offending, how often is he or she also a gang member or the victim of violence? Recall from Chapter 4 that 24 percent of the youths in our sample were classified as serious violent offenders—that is, they reported having attacked someone with a weapon, having used a weapon or force to get money or things from people, having been involved in gang fights, or having shot at someone after being told to by someone else during the previous twelve months. In addition, 9.1 percent were classified as gang members, and 15 percent were classified as victims of serious violence (they reported having been robbed or attacked by someone during the previous twelve months). These different prevalence rates should lead us to suspect that we will find limited overlap among these three types of violence.

Very few researchers have examined the co-occurrence of different forms of violence. Elliott, Huizinga, and Menard (1989) discussed multiple-problem youth, while others have focused on the relationship between violent offending and gang membership (Huizinga 1997; Thornberry 1998; Thornberry et al. 2003). In a previous publication, we (Esbensen et al. 2002) examined the order

in which youths became involved in gang membership, violent offending, and drug sales. While Snyder (1998) reported on the overlap of serious, chronic, and violent offenders, we are not aware of specific attempts to examine the coexistence of violent offending, gang membership, and violent victimization.

A body of research has reported on the co-occurrence of offending and victimization (Esbensen and Huizinga 1991; Lauritsen, Sampson, and Laub 1991; Thornberry and Figlio 1974), but that research has not focused specifically on violent offenses. Furthermore, relatively few of these prior reports have examined the roles of sex and race/ethnicity in these relationships. (Notable exceptions include Huizinga and Jakob-Chien [1998] and Thornberry et al. [2003].) It is important to acknowledge that the prevalence of violent offenders in our sample is significantly greater than that reported by Snyder (1998). He found that 8–10 percent of his juvenile justice-based sample was classified as violent. Similarly, Huizinga and Jakob-Chien (1998) report that 9 percent of the youths in their sample were classified as serious violent offenders. However, recall from Chapter 4 that the Monitoring the Future data from 1995 are remarkably similar to the estimates we report. Twenty percent of respondents in that sample had engaged with a group in a fight; 12 percent had seriously hurt someone; and 15 percent had been in a serious fight.

Given the magnitude of the differences between the prevalence of violent offending in our sample compared with those of Snyder (1998) and Huizinga and Jakob-Chien (1998), it is important to consider the source of the differences. Recall that our serious violent offending measure consists of four separate offenses: attacked someone with a weapon; used a weapon or force to get money or things from people; was involved in gang fights; or shot at someone after being told to by someone else. The prevalence rate for each of these offenses in our sample was 12 percent, 5 percent, 17 percent, and 4 percent, respectively. If we exclude the gang-fighting item, the prevalence of the other three offenses combined is 14.7 percent, still substantively greater than the estimates reported by others. Even if we restricted our measure of violence to the single item of attacking someone with a weapon, we would still exceed the prevalence rates reported by others.

We would expect a higher prevalence in our data than in those reported by Snyder (1998), since he relied on official measures of violent offending. (Recall, for example, the findings comparing our sample with the Uniform Crime Reports data reported in Chapter 4.) However, the behaviors included in our serious violent offending category (aggravated assault, robbery, gang fights, and shooting at someone) are quite similar to those included in Huizinga and Jakob-Chien (1998) (aggravated assault, robbery, gang fights, and rape). Another potential source of the differences in prevalence rates is methodological. Although Huizinga and Jakob-Chien (1998) used self-report measures, they conducted confidential face-to-face interviews, whereas we relied on anonymous, group-administered questionnaires. The latter method allows a greater degree of anonymity that may

produce higher estimates of illegal activity because respondents may feel more comfortable answering the questions. It is also possible that interviews allowed the interviewers to ask additional questions to determine more accurately the seriousness of youths' reported behaviors. In addition, our study was cross-sectional, whereas Huizinga and Jakob-Chien (1998) used longitudinal data. It is possible that our cross-sectional data suffer from a "confession effect." Some criminologists (e.g., Lauritsen 1998, 1999; Thornberry 1989) have reported that the first measure of self-reported offending tends to be greater than in any subsequent data collection, in part because of what researchers call "telescoping" (respondents recall and subsequently report offending behaviors that actually occurred prior to the specified recall period, inflating the prevalence or frequency of offending). Yet another possibility is that our sample includes a number of very high-risk schools that may contribute disproportionately to the overall prevalence estimates. At this point, it suffices to say that we have a higher rate of serious violent offending than do others who have examined the overlap between violent offending and other forms of delinquency.

To examine the overlap or co-occurrence of the three forms of violence (offending, gang membership, and victimization), our first task is to create typologies based on the youths' self-reports. This allows us to determine the extent to which the youths in our sample fit uniquely into one category of youth violence or whether they experience two or more types of youth violence. To accomplish this task, we classified our respondents into the following eight unique categories: (1) nonviolent (non-offender, non-gang member, and non-victim); (2) violent offender only; (3) gang member only; (4) victim of violence only; (5) violent offender and gang member; (6) violent offender and violence victim; (7) gang member and violence victim; and (8) violent offender, gang member, and violence victim. (Remember that these classifications are based on serious violent offending and serious violent victimization.) According to this classification, each of our respondents can be categorized uniquely into one of these mutually exclusive groups. In Chapters 4–6, we discussed prevalence and individual offending or victimization rates. To create our typologies, we relied on the annual prevalence responses: Any youth who indicated that she or he had committed or been a victim of one of the serious violent acts during the previous twelve months was classified as an offender or victim, and any youth who indicated that she or he currently belonged to a youth gang was classified accordingly.

An important observation from these eight categories or types is reaffirmation of what was stated earlier: The vast majority of youths—3,775, or 69.4 percent of our sample—were not involved in any form of youth violence as offenders, gang members, or victims. Further, while Table 7.1 reveals that, with a few exceptions, the same risk factors are associated with all three forms of youth violence, we saw relatively little overlap among the three types of violence. Among the 1,661 (30.6%) youths who were classified in one or more categories of violence, 968 (58.3%) were classified in only one category (see Figure 7.1). For boys,

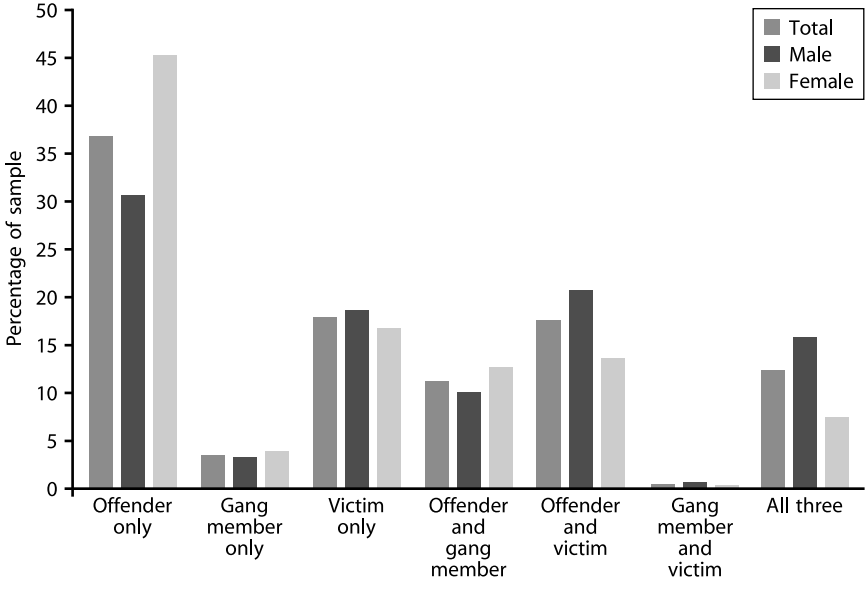

FIGURE 7.1 Co-occurrence of serious offending, gang membership, and serious victimization by sex

501 (52.6%) reported involvement in only one category, while 467 (66%) girls were so classified. A total of 488 youths (29.4%; 300 boys [31.5%] and 188 girls [26.6%]) were classified in two of the categories, while only 205 youths (12.3%; 15.9% of boys and 7.5% of girls) were involved in all three types of violence. With regard to the role of sex in these classifications, we can summarize our findings by stating that girls were more likely than boys to be classified as nonviolent or in only one category, and conversely, boys were more likely to show two or all three types of violence.

No clear pattern emerges when we break out or disaggregate these typologies by race/ethnicity, although we did find notable differences. Of all of the youths in the sample, for instance, white youths (78.3%) were more likely to be nonviolent than were African American (58.6%) and Hispanic (64.3%) youths (not shown in figure). Among those youths classified in one of the seven offender, victim, or gang member typologies (see Figure 7.2), whites (26.9%) were also more likely to be classified as only victims of violence than were African Americans (16.5%) and Hispanics (11.9%). Conversely, African Americans (40.8%) and Hispanics (39.4%) were more likely than were whites (31.8%) to be classified as violent offenders. Among the groups we saw little difference in the proportion of youths who fell into the offender and victim category or who were engaged in all three behaviors. As with the general pattern shown in Figure 7.1, offender-only comprised the largest portion of youths from all groups, but beyond that, the pattern differed across race/ethnicity.

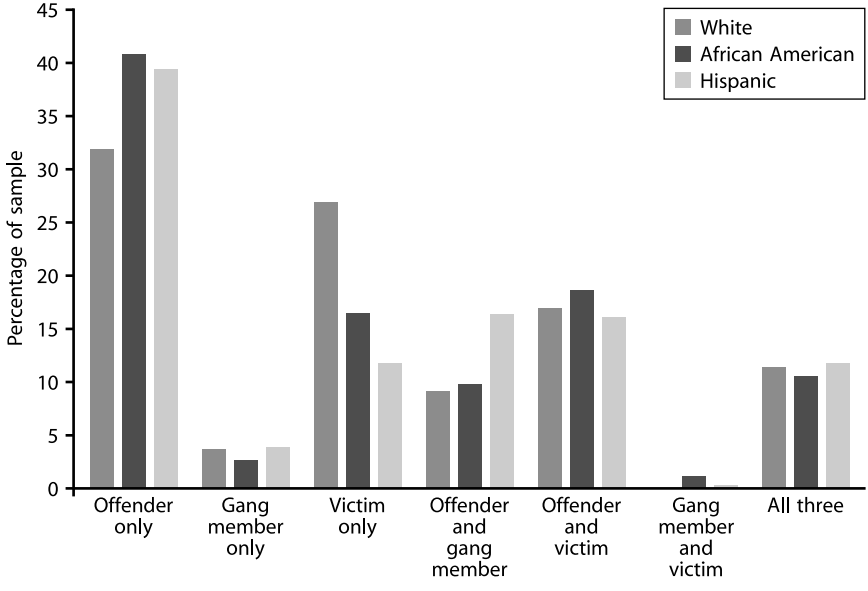

FIGURE 7.2 Co-occurrence of serious offending, gang membership, and serious victimization by race/ethnicity

Cumulative Risk Factors

In previous chapters, our analyses treated risk factors as continuous variables (with responses ranging, for example, from 1 to 5). This allowed us to look at the relative effect of risk factors on specific outcomes. In this chapter, we categorize youths on each risk factor, indicating whether that risk factor is present or not. This calls for a decision on what it means for a risk factor to be present. Some researchers have dichotomized a measure, specifying that those who fall above the median (the halfway point in the distribution of level of risk on that factor) possess the risk factor and those who fall below the median do not (Thornberry et al. 2003). We believe that this approach over-identifies youths with risk factors. Another strategy, adopted by Farrington, Jolliffe, and Hawkins (2003), that may be more useful and more promising is to restrict the definition of the presence of a risk factor to the top or bottom quartile (top or bottom 25 percent on that risk factor) of respondents (for ordinal-level data) and to categorize dichotomous data (measures with two responses, such as "yes" or "no") as the presence or absence of the risk factor. Accordingly, for each risk factor scored at the ordinal level or as a continuous variable, we classified individuals as possessing a risk factor if they scored in the highest (or lowest) 25 percent of risk of all respondents. For instance, scores on self-esteem range from 1 to 5, with a mean score in our sample of 4.01. In this instance, a low score indicates low self-esteem; therefore, those youths in the lowest quartile were regarded as possessing

TABLE 7.2 CUMULATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF RISK FACTORS BY SEX AND BY RACE/ETHNICITY (%)

Number of risk factors	Total	Male	Female	White	African American	Hispanic
0	3.9	4.0	3.8	4.9	3.1	2.5
1–5	53.3	50.2	56.4	56.0	54.7	44.5
6–10	28.3	29.2	27.6	24.2	33.4	33.9
11+	14.4	16.6	12.2	14.8	8.7	19.1

$p < .001$, comparisons of risk factor prevalence across sex and race/ethnicity; chi-square.

this risk factor. Respondents who scored lower than 3.67 on this composite measure were classified as having low self-esteem relative to the other respondents. Another example is commitment to negative peers. This three-item scale ranged from 1 to 5, with a mean of 2.40. The top quartile of youths (a score of 3.0 or higher) were classified as having a high degree of commitment to negative peers and therefore were regarded as possessing this risk factor. For dichotomous variables such as family structure, all youths not residing in a two-parent household were classified as experiencing risk on this factor. All eighteen measures of risk were classified in this manner and included in our analyses of cumulative risk.

In their award-winning book on gangs, Thornberry and his colleagues (2003) analyzed the relationship between cumulative risk factors and gang membership. We adopt an approach similar to theirs in that we examine the relationship between different forms of youth violence and the presence of an increasing number of risk factors. One question of interest is whether the same pattern emerges for all three forms of youth violence (violent offending, gang membership, and violent victimization). And, as in previous chapters, we are interested in the extent to which there are differences by sex and race/ethnicity. Another question of interest is whether a "tipping point" exists at which the odds of youth violence increase dramatically. That is, is there some magic number of risk factors or risk factors in multiple domains that produces negative outcomes for youths? Finally, we ask which factors appear to have the greatest association with different outcomes when all factors are considered. In other words, which factors are the most influential?

As noted above, we defined a risk factor as present when a youth's score fell within the top or bottom quartile of distribution. Even using this criterion, very few youths in our sample were identified as possessing none of the eighteen risk factors, as only 3.9 percent (186 youths) had no risk factors associated with youth violence (see Table 7.2). The majority of youths (53.3%) reported between one and five separate risk factors, and relatively few (14.4%) reported more than ten distinct risk factors. The distribution is similar across sex, although boys generally showed more risk factors than girls. For instance, 16.6 percent of boys and 12.2 percent of girls indicated that they had more than ten risk factors. We found a greater difference by race/ethnicity. African American youths, for example, were

less likely (at 8.7%) to report eleven or more risk factors than were white (14.8%) and Hispanic (19.1%) youths. White youths (4.9%), however, were slightly more likely than African Americans (3.1%) and Hispanics (2.5%) to report no risk factors. In addition to this descriptive distribution of risk factors, an important question is whether the presence of multiple risk factors is linked to involvement in youth violence.

Cumulative Risk Factors for Youth Violence

The description of risk factors in the sample sets the stage to examine the relationship between cumulative risk factors and our measures of youth violence. We can proceed in two separate veins: (1) by investigating the percentage of serious violent offenders (or gang members or serious violence victims) who possess a certain number of risk factors; and (2) by calculating the percentage of youths with a certain number of risk factors who are or are not serious violent offenders.

Table 7.3 examines the distribution of risk factors by type of violence. We find considerably more variability here than was the case in the distribution of risk factors in the general sample (see Table 7.2). Very few youths classified as offenders, victims, or gang members reported no risk factors. The effect of having multiple risk factors on involvement in violence is most pronounced among the gang youths. Eleven or more risk factors were present in the lives of 51.6 percent of gang youths, compared with 6.5 percent of youths who reported no serious violence in their lives. Further highlighting the harmful effect of having multiple risk factors, 87 percent of gang youths, 75 percent of violent offenders, and 70 percent of violence victims reported having six or more risk factors, compared with only 30 percent of nonviolent youths.

One notable finding shown in Table 7.3 is that serious violent offending (as defined in this book) is present even among youths who possess relatively few risk factors. Approximately 25 percent of the violent offenders had between zero and five risk factors; 39 percent had between six and ten risk factors; and 36 percent had eleven or more risk factors. While this is a relatively even distribution among these three categories, violent offenders were considerably more likely to possess more risk factors compared with the sample at large. Fully 64.6 percent of the nonviolent youths reported having one to five risk factors, compared with

TABLE 7.3 CUMULATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF RISK FACTORS BY TYPE OF VIOLENCE (%)

Number of risk factors	Nonviolent	Violent offending	Gang membership	Violent victimization
0	5.5	.3	.2	.4
1–5	64.6	24.7	13.1	30.2
6–10	23.4	39.0	35.1	34.4
11+	6.5	36.1	51.6	35.1

24.7 percent of the violent offenders, and whereas only 6.5 percent of the nonviolent youths had eleven or more risk factors, 36.1 percent of the violent offenders fell into this category. There is virtually no difference in the distribution of violent offenders by sex (not shown in the table). The picture is quite different, however, when we control for race/ethnicity (race differences also are not shown in the table). Among white youths classified as violent offenders, just under half (47.6%) reported eleven or more risk factors, and only 14 percent had between zero and five risk factors, a complete reversal of the finding for the general sample. For African Americans, the presence or absence of risk factors does not appear to exert a strong effect on violent offending. Only 19 percent of African Americans classified as violent offenders had eleven or more risk factors, and 35 percent had between zero and five risk factors. Although the findings for Hispanic and white youths were similar in this category, the risk factor association was slightly less pronounced among the former, in that 22 percent of the Hispanic youths had zero to five risk factors, whereas 40 percent had eleven or more.

The pattern differs slightly among gang members (see Table 7.3). Just 13 percent reported having zero to five risk factors, and the majority (51.6%) reported having eleven or more risk factors. Unlike the relatively even distribution of risk among violent offenders, cumulative risk is clearly concentrated for gang-affiliated youths. The pattern again is similar for girls and boys, with virtually no difference in the distribution by cumulative risk factors (not shown in the table). When we control for race/ethnicity, we see the particularly damaging effects of cumulative risk for white youths. Of the white gang members, nearly 70 percent reported eleven or more risk factors, compared with 50 percent of Hispanic and just 30 percent of African American gang members (not shown in the table). Thus, it appears that offending and gang membership tend to be more normative among African American and Hispanic youths in that fewer risk factors are required to produce violence or gang membership for these groups.

The findings for serious violent offenders and gang members are similar in that a larger proportion of those youths experience more, rather than fewer, risk factors. To what extent are these findings replicated for victims of violent crime? While some patterns of cumulative risk factors reported in Table 7.3 are similar to those reported above, the number of risk factors associated with serious victimization are similar to those reported for violent offenders; they are, however, quite different from those for gang membership. Violence victims were unlikely to have no risk factors, but a sizable number had between one and five. Girls and African Americans who were victims were more likely than boys and whites or Hispanics to have few risk factors (not shown in the table). In contrast to the findings for violence and gang membership, Hispanics (41.8%), not whites (32.8%), were the most likely to report eleven or more risk factors for victimization; African Americans (18.3%) were still the least likely to experience this number of risk factors.

In addition to documenting the relationship between cumulative risk factors and involvement in youth violence, we posed the question of whether there is a

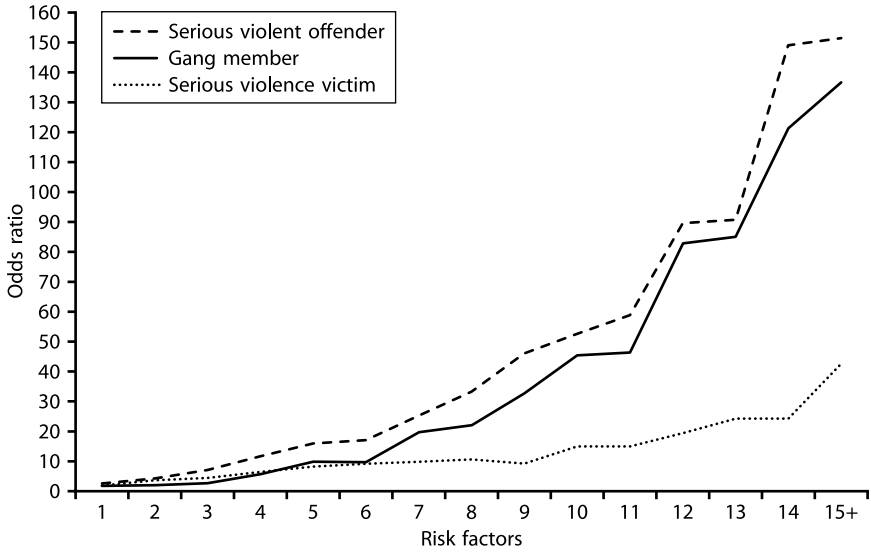

FIGURE 7.3 Odds ratios for violent offending, gang membership, and violent victimization status by number of risk factors

tipping point at which the likelihood of violence increases dramatically. Figure 7.3 allows us to examine the relationship between each additional risk factor and the odds of becoming a violent offender, gang member, or victim. The pattern for violent victimization is linear, with each additional risk factor steadily increasing the odds of being victimized. There does not appear to be a large tipping point in cumulative risk for victimization, although there are slightly greater increases from nine to ten risk factors and from fourteen to fifteen or more factors.

For gang membership and violent offending, however, the relationship is exponential, with a sharp increase in those outcomes with each additional risk factor beyond six. As an example, we will look at gang membership. Figure 7.3 shows a significant increase in odds ratios between six and seven risk factors; youths who possess six risk factors have 9.46 greater odds of joining a gang than do youths who possess no risk factors. Once that number rises to seven risk factors, the odds ratio jumps to 19.68, more than twice that of having six risk factors. A similar, if not as dramatic, increase in the odds of violent offending occurs at that point, as well. Clearly depicted in the figure are two other substantial spikes in odds ratios for violence and gang membership, which occur between eleven and twelve and between thirteen and fourteen risk factors. It is quite evident that the cumulative effects of risk factors are much greater for these two forms of violence than for violent victimization.

A question remains, however, about the relative influence of each additional risk factor for the three types of violence. The logistic regression results presented in Figure 7.3 show that the cumulative influence of risk on the odds of

TABLE 7.4 DISTRIBUTION OF RISK FACTOR NUMBERS FOR VIOLENT OFFENDERS, GANG MEMBERS, AND VIOLENCE VICTIMS (%)

	Number of risk factors				Representation in sample (%)
	0	1–5	6–10	11+	
Violent offender	1.6	10.9	33.1	61.2	24.0
Gang member	.5	2.1	10.6	31.6	9.1
Violence victim	1.1	6.9	15.6	31.8	15.0

Note: Neither columns nor rows sum to 100 percent because the categories are not mutually exclusive.

violence is not the same across types. First, it appears that "gang member" is more "selective"—that is, a youth needs to experience a greater number of risk factors to have the same probability of joining a gang as of engaging in serious violence. A single risk factor, for example, is associated with a 2.44 increase in the odds of violence, whereas three risk factors are necessary to obtain a similar odds ratio (2.69) for gang membership. A greater "push," perhaps, is required for youths to become involved in gangs than in violence. Related to this, the number of risk factors an individual possesses has the most impact on violence and the least impact on victimization. Experiencing eleven risk factors, for example, increases the odds of becoming a violent offender by a factor of 58.71, but it increases the odds of becoming a gang member by a factor of 46.25 and of becoming a violence victim by a factor of only 14.96. Put another way, the same level of impact of having eleven risk factors for violent victimization is reached at approximately five risk factors for violence and between six and seven risk factors for gang membership.

What Percentage of Youths with High-Risk Scores Are Violent?

Another way to examine the role of multiple risk factors is to frame our analyses around the question: When youths possess multiple risk factors, what is the likelihood that they will become involved in violence? That is, we change the denominator and ask the question, "What percentage of youths with eleven or more risk factors are violent offenders?" This approach may provide a more meaningful prediction (see Table 7.4). Of those youths who possessed eleven or more risk factors, 61.2 percent fell into the violent offender category. (Recall that 24 percent of the sample were classified as violent offenders.) Conversely, of those youths who reported no risk factors, only 1.6 percent were violent offenders, and of those who reported one to five risk factors, 10.9 percent were violent offenders.

The picture is less clear with regard to gang membership and violent victimization. Of those who reported more than eleven risk factors, only about 32 percent were gang members or violence victims—half the percentage of youths with more than eleven factors who were violent offenders. Of the youths who reported

zero or one to five risk factors, just .5 percent and 2.1 percent, respectively, were classified as gang members, while 1.1 percent and 6.9 percent were categorized as violence victims. Of those who reported six to ten risk factors, 10.6 percent were affiliated with gangs, and 15.6 percent were violence victims. Again, recall that only 9.1 percent of the total sample were gang members, and 15 percent were classified as victims of serious violence. Thus, these distributions highlight the higher probability that youths with eleven or more risk factors (compared with those with fewer risk factors) will be violent offenders (especially), gang members, and violence victims.

Domain-Level Cumulative Risk

Throughout this book we have classified our eighteen risk factors into the individual, family, peer, and school domains. We have treated demographic variables such as respondents' sex, race/ethnicity, age, and family structure as descriptive variables rather than including them in our risk factor domains. There is no universal agreement in the literature concerning these decisions, and it would have been possible for us to include family structure in the family domain and personal characteristics such as sex and race/ethnicity in the individual domain. The number of risk factors included in the various studies is also inconsistent and depends on the discretion of the researcher (which, of course, is closely related to the purpose of the research and its design and methodology). In their ongoing study of high-risk youths in Rochester, New York, for example, Thornberry and his colleagues (2003) collected data on forty risk factors in seven different domains. In addition to the individual, family, peer, and school dimensions, Thornberry and his colleagues included community, family social-demographic factors, and early delinquency as separate domains.

To examine the influence on youths of possessing risk factors in more than one domain, we created four new variables to indicate whether an individual had one or more risk factors in each of the four domains. Table 7.5 provides a summary of the number of risk factors present in each domain for the entire sample and by sex and race/ethnicity.

Recall from Table 7.2 that only 3.9 percent of the entire sample reported no risk factors. Table 7.5 shows that many youths in our sample reported no risk factors in specific domains; in fact, a majority of youths (50.8%) had no risk factors in the family domain. The youths in our sample were most likely to report multiple risk factors in the peer and individual domains. Only 12.5 percent reported no peer-level risk factors and only 24.8 percent reported no individual-level risk factors, compared with 43.2 percent who reported no risk factors in the school domain and 50.8 percent who reported no risk factors in the family domain. There were minor differences in the patterns by sex, with boys showing slightly more risk factors in each domain. For example, 26.1 percent of the boys reported four or more risk factors in the peer domain, compared with 19.7 percent of the girls. An examination of risk factors by race/ethnicity reveals that

TABLE 7.5 DISTRIBUTION OF RISK FACTORS BY DOMAIN FOR THE TOTAL SAMPLE, BY SEX, AND BY RACE/ETHNICITY (%)

Domain and number of risk factors	Total	Male	Female	White	African American	Hispanic
Individual domain						
0	24.8	24.2	25.6	28.8	25.3	17.0
1	25.5	23.2	27.5	24.5	29.6	23.7
2	21.1	21.5	20.6	19.1	21.6	23.3
3+	28.6	31.1	26.2	27.6	23.5	36.0
Family domain						
0	50.8	48.9	52.6	57.6	44.8	45.6
1	27.2	28.9	25.8	23.2	32.9	29.7
2	14.9	15.0	14.6	12.6	15.7	16.5
3	8.1	7.2	6.9	6.7	6.6	8.1
Peer domain						
0	12.5	11.6	13.3	12.1	11.6	14.2
1	31.1	28.7	33.4	35.1	29.5	22.5
2	20.4	19.6	21.0	18.6	23.3	20.2
3	13.2	14.0	12.6	11.9	15.2	14.5
4+	22.9	26.1	19.7	22.3	20.4	28.6
School domain						
0	43.2	40.3	46.1	47.4	43.7	33.5
1	32.4	32.9	31.7	29.7	34.9	34.9
2	18.8	20.3	17.3	17.7	16.7	24.9
3	5.7	6.4	4.9	5.2	4.7	6.8

$p < .05$, comparisons by sex; chi-square.

$p < .001$, comparisons by race/ethnicity; chi-square.

Hispanic youths appear more likely than white and African American youths to possess one or more risk factors in the individual and school domains, while white youths are the least likely to have risk factors in the family domain.

Table 7.6 reports the percentage of youths in each of our eight typologies who reported risk factors in the four domains. Here the nonviolent youths are markedly and noticeably different from the other categories of youths in that they are much more likely to possess no risk factors in each of the four domains. Interestingly, the youths who were classified as violence victims only appeared to be the most similar to the nonviolent youths. The other six types appeared to be more similar to one another, although the youths who reported having experienced all three types of violence reported the greatest number of risk factors in most domains—that is, 76.7 percent reported three or more individual-level risk factors; 79.5 percent reported four or more peer-level risk factors; and 24.4 percent reported three school-level risk factors. The percentages for serious violent offenders were 41.1 percent, 38.6 percent, and 7.3 percent, respectively.

Yet another way to examine the role of having risk factors in multiple domains is to assess whether those youths with one or more risk factors in each domain are more at risk of youth violence than those with risk factors in only one or two domains. Figure 7.4 presents descriptive information for the entire sample and

TABLE 7.6 DISTRIBUTION OF RISK FACTORS BY DOMAIN AND BY TYPOLOGY (%)

Domain and number of risk factors	Non-violent	Violent offender (VO)	Gang member (GM)	Violence victim (VV)	VO and GM	VO and VV	GM and VV	VO, GM, and VV
Individual domain								
0	32.3	11.8	5.6	20.5	2.7	9.7	0	3.4
1	28.4	21.2	27.2	29.7	14.1	18.8	0	7.3
2	20.3	25.8	24.1	23.9	18.9	20.1	28.6	12.6
3+	18.9	41.1	48.1	25.9	64.3	51.4	71.4	76.7
Family domain								
0	58.9	29.6	38.0	45.8	30.8	29.2	16.7	20.6
1	25.0	30.9	30.0	35.3	27.6	33.9	0	32.8
2	11.8	19.6	20.0	14.5	27.6	21.8	50.0	23.3
3	4.4	9.8	12.0	4.4	14.1	15.2	33.3	23.3
Peer domain								
0	16.5	4.6	7.3	10.5	.6	2.9	0	.5
1	39.3	16.9	18.2	32.5	5.7	15.1	12.5	2.0
2	21.7	22.5	16.4	27.6	9.7	15.8	0	3.9
3	11.3	17.4	14.5	16.8	14.3	19.7	12.5	14.1
4+	11.2	38.6	43.6	12.5	69.7	46.6	75.0	79.5
School domain								
0	52.3	31.6	33.3	33.6	17.3	21.5	33.3	12.2
1	30.7	35.9	35.1	39.9	33.5	40.3	22.2	26.8
2	14.3	25.2	26.3	18.8	30.8	26.0	33.3	36.6
3	2.7	7.3	5.3	5.7	18.4	12.2	11.1	24.4

$p < .001$, comparisons by violence type within domain; chi square.

disaggregated by sex and race/ethnicity. In addition, we report the distribution of risk factors in multiple domains by the youths' typology (see Figure 7.5). The bars in Figure 7.5 represent the proportion of youths in each category who reported risk factors in three or all four of the domains. With respect to the demographic distribution of risk factors, boys (54.9%) were slightly more likely than girls (49%) to report risk factors in three or four domains, and Hispanic youths (59.6%) were the most likely to report risk factors in three or four domains, while whites (45.1%) were the least likely to do so.

Furthermore, as expected, there is a marked difference in the presence of risk factors in multiple domains when we control for offender typology. For example, almost 30 percent of the nonviolent youths reported no risk factors or risk factors in only one domain. This contrasts with 10 percent of the gang members and fewer than 1 percent of the youths who had experienced all three forms of youth violence (not shown in the figure). At the other end of the spectrum, just 40 percent of the nonviolent youths reported risk factors in three or four domains (see Figure 7.5). Of those youths involved in just one form of violence, gang members (71.1%) were the most likely to report risk in three or four domains, although violent offenders were close behind. The effect of cumulative risk is apparent among youths involved in two or more types of violence, as 86.1 percent

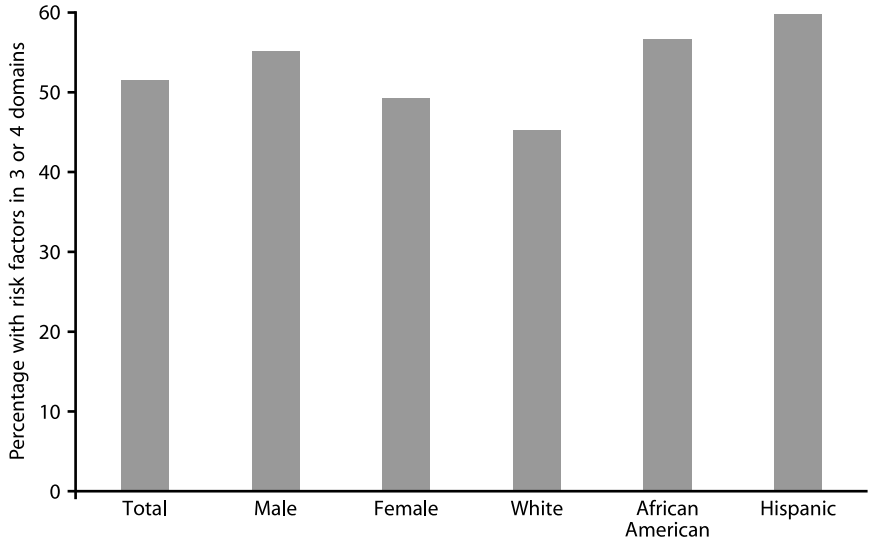

FIGURE 7.4 Demographic distribution of risk factors in multiple domains: Percentage in each group with risk factors in three or four domains

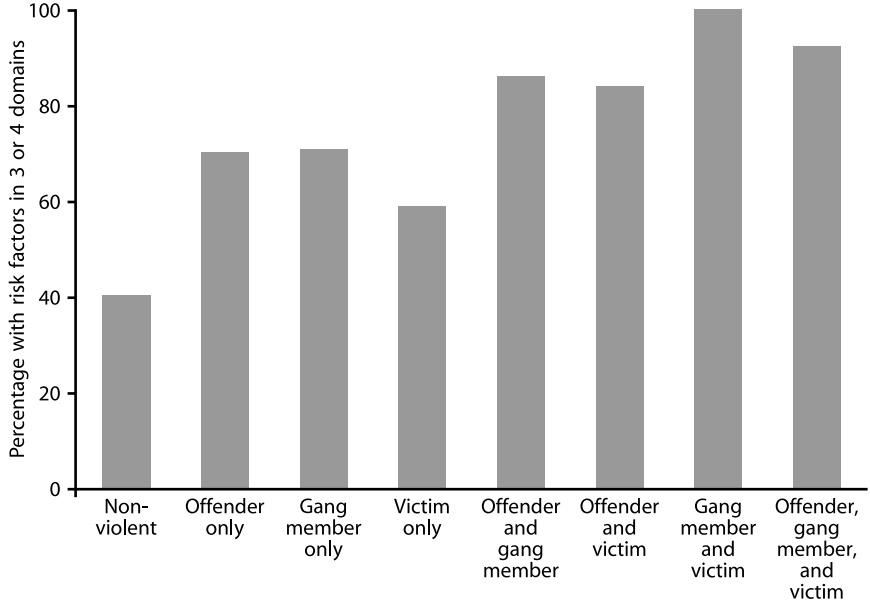

FIGURE 7.5 Presence of risk factors in multiple domains by offender typology: Percentage in each type with risk factors in three or four domains

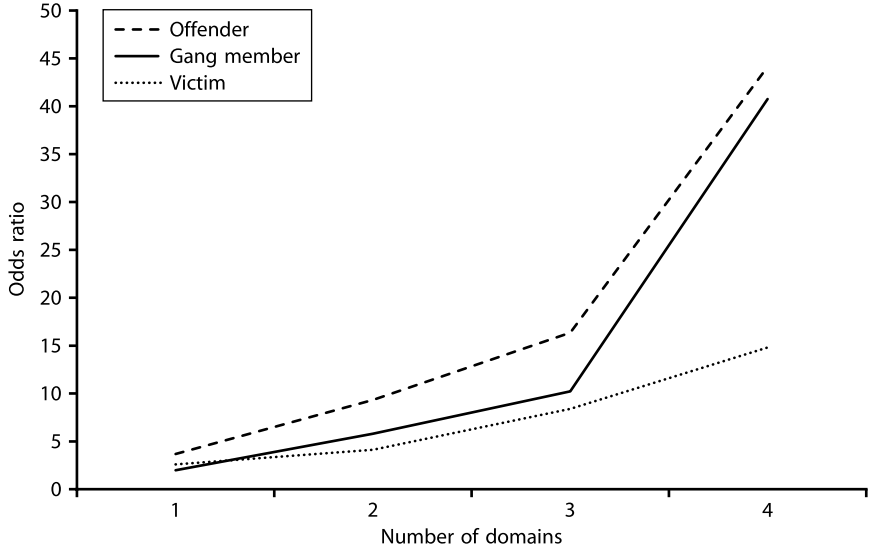

FIGURE 7.6 Odds ratios for violent offending, gang membership, and violent victimization status by risk factor domains

of offenders/gang members, 84 percent of offenders/victims, 100 percent of gang members/victims, and 92.5 percent of offenders/gang members/victims reported risk factors in three or all four of the domains.

It is important to note that the presence of risk factors in multiple domains is probabilistically, not determinately, related to youth violence. In other words, while having risk factors in multiple domains increases the likelihood of violence, it does not necessarily mean that this *will* occur. The fact that 25 percent of the nonviolent youths reported risk factors in four domains (not shown in the figure) underscores that these correlational and descriptive analyses fail to account for the influence of other factors that cause or protect against violence. This is a topic to which we will return in Chapter 8.

We were also able to examine the relative risk associated with having risk factors in one, two, three, or four different domains. Figure 7.6 reveals that, compared with youths who reported no risk factors, for those individuals who reported a risk factor in one domain the odds of falling into the violent offender category increased more than three-and-a-half times (an odds ratio of 3.69). Those who reported a risk factor in two domains showed a nine-fold increase in the odds of falling into the violent offender category. Those who reported a risk factor in each of the four domains had greater odds by a factor of 44 than did those who reported no risk factors. Similar odds ratios were found for gang membership, although, as Figure 7.3 shows, the odds were slightly lower for gang membership than for violence for those with risk factors in the same number of domains. While possessing risk factors in multiple domains predicted

violent victimization, the increase in odds was not as great as for the other types of violence. The odds that youths who reported factors in all four domains would fall into the victim category were 15 times greater than for those who reported no risk factors.

Multivariate Analyses

To what extent do each of the eighteen risk factors across the four different domains have unique effects on the probability of violent offending, gang membership, and violent victimization when all other factors are controlled? Table 7.7 presents the results of logistic regression analyses for the entire sample for all three types of violence. In these analyses we included the youths' demographic characteristics in addition to the risk factors. Using a relatively liberal standard of statistical significance for a sample this size ($p < .05$), we find that four demographic characteristics are predictors of all three types of violence: age (those age 15 or older are more likely to be involved in these activities than those age 13 and younger); being male rather than female; being African American rather than white; and living in "other" family structures rather than in two-parent households. African American and Hispanic youths have higher odds than white youths of engaging in violent offending and belonging to a gang. In addition, youths living in single-parent homes are slightly more likely than youths in two-parent homes to be offenders and victims of violence.

The results for each type of violence vary, and the logistic regression equation is better suited to explaining serious violent offending and gang membership than violent victimization. Of our eighteen risk factors, only four have independent effects on all three types of violence when controlling for the other factors: the use of neutralizations; associating with delinquent peers; spending time where drugs and alcohol are present; and negative perceptions of the school environment. In the model that predicts violent offending, ten of the eighteen risk factors reach statistical significance. Within the individual domain, youths who indicated that they were impulsive, tended to be risk takers, would not feel guilty committing a variety of misdeeds, and believed that it was OK at times to break rules were more likely to have committed serious violent acts. None of the family factors and only one of the school factors (perception of the school environment) was significantly associated with violent offending. As we would expect based on the bivariate analyses reported earlier, the peer variables are important predictors of violent offending. Five of the six risk factors in this domain (association with pro-social peers, association with delinquent peers, commitment to negative peers, hanging out where adults are not present, and hanging out where drugs and alcohol are available) were statistically significant. The explained variance in prevalence of violence attributed to variables in this model is 40 percent (see the Nagelkerke R^2 coefficients in Table 7.7), and the model accurately classifies 49 percent of the violent offenders. That is, 40 percent

of the variation in the prevalence of violence in our sample is explained by the risk factors, and if we used these risk factors to predict who would be violent, we would be correct 49 percent of the time.

The risk factor model explains 38 percent of the variance in gang membership and correctly identifies only 23 percent of gang members, although it accurately classifies almost 99 percent of the non-gang youths. Similar to the results

TABLE 7.7 LOGISTIC REGRESSIONS PREDICTING VIOLENT OFFENDING, GANG MEMBERSHIP, AND VIOLENT VICTIMIZATION

Risk factor	Violent offending	Gang membership	Violent victimization
Demographic characteristics			
Male	1.33*	1.31*	2.39*
African American	2.53*	1.67*	1.48*
Hispanic	1.69*	1.48*	.85
Single-parent home	1.41*	1.23	1.24*
Other family structure	1.98*	1.98*	1.93*
Age			
14	1.15	1.47*	1.19
15+	1.66*	2.71*	1.54*
Individual domain			
Impulsivity	1.32*	1.10	1.33*
Risk seeking	1.22*	.91	1.06
Guilt	1.41*	2.22*	1.06
Use of neutralizations	1.65*	1.40*	1.36*
Social isolation	.89	.94	1.21
Self-esteem	.88	1.00	.83
Family domain			
Parental monitoring	1.11	1.03	1.23*
Attachment to mother	1.12	.88	1.03
Attachment to father	.94	.99	1.11
Peer domain			
Pro-social peers	1.42*	1.16	1.08
Delinquent peers	2.59*	2.63*	1.53*
Commitment to positive peers	1.03	1.05	.98
Commitment to negative peers	1.38*	2.32*	1.00
Spending time without adults present	1.50*	1.07	1.18
Spending time with drugs and alcohol present	2.05*	2.60*	1.81*
School domain			
Commitment to school	1.06	1.19	.90
Perception of limited educational opportunities	1.08	1.01	1.33*
Perception of negative school environment	1.81*	1.81*	1.92*
Model statistics			
Nagelkerke R^2	.399	.375	.200
% Correct: Violent	49.0	22.9	10.8
% Correct: Nonviolent	92.7	98.7	98.4
% Correct: Overall	82.4	92.2	85.4

Notes: Values reported are odds ratios for the independent variables, exp(b). In contrast to analyses reported in previous chapters, for all measures reported in this table, higher scores indicate greater risk.

* $p < .05$.

for violent offenders, none of the family-domain variables and only one of the school-domain factors predicts gang affiliation. Further, only two individual-domain factors were statistically significant predictors: Those youths who reported not feeling guilty about potentially engaging in law-violating behavior and who believed it was OK to break the law in certain situations had greater odds of being involved in gangs. The importance of peers is again apparent in that three of the peer-domain variables—associating with delinquent peers, commitment to negative peers, and hanging out with friends where drugs and alcohol were available—significantly increased the odds of gang membership.

The risk factors are less predictive of violent victimization than they are of the other two forms of violence. The model explains only 20 percent of the sample's variance in victimization and classifies just 11 percent of the victims accurately as victims. Seven of the eighteen risk factors are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. In addition to use of neutralizations, associating with delinquent peers, socializing where drugs and alcohol are present, and negative perceptions of the school environment (the four factors associated with violent offending and gang membership) and impulsivity (a factor shared with violent offending), we found two unique predictors of victimization. Low parental monitoring and perceiving educational opportunities to be limited are associated with greater odds of being victimized.

Do the same risk factors predict violence for girls and boys? Logistic regression analyses conducted separately by sex (see Table 7.8) show that a greater proportion of the variation in boys' prevalence than in girls' prevalence of all three forms of violence is explained, and that a greater number of risk factors is significantly related to violence and victimization for boys (10 and 5, respectively) than for girls (6 and 4). For gang membership, a greater number of risk factors is associated for girls (7) than for boys (6).

Girls and boys share a number of risk factors. Low levels of guilt, using neutralizations, having few pro-social peers and many delinquent peers, spending time where drugs and alcohol are available, and negative perceptions of the school environment all increase the odds of violent offending for youths of both sexes. Further, being African American or Hispanic (as opposed to white) and living in a single-parent or other family structure are predictors for both sexes. Lack of guilt, commitment to and association with delinquent peers, socializing in the presence of drugs and alcohol, and negative perceptions of the school environment, along with other family structure and being age 15 or older, increase the odds of gang affiliation for both sexes. Girls and boys share fewer risk factors for victimization; those they do share are having delinquent peers, socializing where drugs and alcohol are present, negative perceptions of the school environment, being African American, and living in "other" family structures.

Unique predictors are also present for each sex, however, which suggests that the factors that are relevant for girls and boys are slightly different. For boys, unique predictors of violence include impulsivity and risk seeking (individual level) and commitment to negative peers and unsupervised socializing (peer

TABLE 7.8 LOGISTIC REGRESSIONS PREDICTING VIOLENT OFFENDING, GANG MEMBERSHIP, AND VIOLENT VICTIMIZATION BY SEX

	Violent offending		Gang membership		Violent victimization	
Risk factor	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Demographic characteristics						
African American	2.54*	2.56*	2.12*	1.18	1.36*	1.77*
Hispanic	1.50*	1.89*	1.27	1.77*	.89	.73
Single-parent home	1.43*	1.40*	1.04	1.67*	1.32*	1.11
Other family structure	1.79*	2.17*	1.91*	2.43*	2.16*	1.75*
Age						
14	1.20	1.11	1.65*	1.38	1.25	1.11
15+	1.42	2.24*	2.71*	3.21*	1.41	1.90*
Individual domain						
Impulsivity	1.38*	1.28	1.00	1.26	1.34*	1.35
Risk seeking	1.33*	1.13	.98	.84	1.04	1.13
Guilt	1.46*	1.40*	2.61*	1.90*	1.20	.88
Use of neutralizations	1.60*	1.63*	1.76*	1.06	1.30	1.44
Social isolation	.79	.99	.94	1.04	1.06	1.46*
Self-esteem	.78	.98	.97	.89	.85	.91
Family domain						
Parental monitoring	1.24	.98	1.23	.79	1.24	1.27
Attachment to mother	1.11	1.14	.84	1.03	1.16	.84
Attachment to father	.82	1.07	.96	.95	1.05	1.23
Peer domain						
Pro-social peers	1.43*	1.41*	1.10	1.34	1.23	.88
Delinquent peers	2.75*	2.55*	2.63*	2.67*	1.56*	1.55*
Commitment to positive peers	.95	1.15	1.08	1.02	.89	1.14
Commitment to negative peers	1.68*	1.07	2.24*	2.34*	1.09	.83
Spending time without adults present	1.64*	1.37	1.34	.76	1.08	1.32
Spending time with drugs and alcohol present	1.77*	2.39*	1.94*	3.92*	1.52*	2.35*
School domain						
Commitment to school	.98	1.19	.96	1.63*	.83	1.02
Perception of limited educational opportunities	1.16	1.02	1.40	.64*	1.46*	1.22
Perception of negative school environment	2.03*	1.63*	1.68*	2.22*	2.14*	1.62*
Model statistics						
Nagelkerke R^2	.427	.360	.394	.361	.191	.156
% Correct: Non-gang member, serious violent offender, serious violence victim	90.0	94.8	97.6	99.6	96.8	99.6
% Correct: Gang member, serious violent offender, serious violence victim	56.4	39.8	25.4	19.0	18.8	2.6
% Correct: Overall	80.5	84.1	89.8	94.4	80.8	90.2

Notes: Values reported are odds ratios for the independent variables, exp(b). In contrast to analyses reported in previous chapters, for all measures reported in this table, higher scores indicate greater risk.

* $p < .05$.

level). Being African American, age 14, and using neutralizations for behavior predict gang membership only for boys. Living in a single-parent family, impulsivity, and perceiving limited educational opportunities predicts victimization only for boys. For girls, being 15 or older increases the likelihood of violent offending; being Hispanic, living in a single-parent family, and reporting low levels of commitment to school increase the odds of joining a gang; and being 15 or older and feeling socially isolated increase the odds of victimization. Interestingly, the perception that educational opportunities are limited is associated with a *decreased* likelihood that girls will be involved with gangs. Note that no family factors are related to the three forms of violence for girls or boys when factors from other domains are taken into account. This emphasizes the importance of peers and school for this age group, regardless of sex.

Tables 7.9–7.11 show that there are only a few consistent patterns for race/ethnicity. The risk factors explain a similar proportion of variance in whites' and Hispanics' violence and a slightly lower proportion of variance in African Americans' violence (Table 7.9). For gang membership, the greatest proportion of variance explained is for whites; African Americans and Hispanics are similar to each other (Table 7.10). In terms of victimization, whites and African Americans are similar, but a greater proportion of Hispanics' victimization is explained (Table 7.11).

Some factors are consistently related to the three outcomes for whites, African Americans, and Hispanics. Delinquent peers, socializing in the presence of drugs and alcohol, and negative perceptions of the school environment increase the odds of violent offending for all three groups. Negative perceptions of the school environment are also associated with increased odds of victimization for all three groups, and commitment to negative peers increases all three groups' odds of gang membership. Beyond this, using neutralizations increases the odds of violence for whites and African Americans, while having few pro-social peers increases the odds for African Americans and Hispanics; feeling lack of guilt increases the odds of gang membership for whites and African Americans; associating with delinquent peers and having negative perceptions of the school environment increase the odds of gang membership for whites and Hispanics; and spending time where drugs and alcohol are available increases the odds of both gang membership and victimization for African Americans and Hispanics. It is also important to highlight the importance of age to gang membership for minority youths. The likelihood that African Americans and Hispanics will be involved with gangs increases as these youths age, controlling for other risk factors.

There are also unique predictors of each form of violence by race/ethnicity. Being age 15 or older, lack of guilt, and decreased social isolation increase the odds of violent offending only for African Americans, while being male, residing in single-parent homes, and unsupervised socializing increase the odds only for whites. Living in other family structures and using neutralizations increase the odds of gang membership only for whites; there were no unique predictors of

gang membership for African American and Hispanic youths. Living in single-parent households, using neutralizations, social isolation, low levels of parental monitoring and attachment to father, associating with delinquent peers, and perceiving limited educational opportunities increased the odds of victimization only for whites, while being age 15 or older increased the risk of victimization for

TABLE 7.9 LOGISTIC REGRESSIONS PREDICTING VIOLENT OFFENDING BY RACE/ETHNICITY

Risk factor	White	African American	Hispanic
Demographic characteristics			
Male	1.66*	1.30	1.16
Single-parent home	1.53*	1.21	1.35
Other family structure	2.03	1.70*	3.05*
Age			
14	1.14	1.42	1.07
15+	1.14	2.00*	1.25
Individual domain			
Impulsivity	1.38	1.08	1.38
Risk seeking	1.24	1.42	1.01
Guilt	1.43	1.56*	1.40
Use of neutralizations	1.92*	1.65*	1.43
Social isolation	.96	.67*	.66
Self-esteem	.88	.71	.84
Family domain			
Parental monitoring	1.29	1.17	.75
Attachment to mother	1.07	1.26	.92
Attachment to father	1.18	.99	.71
Peer domain			
Pro-social peers	1.40	1.53*	1.63*
Delinquent peers	2.41*	2.21*	2.59*
Commitment to positive peers	1.19	.94	1.09
Commitment to negative peers	1.41	1.35	1.36
Spending time without adults present	1.88*	1.16	1.60
Spending time with drugs and alcohol present	1.67*	2.55*	2.32*
School domain			
Commitment to school	1.11	1.16	1.26
Perception of limited educational opportunities	1.11	1.14	1.34
Perception of negative school environment	1.62*	1.80*	2.40*
Model statistics			
Nagelkerke R^2	.400	.344	.410
% Correct: Non-gang member, serious violent offender, serious violence victim	95.7	88.6	89.9
% Correct: Gang member, serious violent offender, serious violence victim	37.8	53.4	60.3
% Correct: Overall	87.0	76.6	80.8

Notes: Values reported are odds ratios for the independent variable, exp(b). In contrast to analyses reported in previous chapters, for all measures reported in this table, higher scores indicate greater risk.

* $p < .05$.

African Americans and impulsivity increased the odds for Hispanics. Note the higher number of significant predictors of victimization for whites than for the other two racial/ethnic groups: Seven of the eighteen risk factors predicted the risk of victimization for whites, while only two predicted the risk for African Americans and three predicted the risk for Hispanics.

TABLE 7.10 LOGISTIC REGRESSIONS PREDICTING GANG MEMBERSHIP BY RACE/ETHNICITY

Risk factor	White	African American	Hispanic
Demographic characteristics			
Male	1.03	1.55	1.05
Single-parent home	1.56	.82	1.51
Other family structure	4.74*	.54	1.88
Age			
14	1.56	2.34*	2.07*
15+	1.15	5.36*	4.62*
Individual domain			
Impulsivity	1.14	1.08	.85
Risk seeking	.62	1.43	.96
Guilt	3.08*	2.29*	1.84
Use of neutralizations	2.89*	1.48	.78
Social isolation	.74	.64	1.28
Self-esteem	.83	1.19	.97
Family domain			
Parental monitoring	1.17	.89	.86
Attachment to mother	1.25	.72	.79
Attachment to father	.93	1.00	.71
Peer domain			
Pro-social peers	1.31	.77	1.72
Delinquent peers	4.06*	1.65	2.20*
Commitment to positive peers	.91	1.49	.84
Commitment to negative peers	2.19*	2.23*	2.33*
Spending time without adults present	1.77	.85	1.34
Spending time with drugs and alcohol present	1.23	3.81*	3.99*
School domain			
Commitment to school	1.28	1.01	1.45
Perception of limited educational opportunities	1.13	1.47	1.14
Perception of negative school environment	2.39*	1.62	1.77*
Model statistics			
Nagelkerke R^2	.431	.377	.379
% Correct: Non-gang member, serious violent offender, serious violence victim	99.3	98.8	98.2
% Correct: Gang member, serious violent offender, serious violence victim	17.3	28.6	32.7
% Correct: Overall	95.1	91.4	90.1

Notes: Values reported are odds ratios for the independent variable, exp(b). In contrast to analyses reported in previous chapters, for all measures reported in this table, higher scores indicate greater risk.

* $p < .05$.

TABLE 7.11 LOGISTIC REGRESSIONS PREDICTING SERIOUS VIOLENT VICTIMIZATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY

Risk factor	White	African American	Hispanic
Demographic characteristics			
Male	2.69*	2.20*	2.67*
Single-parent home	1.42*	1.07	1.02
Other family structure	1.29	1.69*	3.08*
Age			
14	1.05	1.38	1.38
15+	.88	2.28*	1.94
Individual domain			
Impulsivity	1.13	1.28	2.20*
Risk seeking	.98	.96	1.16
Guilt	.74	1.18	1.27
Use of neutralizations	1.52*	1.40	1.32
Social isolation	1.38*	1.14	.75
Self-esteem	.95	.77	.78
Family domain			
Parental monitoring	1.41*	1.00	1.20
Attachment to mother	1.07	.80	1.12
Attachment to father	1.51*	1.21	.73
Peer domain			
Pro-social peers	.75	1.36	1.33
Delinquent peers	2.14*	1.11	1.23
Commitment to positive peers	.91	.91	1.05
Commitment to negative peers	1.04	1.19	.93
Spending time without adults present	1.37	1.22	1.03
Spending time with drugs and alcohol present	1.43	2.05*	2.23*
School domain			
Commitment to school	1.07	.96	.65
Perception of limited educational opportunities	1.45*	1.23	1.43
Perception of negative school environment	1.90*	1.99*	1.88*
Model statistics			
Nagelkerke R^2	.188	.184	.267
% Correct: Non-gang member, serious violent offender, serious violence victim	99.3	97.6	98.0
% Correct: Gang member, serious violent offender, serious violence victim	10.5	17.0	20.0
% Correct: Overall	88.7	81.2	86.6

Notes: Values reported are odds ratios for the independent variable, exp(b). In contrast to analyses reported in previous chapters, for all measures reported in this table, higher scores indicate greater risk.

* $p < .05$.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, we discussed three issues concerning youth violence: the overlap among the three types of violence discussed in Chapters 4–6; the cumulative effect of risk factors, or the extent to which multiple risk factors or the presence of risk factors in multiple domains increases the probability of youth violence;

and the extent to which risk factors exert independent effects when other factors are controlled in multivariate analyses. As we suspected, given the prevalence of each of the three forms of violence, the overlap was limited, with just about 12 percent of youths reporting having experienced all three forms of violence. However, a fairly large proportion of youths were involved in two of the three types.

The cumulative effect of risk is very apparent, with the greatest increases coming in the odds for violence, followed by gang membership and victimization. In fact, while the effect of cumulative risk on victimization is gradual increase, for both violence and gang membership, increases in the number of risk factors are associated with dramatic and exponential increases in odds. We found a key tipping point at seven risk factors—that is, the odds of committing violent acts or joining a gang are twice as great for youths with seven risk factors than for those with six risk factors. Other tipping points are at twelve and fourteen risk factors. Cumulative risk has the greatest impact on the odds of violence, a finding that was confirmed when we looked at youths who possessed eleven or more risk factors. Fully 61 percent of those youths were violent offenders. It is also the case, though, that of youths who were classified in one of the three types of violence, a higher proportion of gang members (about 52%) than others possessed eleven or more factors. The effect of cumulative risk is also apparent in our domain analyses. Possessing risk factors in multiple domains, as opposed to no domains or in just one domain, also dramatically increases the odds of involvement in the three forms of violence, although again this applies more to violence than to gang membership or victimization.

All of the risk factors together are better predictors of violence and gang membership than of victimization, and peer-level factors appear to be particularly important. While the three models share several predictors, some predictors are also unique to particular forms of violence. Interestingly, though, there are no unique predictors of gang membership.

The patterns of overlap and cumulative risk by sex are similar, although boys are more likely than girls to be involved in all three types of violence and to have greater cumulative risk (in terms of the number of factors and domains). Looking at all of the risk factors together in multivariate analyses shows that there are more significant predictors of boys' violence than of girls' violence and that these factors explain a slightly greater proportion of the variance in boys' behavior than in girls' behavior. Although there are some unique predictors, girls and boys share a number of factors.

For race/ethnicity, the patterns are not so clear. Although the African American and Hispanic youths in our sample were less likely than the white youths to fall into the nonviolent category and to possess no risk factors, a smaller proportion of African American youths than others reported eleven or more risk factors. Further, among violent offenders and gang members, whites were more likely than African Americans and Hispanics to have experienced eleven or more risk factors. Multivariate analyses showed no pattern in the proportion of explained variance of the three behaviors, and there appear to be more racial/

ethnic differences than sex differences when it comes to predictors for each type of violence. That said, all three groups shared a number of factors within each of the three models, suggesting some similarity in the explanation of violence, gang membership, and victimization across race/ethnicity.

This chapter has examined the co-occurrence of the three forms of violence, the effects of cumulative risk, and the relative influence of the risk factors in predicting the prevalence of violent offending, gang membership, and violent victimization. In Chapter 8, we move to our theoretical model, in which we link many of the risk factors to four criminological theories of behavior to explain the frequency of youth offending and victimization.

III

Understanding and Responding to Youth Violence

8

Putting It All Together

A Theoretical Framework

In Chapter 2, we introduced a theoretical model that links a number of risk factors into a conceptual framework. We discussed four theoretical perspectives: self-control, social bond, social learning, and routine activities/opportunity. Recall that these perspectives attempt to explain delinquency by focusing on a specific worldview or by emphasizing particular elements of the human experience. Self-control theorists, for instance, highlight the role of early socialization within the family, especially the extent to which parents supervise and monitor their children. This parental monitoring affects the extent to which children develop self-control—that is, the ability to regulate their behavior. People with low levels of self-control are less able to restrain their impulsive behavior and thereby are more likely to act without thinking about the consequences of their actions. In the routine activities/opportunity perspective, the focus is not on the person's self-control but, rather, on the convergence in time and space of a suitable target, a motivated offender, and the absence of a capable guardian. While each of the four perspectives helps to explain why certain risk factors are related to youth violence, individually they are incomplete. Hence, a combination or integration of these four perspectives allows us to better explain both direct and indirect effects of the risk factors examined in Chapters 4–7.

In this chapter, we propose an integrated model that assumes a developmental perspective in that some aspects of the model precede others. For instance, attachment to parents and levels of parental monitoring are more important in late childhood and early adolescence than in later adolescence, when the peer group exerts greater influence. Likewise, certain personality

characteristics such as impulsivity and risk seeking are developed early in life and, according to self-control theorists, remain relatively stable throughout the life course.[1] Other attributes, such as attitudes about right and wrong, perceptions of opportunities, and self-esteem, are constantly in flux and are affected by experiences with significant others. Before we delve into our specific model, we briefly review the dominant theoretical perspectives from which we borrow.

An Integrated Model of Juvenile Violence

As outlined earlier, multiple risk factors for youth violence, gang involvement, and victimization, as well as several theoretical perspectives explaining these behaviors, exist. As there does not appear to be one single cause or single correlate of youth violence, an integrated perspective that identifies multiple pathways to violence may prove beneficial. During the past twenty-five years, integrated theoretical models have gained acceptance and appeal in criminology. These models acknowledge the limitations of single theories and maintain that combining theories in a coherent model provides additional explanatory power (Elliott 1985; Elliott, Huizinga, and Ageton 1985; Messner, Krohn, and Liska 1989). One of the earlier integrated models proposed by Elliott and colleagues (1979) combined elements of the social strain, social learning, and social control theories. Since then, others have developed integrated models that incorporate a wide range of perspectives (see, e.g., Hagan, Gillis, and Simpson 1985; Sampson and Laub 1993; Thornberry 1987; Winfree, Esbensen, and Osgood 1996).

It is our belief that these theoretical integrations hold the most promise for explaining and ultimately informing policies to prevent and intervene in youth violence, gang membership, and victimization. Thus, we propose the following model incorporating risk factors linked to the self-control, social bond, social learning, and routine activities/opportunity theories to explain youth violence. Using youth violence to demonstrate, low parental monitoring and supervision and high levels of impulsivity and risk seeking are indicators of self-control theory. Risk factors that reflect social bond theory include lack of commitment to school and low levels of attachment to parents. Risk factors that indicate social learning theory include associating with peers who engage in problem behavior, commitment to negative peers (differential reinforcement), favorable attitudes toward problem behavior (use of neutralizations), and low levels of guilt associated with violence. And risk factors that reflect the routine activities/opportunity theory include engaging in unsupervised socializing (hanging out where no adults are present and hanging out where drugs and alcohol are available). The more time youths spend in such unsupervised settings, the more likely they are to become involved in violence as both offenders and victims.

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[1]While Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that these attributes are stable, this is a hotly contested issue: see, e.g., Arneklev, Grasmick, and Bursik 1999; Burt, Simons, and Simons 2006; Polakowski 1994; Turner and Piquero 2002; Winfree et al. 2006.

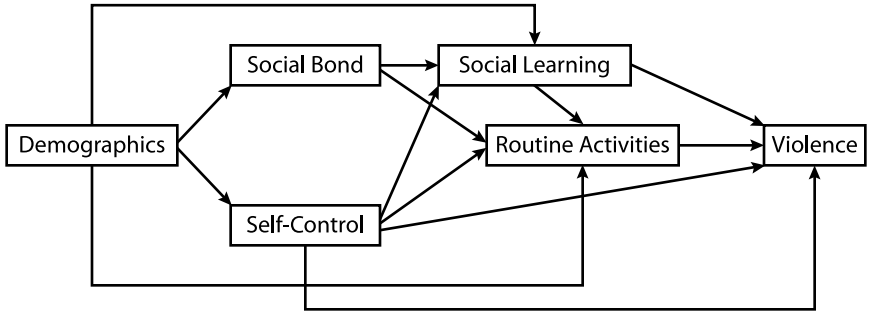

FIGURE 8.1 Integrated theoretical model of juvenile violence

Community or structural variables are noticeably absent from the preceding list of risk factors. While there is little doubt that macro-level factors—for example, higher rates of violent offending in high-density, impoverished urban areas than in low-density, affluent suburbs—are associated with differential rates of youth violence, it is also an established fact that the majority of youths who live in high-crime areas do not commit violent offenses. Thus, while we acknowledge that certain structural and demographic characteristics are correlated with violence and are important, they do not adequately explain the variations in rates of youth violence (or of gang membership or victimization) that are found within communities or among individuals who share characteristics. Other factors are necessary to explain why all similarly situated youths do not engage in violence.

Our integration of the self-control, social bond, social learning, and routine activities/opportunity theories proposes a framework for understanding the multiple paths that may lead to violence. Our "end-to-end" model (Hirschi 1979) suggests a developmental perspective in which the variables on the left side of the model are assumed to occur prior to—and, in fact, to affect—the variables farther to the right (see Figure 8.1). Demographic attributes such as race/ethnicity, sex, age, family structure, and social class are related to the early development of self-control and a bond to society. These levels of self-control and social bond in turn affect learning experiences, especially those involving attitude formation and peer-group associations, which then combine with the prior effects to influence involvement in routine activities. While each of these factors is independent and exerts a direct effect on the likelihood of offending, the most immediate cause of participation in violence is the placement of oneself in situations that are conducive to violence. Our model illustrates that, in addition to having direct effects on offending, the various risk factors have direct and indirect effects on one another. In Figure 8.2, we identify specific indicators of these four theoretical perspectives and describe the multiple pathways that lead to participation, and non-participation, in violence.

Each arrow in Figure 8.2 depicts a specific hypothesized relationship that is based on theoretical formulations and prior research. The linkages identified by

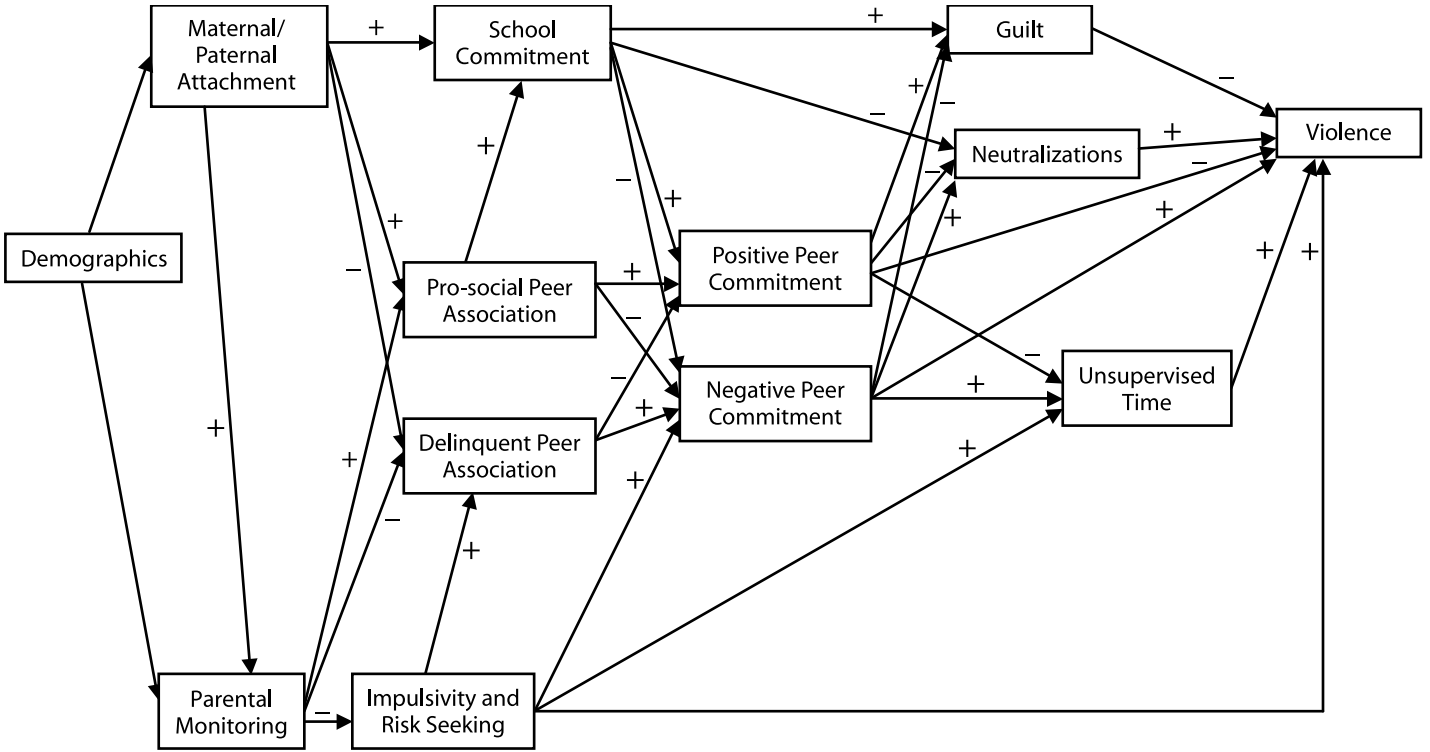

FIGURE 8.2 Elaborated theoretical model of juvenile violence

the arrows reveal the multiple pathways that lead to increased probabilities or levels of violent offending. For example, a child who develops close attachments to both mother and father is less likely to associate with delinquent peers in early adolescence. However, should the child become exposed to delinquent peers, then that association will increase the chances that the child will develop a commitment to those delinquent peers and adopt the group's values and norms. Competing with this exposure, the previous close attachment to parents, for instance, reduces the effect of delinquent peers, as shown by the proposed link among attachment to parents, commitment to school, perceptions of guilt, and use of neutralizations. The cumulative effect of these influences is then related to the probability that the child will engage in routine activities that increase her or his exposure to crime-enhancing situations, such as hanging out where there is no adult supervision and where drugs and alcohol are available (the most proximate cause of offending). It is important to emphasize that each of the hypothesized relationships among the model's components should be seen as probabilistic, not deterministic, statements. The presence of multiple risk factors (e.g., low levels of attachment to parents and low levels of self-control) can be mediated by exposure to conventional peers and positive school experiences that lead to high levels of commitment to school.

Later in this chapter, we present findings from a test of this integrated theoretical model, along with a discussion of how the model operates similarly or differently for girls and boys and for different racial/ethnic groups. In Chapter 2, we provided an overview of prior tests of these four theoretical perspectives. To review these perspectives and set the stage for our empirical assessment, we review prior research that has examined the effects of sex and race/ethnicity within each of the four theoretical perspectives included in our model.

Effects of Sex

Self-Control Theory

Recent studies that examine the sex-generality of self-control theory have provided mixed results. More studies have been conducted that link self-control variables to delinquency in general than to the specific behaviors in which we are interested (youth violence, gang membership, and victimization). The following is a summary of prior research that examines the effect of sex on the relationship between self-control and delinquent behavior, including youth violence.

Despite Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) arguments about the generality of self-control theory, LaGrange and Silverman (1999, 62) write, "Variables measuring self-control, opportunity, and their interactions substantially reduce, but do not eliminate, the impact of gender; it remains a significant predictor of differences in general delinquency, property offenses, and violence." They also found that self-control variables predicted more of the variation in general delinquency and property crime for girls and a greater proportion of the variation in violence

and drug offenses for boys (LaGrange and Silverman 1999). Similarly, Lynskey and her colleagues (2000) found that while self-control theory was useful in predicting levels of involvement in gangs for both girls and boys, sex did show a significant direct effect.

In contrast, Burton and his colleagues (1998) found support for Gottfredson and Hirschi's assertion of the sex-generality of their theory. Models examined separately by sex provided explanatory power for both girls and boys, and sex was unrelated to delinquency when they included self-control in their model (see also Vazsonyi and Crosswhite 2004). Mason and Windle (2002) found that, while self-control directly affected serious delinquency for girls, self-control also operated indirectly through peer-, school-, and family-level variables for boys, suggesting different pathways to offending by sex. Although it is not a comparison of girls and boys, recent work by Stewart, Elifson, and Sterk (2004) confirmed that a low level of self-control predicts the violent victimization of women independent of the women's involvement in risky lifestyles or behaviors. It thus appears that although self-control theory can predict both girls' and boys' offending, gang membership, and, possibly, victimization, questions about its generality remain.

Social Bond Theory

Hirschi (1969), along with his co-author (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990), argues that social control theory holds for all groups, across all societies. Despite this claim, there is evidence of differential effects of the social bond elements by sex and type of delinquency (Deschenes and Esbensen 1999b; Espiritu 1998; LaGrange and Silverman 1999). Traditionally, the criminological literature has tended to emphasize the importance of social influences such as peers in boys' delinquency and the importance of family (e.g., attachment) in girls' delinquency (Campbell 1991; Canter 1982, 150). Some scholars have found, however, that family bonds are as important, if not more important, in predicting boys' delinquency. Research by Canter (1982, 159–161), for example, shows that although family-bonding variables were similar in nature and strength for girls and boys, the relationship of some of these bonds to both serious (index) crimes and violent crimes was stronger for boys than for girls.

Some researchers suggest that some theories for girls' delinquency have been found to have greater explanatory power because girls are required to conform socially more than are boys and thus may require an extra "push" to engage in nonconforming behavior (Rosenbaum 1987; see also Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1998; Giordano and Rockwell 2000). Rosenbaum (1987) found limited support for this interpretation: Social bonds explained more variation in girls' than in boys' drug and property offending, but she found no sex differences in explanations of violent offending. Similarly, Farnworth's (1984) study of African American adolescents found that separate social control models were needed to explain girls' and boys' property and other nonviolent offenses but that a gender-neutral explanation of violence was appropriate.

It is possible, however, that the sex-neutrality or sex-specificity of the theory depends on adolescents' age. Espiritu's (1998) test of a model integrating aspects of the social control and social learning theories revealed that the type of model that was appropriate varied by youths' developmental stage and by type of offense. Sex-invariant models explained three forms of delinquency best for young subjects (age 10–14). Sex-specific models, however, were necessary to explain serious and minor delinquency for youths age 15–18. Overall, girls and boys were more alike than different, and sex differences did not emerge until mid-adolescence (age 13–16); similarly, Jang and Krohn (1995) found sex differences to peak at age 15. These findings suggest that sex-specific explanations may be more appropriate for our sample, as the average age of youths in our study was 14.

Social Learning Theory

Some scholars have investigated whether social learning processes—including associations with peers, perceived guilt for potential delinquency, and use of neutralizations—and their effects on behavior differ for girls and boys. As was the case for the self-control and social control theories, the evidence is mixed. Perceived guilt for potential delinquency seems to be a stronger inhibitor of violence for girls than for boys (Deschenes and Esbensen 1999b), but the reverse is true for gang membership (Esbensen and Deschenes 1998).

Examining the joint influences of parental monitoring and peers' influence on adolescents' substance use, Fletcher, Darling, and Steinberg (1995) found that, in general, girls were influenced more than boys by their parents, and boys were influenced more than girls by their peers. Conversely, although the use of neutralizations was a stronger predictor for boys than for girls, Mitchell, Dodder, and Norris (1990) found peer associations to be more important for girls' than for boys' delinquency. In her review of research on boys' and girls' peer associations, Campbell (1990) argues that close associations with delinquent peers (female as well as male) are just as important for girls' as for boys' delinquent behavior.

There is also evidence that girls and boys have similar experiences of learning in intimate primary groups and that both sexes experience exposure to definitions favorable to lawbreaking that are early, frequent, intense, and recurrent (Giordano and Rockwell 2000; Heimer and DeCoster 1999). Heimer and DeCoster (1999, 302) suggest, however, that "there are important gender differences in the process by which youths learn violent definitions." Overall, they found that coercive discipline had a greater effect on boys' than on girls' learning of violent definitions, while bonds to family affected girls' but not boys' learning of violent definitions. Thus, girls' violence was reduced by indirect controls on their learning of violent definitions, while boys' violence was best predicted by the influence of direct controls on the learning process. Coercive discipline increased the risk of violent delinquency for boys, and supervision decreased this risk.

Routine Activities/Opportunity Theory

As indicated earlier in this chapter, although it is growing, the literature that links routine activities at the individual level to violence and victimization is not as rich as the literature that links the social control and social learning perspectives. Examinations of differences by sex are even more rare, so this is an area in which many contributions can be made. Existing research, however, has produced contrasting findings. Some research on the routine activities, lifestyle, and opportunity theories indicates differential patterns of victimization by sex among youths (Bottcher 2001; Finkelhor and Asdigian 1996; Miethe, Stafford, and Long 1987), while other research supports a more gender-neutral explanation for violent victimization (Bjarnason, Sigurdardottir, and Thorlindsson 1999; Smith and Chiricos 2003). Controlling for respondents' routine activities, especially their involvement in delinquency, appears to reduce the sex gap in offending (Jensen and Brownfield 1986; Osgood et al. 1996).

Summary of Effects of Sex

Empirical research is beginning to provide a base of knowledge about the universality of explanations of delinquency, but the area remains ripe for investigation. Risk factor research has identified some elements that appear to be unique to either girls or boys, but because the findings have not been consistent, we must continue to explore sex differences. Tests of major theoretical perspectives also recently have included sex as more than just a control variable. Although several theories have been shown to predict both girls' and boys' delinquency, the work of several scholars suggests different pathways to delinquency (see, e.g., Heimer and DeCoster 1999; LaGrange and Silverman 1999; Mason and Windle 2002). To inform the debate about gender-specific or gender-neutral programming, these issues require further inquiry.

Effects of Race/Ethnicity

We now turn to a discussion of studies that have examined the role of race/ethnicity in four theoretical perspectives—self-control, social bonding, social learning, and routine activities/opportunities—of offending and victimization.[2]

Self-Control Theory

Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) general theory of crime provided an impetus to reexamine the importance of race/ethnicity in offending and victimization.

[2]To this point, we have discussed three types of youth violence: offending, gang membership, and victimization. In this chapter, we focus exclusively on offending and victimization. As we discuss later, the modeling used to test the integrated theory included in this chapter does not allow for an examination of gang membership.

Drawing from the race/ethnicity literature on family practices, Gottfredson and Hirschi hypothesized that group-level differences in self-control exist across racial/ethnic groups, thereby accounting for racial/ethnic differences in offending. Larger families and those headed by single parents were assumed to be less able to monitor and discipline children adequately for misdeeds, factors that are necessary for the effective establishment of self-control. Since these family structures are more prevalent among racial/ethnic minority groups in contemporary society, Gottfredson and Hirschi hypothesized that racial/ethnic minorities would show lower levels of self-control than white youths and that these differences in self-control would explain racial/ethnic differences in crime and delinquency.

While this still is not a primary line of inquiry of self-control research, recent studies have begun to examine the hypotheses related to race and ethnicity proposed by Gottfredson and Hirschi. To date, the research offers mixed results. De Li (2004), for example, found that controlling for the effects of self-control, opportunity, and levels of social bonding did not eliminate the effect of race on criminal involvement among a national sample of youths in midadolescence. De Li's analyses included race as a control variable, however, precluding an examination of whether the patterns operate differently by race. Vazsonyi and Crosswhite (2004), by contrast, found that self-control measures performed equally well in explaining deviance by African American and white youths. Falling between these two poles, Pratt and his colleagues (2004) found slight racial differences in the family processes associated with the establishment of self-control but concluded that the general pattern was one of similarity between white and non-white youths.

Turner and Piquero (2002) found little support for the hypothesis of race-specificity, finding that whites have slightly higher levels of self-control than non-whites between age 6 and 13, while non-whites have significantly higher levels of self-control than whites between age 15 and 19. Winfree and his colleagues (2006), however, report that self-control operates differently by race/ethnicity and offending status. Their analyses, controlling for sex, family structure, offending status, and time, showed that general self-control is significantly higher, and risk seeking is significantly lower, for African Americans than for whites. Similarly, they found that impulsivity was higher for Hispanics than for whites (controlling for the same factors) and that race/ethnicity interacts with offending status, with African American offenders showing significantly lower levels of self-control than African American non-offenders (controlling for sex, family structure, and time). Taken together, the results of these studies suggest that elements of self-control may operate differently for youths of different races and ethnicities.

Social Bond Theory

A limited body of work has attempted to explain racial/differences in offending by examining social bonding. As the family is one of the key arenas of social interaction, personal growth, and emotional maturation (Cernkovich and Giordano

1987), the importance of social bonds within the family has been an important area of concern. Matsueda and Heimer (1987, 828), for example, postulated that family social bonds vary by race due to different socialization practices or belief systems across socioeconomic classes, neighborhood organizations, and family structures—factors that differ significantly across races and ethnicities in contemporary society. Results of research examining racial/ethnic differences in parental bonding, however, have produced inconclusive findings. Matsueda and Heimer's (1987) reexamination of Hirschi's (1969) Richmond Youth Survey data suggested that social bonds to families worked in the same manner for white and non-white youths. Forehand and colleagues (1997) reported similar findings for a sample of African American and Hispanic youths.

Other studies, however, suggest important racial/ethnic differences in bonding. Smith and Krohn (1995), for example, found that family socialization (attachment, involvement, and supervision) and living in a single-parent family predicted delinquency better for Hispanics than it did for whites or African Americans, while economic hardship affected whites' delinquency through a weakening of the bonds of attachment and involvement (Smith and Krohn 1995). Similarly, Sorenson and Brownfield (1991) found that the father–son bond provided greater protection from delinquent behavior among white boys, while the mother–son relationship was more important for African American boys. Differences uncovered by Paschall and his colleagues (1996) included the fact that family structure was the only factor that was significantly related to fighting in the previous year for African American boys, and attachment to parents and family stress and conflict exerted effects on white boys. Attachment to parents and family stress and conflict were also significant predictors of fighting within the previous month at school for white boys (both contributed to offending; attachment related only to victimization), while family stress and conflict was the only significant predictor of starting a fight at school for African American boys.

Additional studies have uncovered differential family effects by race/ethnicity. Cernkovich and Giordano (1987) found that family variables were better able to explain delinquency for whites than for non-whites, but that the influence of each factor varied by race. Specifically, control and supervision were more important for non-whites than for whites. Gorman-Smith and her colleagues (1996) found that family factors differentiated the nature of offending (violent versus nonviolent) but did not affect the frequency, seriousness, or onset of offending. African American youths had higher levels of family cohesion and monitoring than did Hispanic youths, but these factors showed similar effects on delinquency. Beliefs about families, however, were found to operate differently across the groups: Hispanic non-delinquents held stronger beliefs about the importance of family and family obligations than did Hispanic violent delinquents, and few differences were found among African American non-delinquents, nonviolent delinquents, and violent delinquents. Thus, it appears that researchers must be sensitive to how "family" variables are conceptualized, as these potential explanations may vary across race/ethnicity (Cernkovich and Giordano 1987).

Bonds to school are another area of importance in explaining the link between race/ethnicity and delinquency. Cernkovich and Giordano (1992, 265) suggest that "insofar as schools of varying racial composition subject those attending them to differential experiences and cultures, and to strains, frustrations, and failures that vary in both type and magnitude, it is reasonable to believe that individual levels of school bonding will be correspondingly conditioned." Their subsequent analyses, however, provided only limited support for the hypothesized racial differences in school bonding mechanisms and the corresponding effects on delinquency. They found it somewhat surprising that the levels of school involvement, attachment, and commitment were actually higher for the African American youths than for the white youths in their sample. Despite these racial differences in levels of bonding to school, the results suggested that the effects of school bonding on delinquency worked similarly for whites and African Americans.

Social Learning Theory

While social learning theory has a long history of empirical testing, it is surprising how few of these studies have examined specifically the effect of race/ethnicity on social learning variables. Akers (1973, 1997) contends that his version of social learning theory is in fact a "general theory" of criminal behavior in that it explains different types of offending, as well as offending patterns among different subgroups of the population. Thus, Akers and Silverman (2004, 29) assert: "The effects of the social learning variables remain across age, sex, race, and class." Future studies will illustrate the level of support for this assertion.

Routine Activities/Opportunity Theory

Racial/ethnic differences in lifestyles were an important part of Hindelang and his colleagues' (1978) formulation of lifestyles theory. Their work, at least in part, was intended to explain demographic differences—including racial/ethnic differences—in American crime victimization rates. From a routine activities perspective, Cohen, Kluegel, and Land (1981) suggest that race/ethnicity may have an effect on exposure, capable guardianship, and proximity but is not likely to affect the attractiveness of a target. Specifically, racial/ethnic differences in lifestyles lead to increased exposure, lower guardianship, and greater proximity for African Americans than for whites. As with studies of self-control, social bonding, and social learning theories, existing research has often failed to examine fully the importance of race/ethnicity.

The research that has assessed the applicability of the routine activities perspective has focused on explaining differences in rates of victimization. Cohen and his colleagues (1980) did not find any effect of race/ethnicity on victimization. Similarly, Miethe, Stafford, and Long (1987) found that, although some demographic characteristics (e.g., being male, unmarried, and low-income) were

related to elevated risks of violent victimization, race/ethnicity had no direct effect on the odds of being victimized. However, once they added lifestyle-activities measures to their model, an interaction effect between lifestyle variables and demographic characteristics appeared. Specifically, they found that "among the highest-risk category . . . major daily activity in or near the home is associated with the greatest risk of violent victimization, among blacks, males, the unmarried, and the young, whereas daily activity outside the home combined with high nighttime activity has the greatest risk for other groups" (Miethe, Stafford, and Long 1987, 191). Lauritsen, Sampson, and Laub (1991) also found racial/ethnic differences in assault and robbery victimization were explained by differences in delinquent lifestyle. A more recent study by Schreck and Fisher (2004), however, found that lifestyles, family context, and exposure to delinquent peers did not eliminate the effect of race/ethnicity on violent victimization.

Summary of Effects of Race/Ethnicity

The studies examined above provide mixed evidence of racial/ethnic differences in explanations for youth violence. In summary, we highlight McNulty and Bellair (2003), perhaps the most extensive study to examine this topic directly. Using two years of data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, they examined the effects of race/ethnicity, community context, family structure, social bonding to family and school, gang membership, and exposure to violence on violent victimization. Their analyses showed significant differences in levels of violence across racial/ethnic groups, as well as different explanations for each group's involvement in serious violence. When they controlled for the effects of sex, age, residential mobility, area of residence, peers' substance use, alcohol and drug use, accessibility of guns, and prior involvement in violence, racial differences in violence remained. Taken together, these results provide strong evidence for the existence of risk and theoretical factors for youth violence that are specific to race/ethnicity.

Tests of the Model for Serious Violent Offending

Given the body of literature on theoretical explanations, what might we expect to find in regard to sex and race/ethnicity in tests of our integrated theoretical model? Are there different pathways to violence for girls and boys and for youths of different racial/ethnic backgrounds? Although an increasing number of studies provide insight into these questions, the current state of knowledge is still limited by several previously mentioned factors, including the composition of study samples (studies that over-sample or include only boys; studies that focus on one or two racial/ethnic groups) and a focus on less serious forms of delinquency. Our sample is drawn from eleven different cities; comprises an equal proportion of girls and boys; and is racially/ethnically heterogeneous to allow

comparisons of three major racial/ethnic groups.[3] Further, our data make it possible to examine serious youth violence and victimization. These features allow us to contribute to the growing body of knowledge about whether and how theoretical factors and models explain behavior for different kinds of youths.

In contrast to the analyses presented in Chapter 7, we focus here on youths' frequency of behavior—that is, the number of their serious violent offenses or experiences of victimization. Findings from these analyses help us formulate conclusions and recommendations to intervene in youth violence.[4] We do not include gang membership as a dependent variable, as it measures prevalence, not frequency, and we are concerned only with frequency in the analyses that follow.

We used path modeling in the statistical analysis software program AMOS 7 to test our theoretical model for the total sample.[5] Path modeling is one strategy for examining theoretical linkages in models where mediating and moderating factors are believed to be present. We began by testing the model as originally proposed (see Figure 8.2), using a frequency measure of serious violent offending (the total number of times youths reported having engaged in aggravated assault, robbery, gang fighting, and shooting). Each of the direct effects proposed in the model was statistically significant and in the expected direction, with two exceptions: Neither impulsivity nor risk seeking (self-control measures) was significantly related to serious violent offending. Although the patterns of the effects were generally consistent with our theoretical model, the goodness-of-fit measures described by Arbuckle (2006) and Kline (1998) indicated that our model did not fit the data well.

Because of this poor fit, we examined alternative models, including fully saturated models (models with all possible relational paths among the variables present). The fully saturated models did not fit the data any better than the original model, even after we removed the paths that were not statistically significant.

Our next step was to develop a more concise model by making informed decisions about variables to exclude. We closely reviewed the results of our prior analyses (presented in previous chapters) to determine which variables were the most theoretically and empirically important. While impulsivity and risk seeking are both components of self-control, prior studies have indicated that they often

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[3]We acknowledge that there are potential concerns about temporal ordering when using cross-sectional data to test models such as the one we propose. However, the convergence of risk factors identified in both cross-sectional and longitudinal research is reassuring. In this research, the cross-sectional study provides a large and diverse sample that allows us to better address the role of race/ethnicity. In addition, the use of passive parental consent in the cross-sectional study eliminates the problems of differential loss associated with active-consent samples.

[4]Since the main focus in Chapter 7 was on the prevalence of behavior, those analyses better inform prevention.

[5]To make these analyses easier to understand, we report the patterns of relationships rather than the estimates generated. More detailed information about the model's fit and about direct, indirect, and total effects are available from Esbensen.

operate differently, with risk seeking showing the strongest relationship to offending (Winfree et al. 2006). Thus, we dropped impulsivity from the model. We were also particularly attuned to the concern that youths' reports of their friends' behavior might actually represent their own behavior; thus, we dropped association with delinquent peers, as well as association with pro-social peers, from the model, and focused instead on youths' levels of commitment to both positive and negative peers. Given the conceptual similarities between guilt and neutralizations, we chose to include only guilt in the model because it had a stronger relationship to violence in the prior chapters. We also combined the separate variables for attachment to mothers and fathers into a single measure of attachment to parents.[6] Finally, based on the differences between demographic groups highlighted in earlier chapters, we included direct paths among sex, race/ethnicity, age, and living arrangements on serious violent offending. The final model of violent offending and violent victimization that we tested is presented in Figure 8.3.

Figure 8.4 illustrates the paths where the direct effects were statistically significant ($p < .05$) for offending. Goodness-of-fit measures indicated that the model of violent offending presented here was indeed an improvement over other models tested. We can see in the figure that each of the theoretically hypothesized direct effects (as shown in Figure 8.3) is statistically significant, with one exception: Risk seeking has no direct effect on serious violent offending once the effects of the other variables are taken into account. As expected, commitment to positive and negative peers, guilt, and unstructured time remain associated with serious violent offending. Youths who are more committed to negative peers or who spend time with drugs and alcohol and without adults present engage in more violent offending, while youths who are more committed to positive peers or who have higher levels of guilt are involved in fewer instances of serious violent offending. Guilt has the strongest relationship to serious violence, with commitment to negative peers a lagging second.

The model also shows a number of significant indirect paths between the theoretical variables and serious violence. For example, higher levels of attachment to parents are associated with higher levels of parental monitoring, commitment to school, and commitment to positive peers and to lower levels of commitment to negative peers. Thus, attachment to parents indirectly decreases violence through its effect on these other variables. Commitment to positive peers is inversely and directly related to serious violence (i.e., as commitment to positive peers increases, the frequency of serious violence decreases), while an increased level of commitment to negative peers is directly and positively associated with increases in serious violent offending (i.e., as commitment to negative peers increases, serious violence also increases). Commitment to school and

[6]The composite measure is the mean of the sum of the two separate scales when values for attachment to both parents were provided. When respondents indicated attachment to only one parent, that value was used.

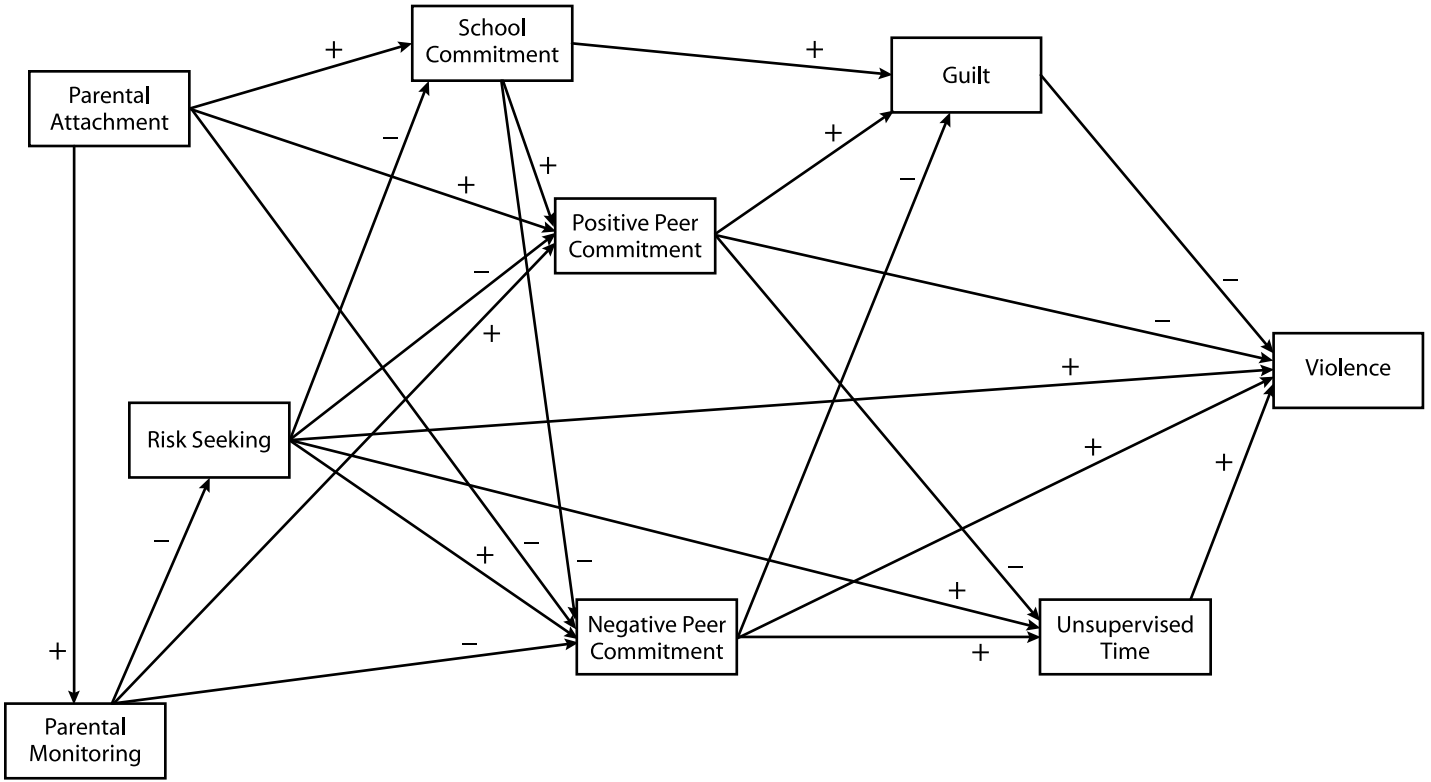

FIGURE 8.3 Tested model of serious violence (offending and victimization)

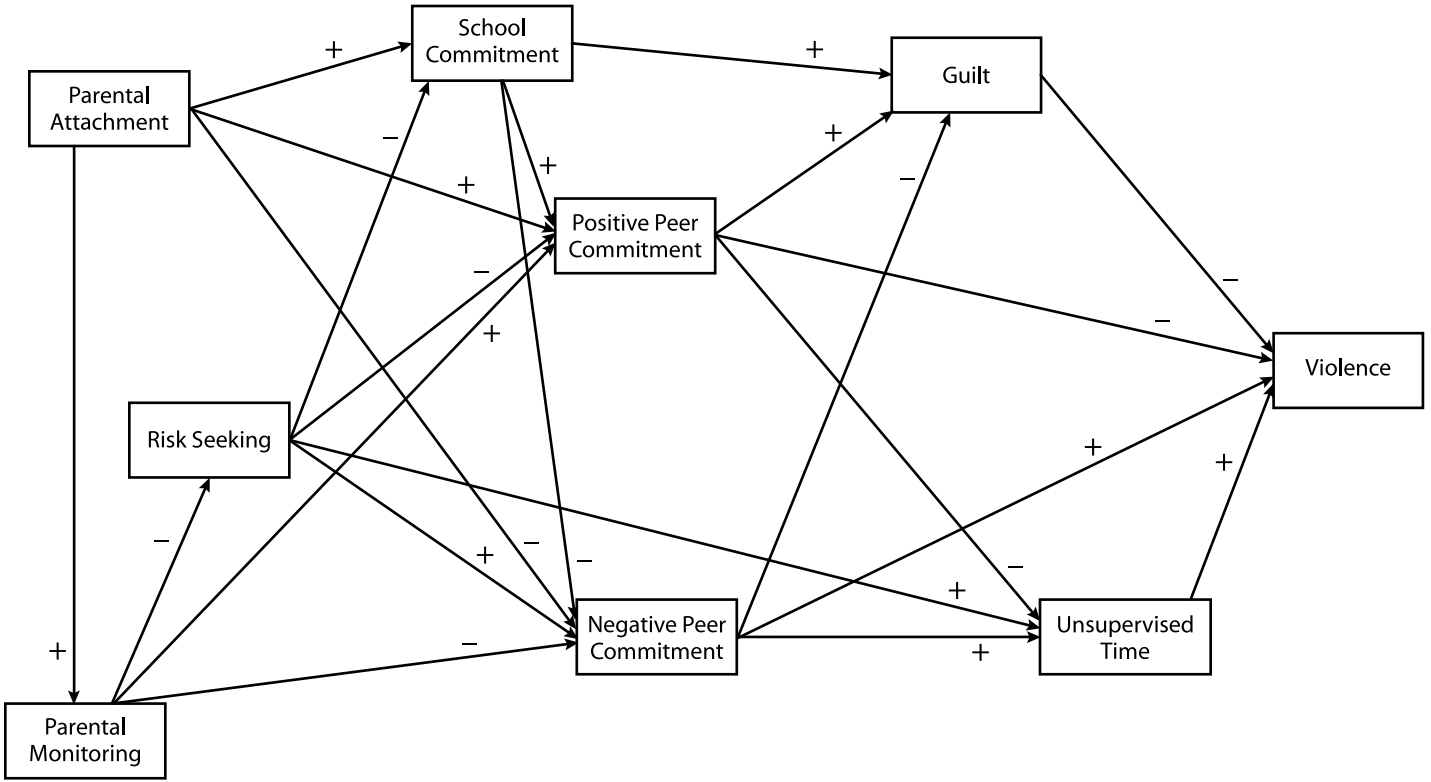

FIGURE 8.4 Final model of serious violent offending (total sample)

commitment to positive and negative peers also affect violence indirectly through their effects on guilt (all three factors) and unstructured leisure time (for the peer factors).[7] In other words, the family-level and school-level factors operate through commitment to peers, guilt, and unsupervised time.

One additional finding that is noteworthy involves risk seeking. As mentioned earlier, risk seeking has no significant direct effect on serious violent offending. It does, however, operate indirectly through commitment to school, commitment to positive and negative peers, and unsupervised time spent with drugs and alcohol present. Specifically, higher levels of risk seeking are associated with lower levels of commitment to school and of commitment to positive peers; they are also associated with greater commitment to negative peers and to time spent in unstructured leisure activities with drugs and alcohol available. Indeed, when we examined the standardized total effects (i.e., added the standardized direct effects to the standardized indirect effects of the intermediary variables) of risk seeking on serious violent offending, we found that the relationship is stronger than that of attachment to parents, parental monitoring, commitment to school, commitment to positive peers, and unstructured time spent with friends with drugs and alcohol present. Keep in mind, however, that the largest total effects were for guilt and commitment to negative peers.

Sex Differences in the Model of Serious Violent Offending

What about sex differences? In the model for the total sample, sex exerts a direct effect on serious violent offending. That is, even when the effects of family, school, peer, and other demographic factors are taken into account, boys are still more involved than girls in serious violent offending. An examination of the standardized direct effects, however, shows that the strength of the relationship between sex and violence is similar to that of time spent in unstructured activities and violence.

We also see that boys show greater attachment to their parents than girls. Youths who are more attached to their parents (in this case, boys) are also more committed to school, more committed to positive peers, and less committed to negative peers. Conversely, boys are less monitored by their parents than are girls. As we saw earlier, lower levels of parental monitoring are associated with increased levels of risk seeking and commitment to negative peers and to lower levels of commitment to positive peers, and these factors influence guilt and unsupervised time, which in turn affect serious violent offending. These indirect effects, then, have an impact on the total sex differences in serious violent offending. Looking at the total effect of sex on serious violence, we find few differences between girls

[7] As indicated in the figures, we did not examine direct effects among all of the theoretical variables in the model. Rather, our models propose that some factors (e.g., attachment to parents, parental monitoring, commitment to school) have no direct effects on violence; instead, they operate through other theoretical factors.

and boys. In short, the direct effect of sex on serious violence is slightly enhanced by the indirect effects of family-, school-, and peer-level factors. Thus, the total effect of sex on serious violent offending is only slightly greater than what we would find without taking the individual, family, school, peer, and other demographic factors into account. It is also important to keep in mind that the effect of sex on violence is weak relative to the effects of guilt, commitment to negative peers, risk seeking, commitment to school, and commitment to positive peers. That is, being male is not as important to predicting violence as are these theoretical factors.

These results illustrate that, taking all factors into account, boys are slightly more involved in serious violent offending than girls. But do the models work similarly for boys and girls, or are there differences in the etiology of serious violent offending between the sexes? To examine this question, we reran the models for each separate subsample in AMOS.[8] The short answer to this question is that the models operate similarly for girls and boys, with one exception: Levels of attachment to parents are not significantly related to levels of commitment to positive peers for girls. As we saw before, however, the factors with the strongest relationships to violent offending are guilt, commitment to negative peers, risk seeking, commitment to school, and commitment to positive peers. It is important to note that risk seeking and commitment to school derive their relatively strong effects primarily from the influence they exert on peer and routine activity factors (rather than directly on violence).

Racial/Ethnic Differences in the Model of Serious Violent Offending

We also see racial/ethnic differences in the model of serious violent offending for the total sample. The direct paths to serious violence for African Americans and Hispanics are statistically significant, indicating that youths from each of these groups are involved in more serious violent offending than are white youths, even when additional individual, family, school, and peer factors are taken into account.

African American youths also show greater attachment to parents than do white youths, and there are no significant differences between Hispanics and whites or Hispanics and African Americans. When we compare African Americans and Hispanics,[9] however, we find that youths from these backgrounds engage in similar levels of serious violence and report similar levels of parental monitoring. As we saw earlier, the individual, peer, and school factors condition

[8]We do not present the sex-specific analyses in a figure because of their similarities to the model for the total sample.

[9]We ran the models of violent offending and violent victimization three times. Each time, we substituted a different referent category for race/ethnicity. In the first model, we used white as the reference; in the second, we used African American as the reference; and in the third, we used Hispanic as the reference.

these effects on serious violence. In fact, the total effects of race/ethnicity on violent offending increase slightly when these intermediary factors are taken into account. An examination of the standardized total effects of race/ethnicity on serious violent offending shows that the strength of these relationships is similar to the relationships of parental monitoring and unstructured time spent with drugs and alcohol available to serious violent offending. Again, however, the effects of race/ethnicity are weak relative to those of guilt, commitment to negative peers, risk seeking, commitment to school, commitment to positive peers, and attachment to parents.

Once again, we must ask: Do the models operate differently for white, African American, and Hispanic youths? We examined this question using the race/ethnicity-specific subsamples. The analyses suggest that there are different models of serious violent offending for youths of different racial/ethnic backgrounds. Results show that increased commitment to negative peers and decreased levels of guilt are associated with increased involvement in serious violent offending for all racial/ethnic groups. In addition, unstructured time spent with drugs and alcohol is directly related to violent offending for African American and Hispanic, but not white, youths. Interestingly, risk seeking is associated with increased involvement in serious violent offending only for African American youths, and the direct relationship between commitment to positive peers and serious violent offending is salient only for Hispanic youths.

Tests of the Model for Serious Violent Victimization

We now turn our attention to the model of serious violent victimization among the total sample of youths. In this case, we use the frequency measure of serious violent victimization, or the total number of aggravated assaults and robberies experienced by each youth, as our dependent variable. The final violent victimization model is similar to the model for violent offending (see Figure 8.5), although some key differences emerge. Unlike in the model for serious violent offending, higher levels of risk seeking are directly associated with levels of serious violent victimization once other factors are taken into account, and the total effect of this relationship is the strongest of all factors in the model. Conversely, commitment to negative peers is not significantly related to serious violent victimization, but it is significantly related to levels of guilt and unstructured time with drugs and alcohol present. In other words, although commitment to negative peers does not directly affect levels of violent victimization, it does affect victimization indirectly through its effects on guilt and unsupervised time. Other than these differences, the factors affecting serious violent victimization appear to be quite similar to those that affect serious violent offending. As before, lower levels of commitment to positive peers, unsupervised time spent with drugs and alcohol available, and lower levels of guilt are directly related to increases in serious violent victimization. In addition, the family- and school-level factors operate through peer and individual factors to affect serious violent victimization.

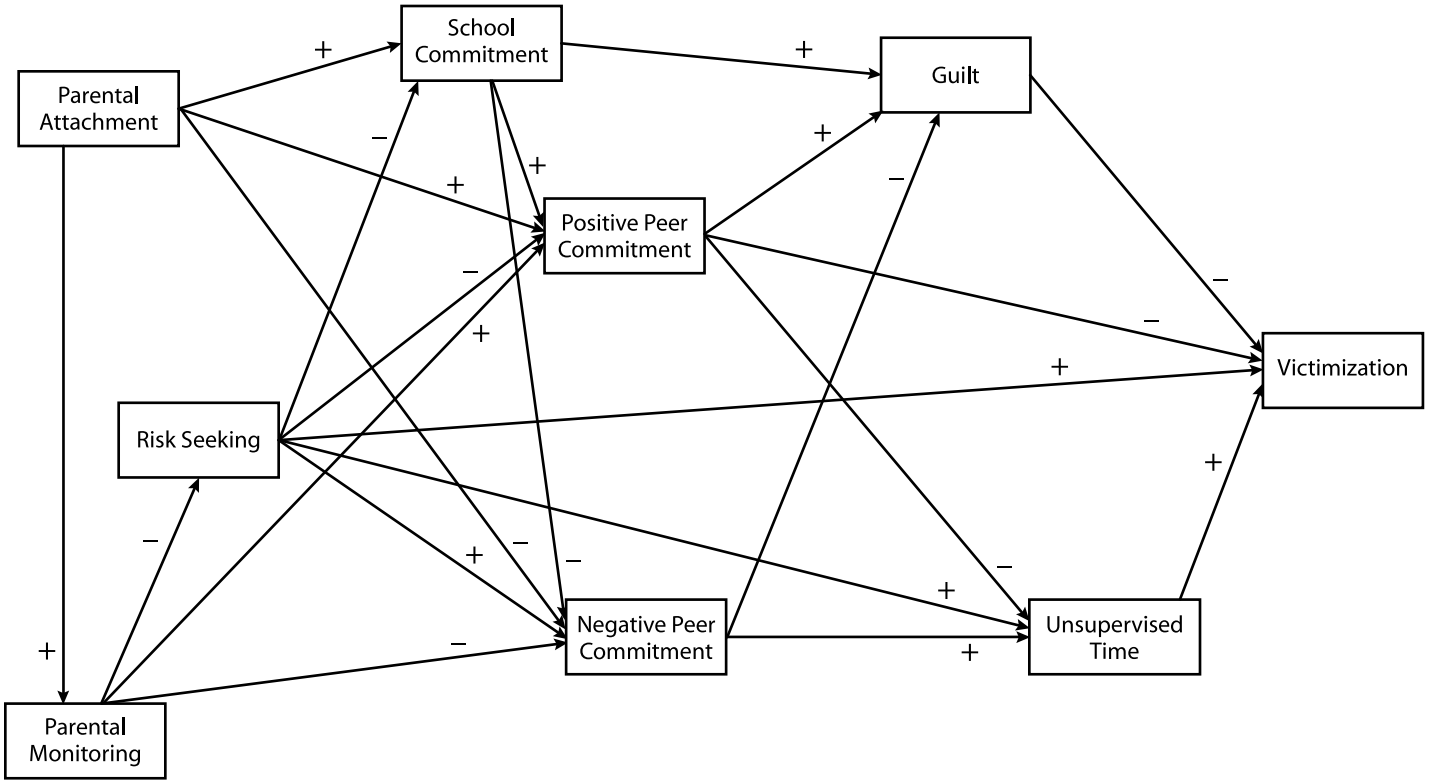

FIGURE 8.5 Final model of serious violent victimization (total sample)

Sex Differences in the Model of Serious Violent Victimization

Looking at the results for the total sample, we again see differences in serious violent victimization for girls and boys, even when the effects of individual, family, school, peer, and additional demographic characteristics are taken into account. As indicated by the direct effect, boys are again found to experience more serious violent victimization than similarly situated girls. In addition to the direct effect of sex on serious violent victimization, indirect effects operate through the family factors. Specifically, sex differences in levels of attachment to parents and parental monitoring are transmitted through the school, peer, and individual factors to slightly enhance the effect of sex on serious violent victimization. Thus, the total effect of sex on serious violent victimization is only slightly lower than the association between risk seeking and serious violent victimization and greater than any of the other theoretical variables.

Are there sex differences in the etiology of serious violent victimization? An examination of the models for girls and boys again reveals few differences. Unlike for boys, levels of attachment to parents are not directly associated with levels of commitment to positive peers for girls, and risk seeking is not directly related to serious violent victimization. Conversely, unlike for girls, levels of commitment to positive peers are not directly associated with decreases in victimization for boys. For both boys and girls, however, attachment to parents is directly associated with parental monitoring; parental monitoring is directly associated with risk seeking and commitment to positive and negative peers; risk seeking is associated with commitment to peers; and commitment to peers is associated with guilt and unstructured time spent with alcohol and drugs available. Looking at the standardized total effects of each of the theoretical factors and serious violent victimization, we see that the strongest standardized total effects for boys are for risk seeking and guilt. For girls, the strongest total effects are for commitment to positive peers and guilt.

Racial/Ethnic Differences in the Model of Serious Violent Victimization

The direct effects indicate that white and Hispanic youths experience similar levels of serious violent victimization, and African American youths experience slightly more serious violent victimization than white youths. The total race/ethnicity effects again operate through family factors. African Americans and Hispanics have lower levels of parental monitoring than white youths. Also relative to white youths, attachment to parents is significantly higher for African American youths and lower for Hispanic youths. When we examine the total effects of race/ethnicity on serious violent victimization while controlling for the effects of other theoretical factors, we see relatively little difference in serious violent victimization among the racial/ethnic groups.

As before, we examined the models separately for the sample of white, African American, and Hispanic youths to determine whether racial/ethnic differences existed in the etiological factors related to serious violent victimization. The results of these analyses clearly illustrate the differences in the etiology of violent victimization for white, African American, and Hispanic youths. For example, for white youths, guilt is the only theoretical factor directly associated with victimization (higher levels of guilt are associated with less victimization). Risk seeking, commitment to positive peers, time spent with drugs and alcohol, and guilt are all directly associated with African American youths' levels of victimization. For Hispanic youths, victimization is directly associated with decreased levels of guilt and increased time spent with drugs and alcohol. As is the case with white youths, levels of risk seeking and commitment to positive peers are not directly associated with serious violent victimization of Hispanic youths. Finally, it is important to note that, as for the general sample, commitment to negative peers is not directly associated with serious violent victimization for white, African American, or Hispanic youths. Interestingly, however, the models fit the data better for African American youths than for white or Hispanic youths. This was also true for violent offending.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, we built on the foundation of Chapter 2 to develop and test an integrated model of youth violence. By linking the risk factors examined throughout this book and situating them within the self-control, social bonding, social learning, and routine activities/opportunity theories, we offered an explanatory framework for understanding youth violence. Specifically, we proposed that levels of violent offending and victimization among youths can be viewed as a developmental outgrowth of processes associated with linkages among individual-, family-, peer-, and school-level factors. For example, we examined the effects of family factors such as attachment to parents and parental monitoring on levels of self-control; self-control's effect on bonds to school and peers; and the effects of school- and peer-level factors on levels of guilt and time spent in risky situations—namely, time without adults present and where drugs and alcohol were available. As we have throughout the book, we explored differences between boys and girls and among individuals of different racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Our empirical tests of the integrated model of youth violence suggest that these individual, family, peer, and school factors can indeed be linked together as a potential explanation of youth violence. The results suggest that the model outlined here not only is particularly adept at explaining youths' violent offending but also holds promise as a mechanism to explain their violent victimization. The model did an adequate job for the total sample and performed similarly for boys and girls; the findings for race/ethnicity were more varied. For

example, the results suggest that the model is better suited to explaining violence among African American and Hispanic youths than to explaining violence among white youths.

The findings reported in this chapter have important implications for policy, as we will discuss in greater detail in the next chapter. As we have seen, each of the theoretical factors and risk factors is found to affect levels of violence (both offending and victimization) either directly or indirectly. Thus, one should expect programs that focus on these factors to have a demonstrable effect on reducing youth violence. In some cases, these effects are direct. For example, increasing the level of youths' commitment to positive peers should lead to reduced offending and victimization. In other cases, the relationships are indirect. For example, enhancing youths' commitment to school should lead to greater commitment to positive peers and increased levels of guilt while also reducing the commitment to negative peers. These changes, in turn, can be expected to lead to reductions in violence. Again, our results suggest that violent offending and violent victimization can be modified by emphasizing similar risk factors.

Our analyses also suggest that the etiology of violent offending and victimization are similar for girls and boys. In a general sense, these results call into question the need for gender-specific programming. In other words, programs that focus on factors such as parental monitoring, commitment to school, unstructured time spent with drugs and alcohol, and so on should reduce violent offending and victimization, regardless of whether they target girls or boys. Some differences are noteworthy, however. For example, our results suggest that enhancing girls' levels of emotional attachment to parents would not be expected to result in any changes in their levels of commitment to positive peers (or the resultant changes in violent offending or victimization). Boys, however, may receive additional benefit from increased commitment to positive peers (and subsequent reductions in violent offending and victimization) when their levels of attachment to parents are enhanced. This is not to suggest that improving attachments to parents should be a goal of programs aimed at boys but not girls. Rather, it illustrates that some factors may have different consequences and mechanisms in reducing violence depending on whether girls or boys are targeted. These results suggest that we should discuss "gender-sensitive," rather than "gender-specific," programming. Having said that, the consistent finding of direct effects of sex on violence, even controlling for the theoretical factors, suggest that programs that focus on theoretically based risk factors can reduce (but probably not erase) the gap between girls and boys in offending.

The results of the analyses for white, African American, and Hispanic youths are more complicated. On the one hand, racial/ethnic differences are less pronounced when the theoretical factors are introduced. For example, once the family, peer, school, and individual factors were controlled, racial/ethnic differences in these factors' associations with violence (as illustrated by the direct effects of race/ethnicity on offending and victimization) were relatively weak. On the other

hand, some important differences do appear to exist in the etiology of violence across racial/ethnic groups. For example, some factors (such as risk seeking, commitment to positive peers, and unsupervised time spent with drugs and alcohol) were found to have no effect on violence for some racial/ethnic groups but were important for others. In short, these findings suggest that racial/ethnic differences in violent offending and victimization may be reduced by emphasizing the theoretical risk factors, although the mechanisms by which these factors work may vary by race/ethnicity. Thus, programs should also be sensitive to the racial/ethnic composition of their clientele. In some cases, programs may be encouraged to explore programming that is specific to race/ethnicity.

9
Responding to Youth Violence

In this final chapter, we integrate a summary of our findings regarding youth violence, gang membership, and violent victimization with discussion of programs or approaches suggested by our results. In particular, this chapter is framed by the following questions:

- Should we adopt different prevention or intervention approaches for youth violence, gang membership, and victimization?
- Does our work provide justification for gender-specific programming?
- Does our work provide justification for race/ethnicity-specific programming?

The findings reported throughout this book allow us to make recommendations to prevent youth from becoming involved in violent offending, gangs, and violent victimization, as well as to intervene with youth who are already involved in such behavior. To address the first question posed above, we briefly review our findings regarding the prevalence of and risk factors associated with the three forms of violence. We then discuss the implications of those findings for general prevention (i.e., whether the same, or "general," approaches can be used to prevent all three types of violence) before turning our attention to the frequency of violent offending and victimization, associated risk factors, and implications of our findings for general intervention. To address the second and third questions, we provide a brief discussion of the current debates about sex- and race/ethnicity-specific programs, then turn to the implications of our findings in regard to these debates.

Should We Adopt Different Prevention or Intervention Approaches for Youth Violence, Gang Membership, and Victimization?

Are different programs or approaches needed to prevent youths from becoming involved in violence, joining gangs, and being violently victimized? Or can a general program or approach address all three forms of violence? The results from Chapters 4–7 suggest that, although similar approaches should work for violence and gang prevention, slightly different strategies may be needed to protect youths from victimization. Tests of our theoretical model in Chapter 8, however, indicate that the pathways to violence and victimization may be similar enough for general intervention approaches to reduce the frequency of both forms of violence. Below, we describe the particular results that lead us to these general conclusions.

Prevalence and Prevention of Violence, Gang Membership, and Victimization

Recall that 24 percent of our sample of eighth-graders were serious violent offenders (reported having attacked someone with a weapon, having robbed someone, having been involved in gang fights, or having shot at someone); 9.1 percent were gang members; and 15 percent had been victims of serious violence (reported having been robbed or attacked by someone with a weapon or by someone trying to seriously hurt or kill them). Although we saw in Chapter 5 that gang members are responsible for a great deal of violent offending and in Chapter 6 that gang members are much more likely to be victims of violence than are non-gang youths, our analyses in Chapter 7 showed that there is not a great deal of overlap in the three types of violence. That is, of those youths classified in at least one of our categories of youth violence—recall that 69 percent of our sample was *not* involved in any of these violent categories—few (about 12%) were violent offenders, gang members, *and* victims of violence. More youths (29% of those classified) had been involved in two types of violence, and even more (58%) had been involved in only one type. The most likely combination of two types of violence was for youths to be offenders and victims (18%), followed by offenders and gang members (11%); we found the lowest percentage of youths were gang members and victims (.5%). Given this lack of overlap, would we expect risk factors for each type of violence to differ and thus suggest different approaches to prevention?

In Chapters 4–6, we found statistically significant differences in levels of risk among non-offenders, nonviolent offenders, and serious violent offenders; between non-gang youths and gang members; and among non-victims, victims of assault only, and serious violence victims. Serious violent offenders, gang members, and serious violence victims experienced the greatest risk on all eighteen factors. Thus, it would appear desirable to address all eighteen risk factors

in prevention. However, particular risk factors appear to deserve greater attention, either because of their effects on all three forms of violence or because they are unique predictors of one type of violence. Of the eighteen risk factors found to be individually (or bivariately) associated with the three forms of violence, four were significantly related to all three forms of violence in multivariate analyses controlling for demographics and the effects of all eighteen risk factors (see Table 7.7). The use of neutralizations, association with delinquent peers, spending time where drugs and alcohol are available, and negative perceptions of the school environment were all associated with greater odds of involvement in violence, gang membership, and victimization, and these findings generally hold for both sex and race/ethnicity, as we describe later.

Unique predictors of violence—or factors that predict violence but not gang membership or victimization—are risk-seeking tendencies, few pro-social peers, and unsupervised and unstructured socializing with peers. Unique predictors of violent victimization are low parental monitoring and perceptions that educational opportunities are limited. Note that there are no unique predictors of gang involvement; this is consistent with other research (e.g., Hill et al. 1999). It is the accumulation of these risk factors that leads youths to become involved in gangs. The analyses in Chapter 7 demonstrate that a greater number of risk factors are required to achieve the same odds of gang membership as of violent offending—that is, it takes a greater push for youths to become involved in gangs than in violence. It is also true that those youths who are gang members experience the most risk. Thus, it is important to address risk early, before factors have a chance to accumulate. Similarly, given that fewer risk factors are necessary to produce relatively high odds of violence, early violence prevention is especially important. Taken together, our findings indicate that approaches to violence prevention, particularly those that focus on increasing social conscience (to combat lack of guilt for potential deviance and decrease the use of neutralizations) and decreasing association with and commitment to deviant peers, also would protect youths from involvement in gangs.

We have acknowledged that it is likely that we have not measured many risk factors specific to violent victimization, including those associated with lifestyle and family environment such as domestic violence, abuse, parents' mental health, and substance abuse, and particularly for specific kinds of victimization such as abuse and sexual assault. But for "street" victimization such as robbery and aggravated assault, our results provide some insight and recommendations for programming. While approaches to violence prevention should provide some protection for youths against violent victimization (because some risk factors are shared and because research suggests that youths who commit violence often put themselves in situations in which they are likely to become victims of violence themselves), such programs are likely to provide greater benefit if they also include elements that address risk factors that are unique to victimization. Thus, in addition to increasing youths' ability to make safe choices (e.g., avoiding deviant peers and situations where drugs and alcohol are present) and improving

their feelings of safety in school, programs that aim to address youth victimization should focus on increasing parental monitoring of young people's whereabouts and activities and youths' knowledge of and access to the educational opportunities that are available to them.

Prevention Approaches

So how do we protect youths from these risks, or how do we equip them to resist the risks? Dahlberg (1998, 267) states that it is "far easier to identify the factors that place young people at risk for violent victimization than it is to design interventions and programs to reduce this risk." This is true, but it is not cause for discouragement. Numerous scholars have been working to identify effective prevention and intervention strategies.

Building on their work, we have identified numerous risk factors that are associated with violence, gang membership, and victimization. Our categorization of risk factors, however, is by no means totally inclusive. For example, as we have stated, our data do not allow us to examine community-level risk factors. Although these are important influences, they also often are the most difficult to address, as many would require macro-level or structural (societal, political, or economic) changes. Thus, Vigil (2002, 15) encourages us to focus on factors we can change—or, at least, those we can more readily, if not more easily, target:

> If we focus on the intermediate (meso and micro) levels of social control, such as families, schools, and law enforcement, we can do something for the proximate future. To pull off even this will require a great engagement and involvement and a retooling of the connections among these agents. Put another way, if we are powerless to address changes at the macro level, then we certainly can and must muster the resources to work at them at the intermediary or micro level.

Thus, we propose that programs or approaches that address the following micro-level risk factors are likely to prevent or reduce the odds of youths' participation in violence, gang membership, and victimization:

- *Individual domain:* elements that attempt to increase youths' moral convictions, social conscience and responsibility, or altruistic values; that is, that bring them to understand the consequences of negative behaviors and that lead them to "define" such behaviors as wrong and to be avoided"
- *Peer domain:* elements that increase youths' ability to make responsible choices regarding friends; that discourage associating with and committing to deviant peers and encourage associating with pro-social peers;

and that more closely supervise youths in structured activities or encourage youths to make healthy decisions such as not associating with peers in unsupervised situations, especially where drugs and alcohol may be present
- *School domain:* elements that address students' perceptions that school environments are unsafe or that there is a high presence of crime, gangs, and conflict in their schools.

Given the harmful effects of cumulative risk, as well as the fact that there may be multiple paths to violence, programs should be broadly based, addressing numerous risk factors across multiple domains (Catalano et al. 1998; Dodge 2001; Kumpfer and Alvarado 1998).

Do programs exist that are effective in reducing these risk factors for violence, gang membership, and victimization? Several groups, including the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), have reviewed numerous prevention and intervention programs and, using various criteria, designated programs "model" or "exemplary," "effective," and "promising." The CSPV, at the University of Colorado, Boulder, for example, has reviewed more than 600 programs; of these, it has identified only eleven model programs that have proved scientifically to be effective in reducing youth aggression, violence, delinquency, and substance abuse. An additional twenty-one programs have been designated promising (Mihalic et al. 2004). Of the eleven model programs, five—Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Functional Family Therapy, Multisystemic Therapy (MST), Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC), and the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program—have demonstrated prevention of or reductions in violent behavior, gang membership, or victimization among the early adolescent age group represented in our study sample. In addition, several programs have been rated either exemplary or effective by the OJJDP (although the criteria are slightly different from those used by CSPV).

Many of these programs address the types of violence examined in this book. Further, nearly all are designed to address a multitude of risk factors across several domains. It is likely, for example, that the following activities of Big Brothers/Big Sisters directly or indirectly affect some of the risk factors we have identified:

- Social (hanging out and talking about topics of interest), which could increase attachments to pro-social others
- Recreation (sports, camping trips, concerts, museum visits), which could help channel risk-seeking or impulsive tendencies toward pro-social behaviors, increase exposure to pro-social individuals, and provide youths with structured, supervised activities

- Academic (homework or other assistance), which could improve attitudes toward, commitment to, and performance in, school, as well as alter perceptions about educational opportunities
- Volunteering and charity work, which could instill a sense of moral responsibility and life-skills development (learning about nutrition or how to open a bank account)
- Job and career activities (visiting worksites, developing résumés)

The Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentorship program has resulted in fewer incidences of hitting, better attitudes toward school, better behavior and performance in school, and higher-quality relationships with parents and peers (McGill, Mihalic, and Grotpeter 1998).

Several programs have been deemed successful in addressing overall violence and gang membership. Aggression Replacement Training (ART; see Goldstein et al. 1987), rated an effective violence and gang prevention program by the OJJDP, addresses the following risk factors that we identified: impulsivity, delinquent beliefs, lack of guilt (moral reasoning), and association with delinquent peers. Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways (RIPP; see Meyer et al. 2000), which the OJJDP has designated an exemplary program, also has been shown to reduce gang activity, delinquency, aggression, and violence by targeting a variety of community-, family-, school-, peer-, and individual-level risk factors. The revised Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) curriculum taps a number of the risk factors we have found to be associated with the three forms of violence, including risk seeking, low levels of guilt, use of neutralizations, association with negative peers, and negative perceptions of school environments. Although G.R.E.A.T. is not currently identified as a model or exemplary program, it is undergoing a longitudinal evaluation by the authors, to be completed in 2011. Finally, although it is not currently funded by the federal government, the Comprehensive Gang Model (Spergel and Grossman 1997) also has been rated by the OJJDP as an effective gang- and violence-prevention program. While many of the risk factors it reduces are at the community level, it also lessens risk in the areas of association with deviant peers and delinquent beliefs.

Other programs seek to reduce violence and victimization by changing classroom and school climates. One such program, PeaceBuilders (Embry et al. 1996), deemed exemplary by the OJJDP, focuses on negative peer interactions, delinquent beliefs, and social-skill building, among other factors. For youths who perceive their school environments as threatening, Dan Olweus's Bullying Prevention Program for elementary- and middle-school students may be useful. It has been shown to improve perceptions of the school environment and attitudes toward school and to reduce bullying, fighting, and victimization, among other behaviors (Olweus, Limber, and Mihalic 1999). In addition, the *OJJDP Model Programs Guide* identifies the School Transitional Environmental Program (STEP) and Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents (VPC) as effective

in addressing school or classroom climate factors to improve students' perceptions of school environment. STEP also addresses commitment to school, delinquent beliefs, and association with negative peers, encourages association with pro-social peers, and builds self-efficacy.

In addition to identifying specific risk factors associated with violence, the results in Chapter 7 demonstrate that experiencing multiple or cumulative risk is particularly damaging for youths. In fact, each additional risk factor beyond six, as well as experiencing risk in multiple domains, increases the odds of violence exponentially. Thus, it is likely to be more productive to address some of these risk factors before youths reach the age of our sample, since many of our respondents already report exposure to these risk factors. Model programs designed to reach individuals before adolescence include the Nurse–Family Partnership, the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum, and the Incredible Years Series (IYS). The Nurse–Family Partnership strives to improve outcomes for children born to low-income, at-risk pregnant women (Olds et al. 1998) by providing services during the first two years of life. In addition to focusing on key family risk factors, the program addresses risk factors in the community and individual domains and has been found to reduce arrests and convictions among children born to these mothers. PATHS has been shown to improve self-control, increase the ability to tolerate frustration, and decrease aggression in elementary-school children by focusing on risk factors such as self-control, social competence, and positive peer relations (Greenberg, Kusché, and Mihalic 1998). The IYS consists of programs for children, parents, and teachers to reduce youths' problem behavior by addressing a variety of school, family, and individual risk factors (Webster-Stratton et al. 2001).

Frequency of and Intervention in Serious Violence and Victimization

We have focused more on the prevalence of different types of violence in this book and believe that prevention should be the main focus for our resources. However, we have also examined the frequency of offending and victimization and believe that intervention programs are necessary because some youths, despite our best efforts toward prevention, will become involved in violence. In Chapter 8, we tested our integrated theoretical model to predict levels of serious violence and victimization.[1] We identified theoretical perspectives with which a number of our risk factors are associated and developed a model to describe the ways in which we believe the factors relate to one another and to youth violence. While this is different from how we examined predictors of prevalence in Chapter 7, we can draw similar conclusions about the kinds of intervention approaches that our findings suggest.

[1]Recall that because gang membership is a prevalence measure, we did not examine this dependent variable.

The models for the frequency of serious violence and victimization presented in Chapter 8 are very similar, with the exceptions that risk seeking has a direct effect on the frequency of victimization but not of violence and that commitment to negative peers has a direct effect on the frequency of violence but not of victimization. Thus, while greater risk-seeking tendencies are directly associated with increases in victimization, the effect of risk seeking on violence is indirect through its relationships to commitment to school, guilt, commitment to positive peers, and commitment to negative peers. Similarly, while greater commitment to negative peers directly increases violent offending, it only indirectly increases violent victimization by lowering feelings of guilt and increasing unsupervised time.

Guilt is an important predictor of both violence and victimization. The less guilt that youths feel, the more incidences of violence they commit and the more incidences of violence they experience as victims. For violence, guilt is followed in importance by commitment to negative peers, unsupervised socializing, and commitment to positive peers. For victimization, risk seeking is the strongest predictor, followed by guilt, unsupervised socializing, and commitment to positive peers. Other factors (attachment to parents and parental monitoring, risk seeking, and commitment to school) have indirect effects on levels of violence and victimization through their relationships to the four factors just described. Thus, any programs or approaches that address these individual-, family-, school-, and peer-level factors should reduce the frequency of both violent offending and violent victimization.

Since these findings were based on tests of our integrated theoretical model, we can provide insight into general intervention programs that are theoretically based. That is, approaches rooted in the four theoretical perspectives we discussed in Chapters 2 and 8 have a good chance to reduce violent offending and victimization. Program elements that are likely to be effective will strengthen bonds to family and school (social bond theory); increase monitoring of youths and decrease risk seeking (self-control theory); increase commitment to positive peers and decrease commitment to negative peers (social learning theory); and decrease the amount of time youths spend socializing with peers in unstructured situations and where drugs and alcohol are available (routine activities/opportunity theory).

Intervention Approaches

Numerous reviews have been conducted since the late 1970s to determine whether and what kind of treatments "work." As evaluation designs have become more robust and analytical techniques have become more sophisticated, we have been able to identify effective treatments and their components (Andrews et al. 1990; Catalano et al. 1998; Gendreau and Andrews 1990; Kumpfer and Alvarado 1998; Lipsey 1992, 1995; Lipsey and Wilson 1998; Loeber and Farrington 1998; Palmer 1983, 1991; Wilson and Howell 1993). This body of evidence indicates

that, to have the best chance to reduce aggressive, delinquent, and violent behavior, interventions should be

- Broad-based or multi-modal
- Behavioral or skill-oriented in nature
- Matched to the subsample of offenders by adhering to the "responsivity principle" (i.e., matched to the youths' learning styles) and to the "risk principle" (i.e., delivered mainly to high-risk rather than to low-risk offenders)
- Intensive (taking up at least 40 percent of clients' time for three to nine months)
- Focused on "criminogenic need," or the known predictors of delinquency and reoffending
- Developmentally appropriate
- Family-focused

In addition, program fidelity is essential. That is, programs should be fully implemented as intended to maximize the potential to achieve effective outcomes (Mihalic et al. 2004).

A few model, exemplary, or effective programs that target youths at risk of becoming involved in violence or those who are already involved but have not yet reached a level that requires residential placement adhere to these principles of effectiveness. MST, rated exemplary by the OJJDP, is a holistic community-based treatment program for youth and families that builds on strengths to equip youths to make positive choices in the family, peer, school, and neighborhood contexts. MST has shown effectiveness with serious, chronic, and violent offenders, reducing re-arrests, out-of-home placements, and mental health problems and increasing the functioning of families (Henggeler et al. 1998). Among the risk factors it addresses are low levels of family monitoring and attachment, association with delinquent peers, and low levels of commitment to school. Another community-based, family-focused prevention/intervention program, Functional Family Therapy, has shown similar effectiveness with various types of youth and families, including youths with conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, or disruptive behavior disorder and who are delinquent or violent (Alexander et al. 1998; Alexander, Holtzworth-Munroe, and Jameson 1994; Barton et al. 1985).

For youths who are already involved in serious violent offending and have come to the attention—perhaps multiple times—of authorities, MTFC is an option that has been deemed a model program. Designed to prevent placement of youths in treatment centers, hospitals, or state or county juvenile facilities, MTFC has been found to decrease arrests and incarceration time and to increase involvement in school by providing youths with a stable community family environment, intensive supervision, positive relationships with adults, and positive reinforcement for desired behavior and by inhibiting association with deviant

peers (Chamberlain and Mihalic 1998). It thus appears to address many of the factors associated with higher levels of violence in our theoretical models.

Does Our Work Provide Justification for Gender-Specific Programming?

Whether gender-specific prevention and intervention programming is appropriate depends on whether girls' and boys' behaviors have similar or different causes. As we reviewed in previous chapters, the risk factor perspective and numerous theories have been proposed to explain youths' behavior. Much of this theorizing and related empirical research, however, was conducted with boys in mind. It is only relatively recently that a body of knowledge regarding girls' behavior has been accumulated to assist in the gender-specific or gender-neutral debate. Do girls' and boys' misbehavior stem from different causal mechanisms? One group argues that traditional "male-centered" explanations cannot adequately describe and predict the behavior of girls; these scholars believe that the specific context in which girls live should be examined and that female-specific theories should be developed (e.g., Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn 1999). Other scholars argue that a gender-neutral framework can suit analyses of both girls' and boys' behavior because the same causal factors underlie both (e.g., Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Rowe, Vazsonyi, and Flannery 1995). Still others argue for what can be called a middle ground—that is, that the potential utility of traditional explanations should not be dismissed outright but should incorporate investigation into contexts that influence gender organization, roles, and relations and that produce sex differences even in the face of similar causal factors (e.g., Miller 2001).

Studies have found that factors drawn from theories such as social control, differential association, and strain/anomie (Rosenbaum 1987; Simons, Miller, and Aigner 1980; Smith and Paternoster 1987) predict misbehavior by both sexes. More recent studies have also demonstrated that some traditional theories *can* explain girls' delinquency (see, e.g., Deschenes and Esbensen 1999b; Esbensen and Deschenes 1998; Giordano and Rockwell 2000; Heimer and DeCoster 1999; LaGrange and Silverman 1999; Lynskey et al. 2000) and, in fact, may explain greater variation in girls' than in boys' delinquency (Rosenbaum 1987). Further, the risk factor literature reviewed in previous chapters shows that many of the same factors are related to both girls' and boys' behavior. But, as Daly and Chesney-Lind (1988, 516) ask, even if similar processes explain both girls' and boys' delinquency, "Why do such similar processes produce a distinctive gender-based structure to crime or delinquency?" That is, how do similar factors produce a sex difference in offending? Some reconcile the gender-neutral and gender-gap conundrum by proposing the idea of "differential exposure to the same general, predisposing factors" (Rhodes and Fischer 1993, 880). Others focus on sex and gender as key explanatory and organizing factors (see, e.g., Miller 2000). Recent works by Miller (2000, 2001), Miller and Brunson (2000), and Peterson, Miller,

and Esbensen (2001), for example, describe the sex and gender organization of groups as having an important influence on girls' and boys' behavior within those groups.

Although the debate regarding sex differences was (and is) far from resolved, the U.S. Congress, in its reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act in 1992, included a mandate that states conduct "an analysis of gender-specific services for the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency, including the types of such services available and the need for such services for girls; and (develop) a plan for providing needed gender-specific services for the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency" (42 U.S. Cong. 5631, sec. 223[8][B][i–ii]). Also included were funds for states to develop policies to reduce gender bias and programs to ensure that girls receive appropriate services to meet their specific needs (sec. 285[B][2][E]).

Some researchers have argued that responses to girls' behavior must be tailored not only to girls' specific developmental needs but also to their ways of communicating and learning, which often differ from boys' (Albrecht 1995). Others claim that girls face issues "unique to their sex, such as sexual abuse, sexual assault, dating violence, depression, unplanned pregnancy, and adolescent motherhood" (Shelden 1998, 18). Although boys also face some of these issues, Greene, Peters, and Associates (1998, 6) asserts that "persistent sexism makes adolescence more confusing for girls by projecting mixed messages about the worth and role of women in society." Accordingly, some have argued that programs for girls must address *at least* the following: gendered physical and sexual violence, the risk of AIDS, sex education, birth control, pregnancy and motherhood, health care and education, drug and alcohol dependency, family dysfunction, vocational counseling and training, stress management, improvement of educational skills, enhancement of self-esteem, efficacy and empowerment, and independent living skills (e.g., Albrecht 1995; Beger and Hoffman 1998; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1998; Shelden 1998).

Despite well-intentioned arguments in favor of gender-specific programming, Kempf-Leonard and Sample (2000, 119) note that "too little information exists on programs that have proved effective specifically for girls." To help address this gap in knowledge, the OJJDP funded a Girls Study Group in 2004 to identify causes of girls' delinquency and effective prevention and intervention strategies. The group has reviewed female-specific programs and associated evaluations; using the same criteria as the Blueprints program, it classifies programs on a six-category continuum, from "effective" to "ineffective." As of November 2006, the Girls Study Group had identified fifty-eight female-specific programs throughout the United States (nineteen prevention programs, thirty-seven intervention programs, and two programs that provided both prevention and intervention services);[2] only eighteen of these, however, had evaluations that

[2]According to an update by Zahn and colleagues (2008), a total of sixty-two programs were identified, but only eighteen had yet been evaluated.

would allow the research group to classify their effectiveness (Zahn, Day, and Haynes 2006). None of the programs were rated effective, but none were classified as ineffective, either. Four were deemed promising; four had inconclusive evidence (contradictory findings or no sustained effects over time); and ten had insufficient evidence (evaluations were not scientifically rigorous; Zahn, Day, Haynes 2006). Importantly, of the four promising programs, none is still operating. Thus, while there are calls for female-specific programs, few such programs exist and even fewer evaluations are available showing that such programs are as effective as, or more effective than, mainstream programs.

What do our findings suggest for whether gender-specific or gender-neutral programs are needed? In the next sections, we discuss our recommendations for prevention and intervention approaches for girls and boys.

Prevalence and Prevention

Although boys outnumber girls as violent offenders, and the sex gap in the prevalence of violence increases as the seriousness of offenses increases, girls are engaged in a fair amount of violence. Nearly half of all of the girls in our sample had committed one of five "general violent" acts, compared with 61 percent of boys, and nearly one-fifth had committed one of four serious violent acts, compared with 29 percent of boys. A similar pattern is present for violent victimization: Boys are more often victims than girls, and the sex gap in victimization increases with seriousness, but many female youths in the sample reported having been victims of violence, and even of serious violence. Finally, the proportion of all girls (6.3%) who were involved in gangs was about half that of boys (11.9%), but girls did make up 37 percent of all gang members in our sample. Despite the fact that boys are significantly more likely to be serious violent offenders, gang members, and victims, is it the case that risk factors for these forms of violence differ by sex such that sex-specific programming is warranted?

Our analyses in Chapters 4–7 show that boys experience higher levels of risk (with a few exceptions) and greater cumulative risk than do girls. In multivariate analyses predicting violence, gang membership, and victimization (see Chapter 7), we see that girls' risk factors are generally shared by boys, with the most important predictors of all three types of violence for both sexes being association with delinquent peers, spending time where drugs and alcohol are available, and negative perceptions of school environments. One caveat is that we were not able to include risk factors or experiences that may be more female-specific (in that they are more common among girls than among boys), such as sexual abuse and sexual assault.

Taken together, our findings lend support to sex-neutrality in approaches to preventing violence, gang membership, and victimization. This does not mean that sex should not be taken into account in developing and delivering programs. We found a number of predictors unique to each sex, suggesting a number of "sex-sensitive" elements that could enhance programming for girls and boys.

A few areas that could be given more focus for girls than for boys are increasing commitments to school and decreasing perceptions of limited educational opportunities (specific to gang prevention) and decreasing feelings of social isolation (specific to victimization prevention). Programs that have demonstrated effectiveness in these areas include ART, MST, STEP, and VPC. It may also be useful to focus more for boys than for girls on decreasing impulsive and risk-seeking tendencies (for violence prevention), which are partial components of ART, and on decreasing commitments to negative peers and unstructured socializing. G.R.E.A.T. includes a number of these elements, although evaluation of the current program is not complete.

Frequency and Intervention

While violence is more prevalent among boys than girls, there are few sex differences in levels of offending among those youths who are violent. This is not the case for victimization. Boys are significantly more likely than girls both to be victimized and to experience high levels of all of the types of victimization examined here.

Our theoretical models in Chapter 8 show that girls' and boys' levels of violence are explained largely by the same factors and that the models for the frequency of violent victimization are also similar, although there are a few more sex differences. Taken together, these findings indicate that sex-neutral intervention programs, such as those described earlier in the chapter, should reduce levels of violence and victimization for both girls and boys.

Kempf-Leonard and Sample (2000, 118) challenge that we must determine whether gender-specific programs are necessary: "Most recommendations fail to explain why the program elements for girls are any different from elements appropriate for boys. . . . [I]t is difficult to understand how good *female-specific* services differ from good *youth* services." We agree and believe that until gender-specific programs are more widely implemented and evaluated, at the very least, our findings show that mainstream prevention and intervention programs can benefit both girls and boys and that the addition of some sex-sensitive elements should serve to boost their effectiveness.

Does Our Work Provide Justification for Race/Ethnicity-Specific Programming?

As with sex-specific programming, the question of whether race/ethnicity-specific programming is needed remains unanswered and largely unexplored. However, unlike the recent push for gender-specific programming, programs directed at separate racial/ethnic groups are essentially nonexistent. Before instituting race/ethnicity-specific solutions to violence, a primary question of interest must be answered: "Would we expect different factors to explain violence by whites and minorities?" Since minorities have long been associated with higher

levels of violence, and numerous theories to explain minorities' over-involvement in violence exist, the apparent answer to this question is often "yes." However, there are several problems with this assumption. First, the connection between race and crime is one of the most hotly debated issues in criminology. This is true largely because a much larger relationship exists in official statistics than in self-report studies (Elliott and Ageton 1980; Huizinga and Elliott 1986; Pope 1979; Short and Nye 1958; Snyder and Sickmund 1999; Walker, Spohn, and DeLone 2006; Williams and Gold 1972). A second problem is that scholars only recently have begun to include racial/ethnic groups besides whites and African Americans in examining the relationship between race/ethnicity and violence. Finally, research in this area has mostly used race/ethnicity not as an explanatory variable but as a control variable, negating the ability to determine whether the same or different factors explain violence across groups.

Those examining whether the same factors can describe involvement in delinquency and violence for minorities and whites have primarily used social and cultural theories proposing that variation among groups should be expected due to disparities in social, economic, and cultural conditions (Bonger 1943; Cohen 1969; Crutchfield 1995; LaFree 1995; Messner and Golden 1992; Shaw and McKay 1942; Sutherland and Cressey 1978; Wilson 1987). Research also links many of the current factors associated with racial/ethnic differences in delinquency to theories such as social bond (Austin 1992; Browning 1960; Chilton and Markle 1972; Jang 2002; Miller 1958; Rankin 1983; Smith and Walters 1978), social learning (Anderson 1999; Paschall, Flewelling, and Ennett 1998; Stewart and Simons 2006), social control (Phillips 1997; Vazsonyi and Crosswhite 2004), and social disorganization (Curry and Spergel 1992; Shaw and McKay 1942).

Since research is lacking on whether race/ethnicity-specific programs are needed and what components they should incorporate, we can turn to research reviewed in previous chapters for some evidence on whether such programming is necessary or current prevention programming, which is more universal, should continue. Within this body of work, some scholars have proposed that similar processes and risk factors function for the various racial/ethnic groups and thus that general prevention programs targeting all individuals, regardless of race/ethnicity, could be effective. Some studies support this contention by finding that similar risk factors predict delinquency and violence for minorities and whites and that the impact of those risk factors is similar for African Americans and whites (Farrington, Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber 2003; Rowe, Vazsonyi, and Flannery 1995; Vazsonyi and Crosswhite 2004; Vazsonyi and Flannery 1997; Vazsonyi and Pickering 2003; Williams et al. 1999). These findings, however, raise an additional question: If the same mechanisms explain violence for minorities and whites, why do minorities have higher rates? Farrington, Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (2003) propose that although the same risk factors predict these activities, African Americans may experience more risk factors than whites do and thus are more likely to commit violence. Other research supports this suggestion (Paschall, Ennett, and Flewelling 1996; Rowe, Vazsonyi, and Flannery

1995). These research findings advise a race/ethnicity-neutral approach to combating youth violence. Wilson, Lipsey, and Soydan (2003) support this. Their meta-analysis of 305 studies suggests that delinquency interventions are equally effective with minority and white youths. Because they found no statistically significant racial/ethnic differences in programs' effects on any measures of outcome, including delinquency, they concluded that minority youths can be well served with mainstream approaches.

Although Wilson, Lipsey, and Soydan (2003) concluded that general prevention programming is effective for all racial/ethnic groups, other empirical studies have advocated developing separate programs (Curry and Spergel 1992; Freng and Esbensen 2007; McNulty and Bellair 2003) because of differences in risk factors (Austin 1992; Berry 1980; Browning 1960; Cernkovich and Giordano 1992; Chilton and Markle 1972; Franke 2000; Fridrich and Flannery 1995; Hanish and Guerra 2000; Jang 2002; Paschall, Ennett, and Flewelling 1996; Paschall, Flewelling, and Ennett 1998; Rankin 1983; Samaniego and Gonzales 1999; Smith and Walters 1978; Zimmerman, Salem, and Maton 1995). Curry and Spergel (1992), for example, argued for programs that target the key factors for each group—in this case, ecological factors for African Americans and family and self-esteem factors for Hispanics. McNulty and Bellair (2003) made a similar argument, proposing that although programs need to address risk factors for violence in general, they should also focus on risk factors specific to each group. It is also possible that specificity by race/ethnicity differs according to whether programs are intended for prevention or intervention. Freng and Esbensen (2007), for example, argue that race/ethnicity-specific programming may be beneficial in gang prevention, but that general programs may be more effective for intervention.

Prevalence and Prevention

A significantly greater proportion of African American and Hispanic youths than white youths are involved in violence (especially serious violence), gangs, and victimization (especially serious victimization). But it is still the case that white youths make up a large proportion of serious violent offenders (27%), gang members (24%), and serious violence victims (36%).

In terms of general risk levels, we found significant differences by race/ethnicity on all eighteen factors but no pattern of greatest risk. African American youths have the highest levels of risk on some factors, while whites have the highest levels on some others, and Hispanics fall in between. Among violent offenders, gang members, and victims, however, the white youths were the worst off, experiencing the highest levels of risk; they also had the greatest cumulative disadvantage. By contrast, violent offending, gang membership, and victimization seem more "normative" among African American and Hispanic youths. (For possible explanations, see Anderson 1999; Stewart, Schreck, and Simons 2006.) In other words, these youths reported involvement even when they faced less risk than white youths. Although whites reported more risk than minorities, the

minorities' lower risk did not mediate the effect of race/ethnicity. In other words, regardless of risk levels, race/ethnicity is still an important factor, as African Americans have higher odds than whites of becoming involved in all three behaviors, and Hispanics have higher odds of engaging in violence and joining gangs than whites (see Table 7.7). This suggests that race/ethnicity should be taken into account in prevention programming. Further examination of our findings will indicate whether there is additional support for this suggestion.

Our logistic regression analyses by race/ethnicity in Chapter 7 (see Tables 7.9–7.11) show that several factors predict violence for all three racial/ethnic groups: associating with delinquent peers, socializing in the presence of drugs and alcohol, and negative perceptions of school environments. The factor that predicts gang membership for all three groups is commitment to negative peers, and the factor for victimization is negative perceptions of the school environment. A few risk factors are common predictors for two of the three groups for the different types of violence. In addition to these shared risk factors, a number of unique predictors of each type of violence exist for each group. Numerous factors increase the odds solely for whites, including unsupervised time with peers (for violence), neutralizations (for gang membership), and use of neutralizations, social isolation, low parental monitoring, low attachment to father, association with delinquent peers, and limited educational opportunities (for victimization). In contrast, only low guilt and social isolation are uniquely associated with increased odds of violence for African Americans, and only impulsivity is uniquely associated with increased odds of victimization for Hispanics.

These findings indicate our data may not uphold one of the explanations that has been posed for the greater prevalence of violence among minorities: cumulative disadvantage. Minorities had higher odds of participating in violence while reporting fewer risk factors than whites. In light of the number of unique factors present for whites, it may be that this study measures factors that are more pertinent to explaining violence among white youths than among minority youths. These differences could also be due to unmeasured risk factors at the community level, such as inequality, which affect more minority youths than white youths and result in an urban minority underclass that is largely removed from the larger society (Bruce and Roscigno 2003; Wilson 1978, 1987). They could also be due to greater tolerance of such behavior in communities in which minority youths live, as suggested by the subculture of violence theory, which proposes that a code of the streets exists among the urban underclass that favors violence to survive in the environment (Anderson 1999). If this is the case, Anderson's recommendations for altering the culture of a neighborhood may be applicable. Regardless, the findings that whites report more risk than minorities, but that risk does not mediate the effects of race/ethnicity for most relationships, suggest that race/ethnicity may be an important consideration in programming.

These analyses seem to imply that, although certain elements of prevention programs, such as decreasing association with deviant peers, ensuring that youths avoid socializing in situations where drugs and alcohol are available, and

improving school environments, are essential for youths of all three racial/ethnic backgrounds, other elements may provide limited protection for youths of certain racial/ethnic groups. Does this mean that race/ethnicity-specific prevention approaches are necessary? Perhaps not. We previously argued that our findings appear to support sex-neutral prevention with sex-sensitive elements. Although our data appear to show more differences by race/ethnicity than by sex, programs that target association with deviant peers, time spent unsupervised, and school environments should reduce the prevalence of violence and protect youths of all three racial/ethnic groups. Thus, similar to the direction proposed by McNulty and Bellair (2003), race/ethnicity-neutral programs with race/ethnicity-sensitive elements may be the best way to proceed. RIPP (Meyer et al. 2000), which targets a variety of family-, school-, and peer-level risk factors, may be successful in dealing with white youths' numerous risk factors for victimization. For African Americans, components of ART (Goldstein et al. 1987) that concentrate on lack of guilt may be particularly helpful in preventing violence, and elements of programs that focus on impulsivity may provide additional protection from victimization for Hispanics.

Frequency and Intervention

While there are racial/ethnic differences in the prevalence of violence and victimization (with a greater proportion of African American and Hispanic youths than of white youths reporting both), there are no significant racial/ethnic differences in the frequency of offending or in victimization. Despite the lack of difference in frequency, race/ethnicity does have a direct effect on violence for African Americans and for Hispanics and on victimization for African Americans (but not Hispanics) that is not fully mediated by the inclusion of theoretical predictors (see Chapter 8). Further, racial/ethnic differences are evident in the models that predict the frequency of violence and victimization. For example, while greater commitment to positive peers decreases violence for Hispanic youths, this factor is not related to violence for white or African American youths. Similarly, greater risk seeking increases violence for African Americans but is not related for the other groups, and more unsupervised time is related to higher violence for African Americans and Hispanics but not for whites. Common direct predictors of the frequency of violence across all three groups are guilt and commitment to negative peers.

The only theoretical predictor that is directly related to victimization for whites is guilt, and this factor is shared by African Americans and Hispanics. More time spent in unsupervised socializing is associated with higher levels of victimization for both African Americans and Hispanics but not for whites. For African Americans, greater risk seeking also increases levels of victimization, while commitment to positive peers decreases the levels.

It would thus appear that race/ethnicity-specific approaches to intervention may be best suited to reducing levels of violence and victimization. While program

elements based on the principles of social learning theory (those that increase moral convictions and feelings of guilt about potential deviance) would be effective in directly reducing levels of violence and victimization for all three racial/ethnic groups, and elements that decrease commitments to negative peers would directly reduce violence, additional components of intervention that are unique to each group appear to be suggested. Program elements that focus on routine activities—specifically on reducing unsupervised and unstructured hanging out or time spent where drugs and alcohol are present—should decrease levels of violence and victimization among African American and Hispanic youths but would appear to do little or nothing for white youths. For African American youths, programs that target the self-control theory's risk-seeking component would decrease the frequency of both violence and victimization. Finally, for Hispanics, components of the social learning theory that increase commitment to positive peers would also reduce violent offending.

Summary and Conclusion

At the outset of this chapter, we asked three questions: Should we adopt different approaches for the issues of youth violence, gangs, and victimization? Does our work provide justification for gender-specific programming? And does our work provide justification for race/ethnicity-specific programming? For the most part, our answers to these questions are "no." Programs that target some similar risk factors should prevent youths, regardless of sex or race/ethnicity, from being violent, joining gangs, and being victimized and should intervene to reduce levels of violence and victimization. This general statement should be qualified, however, in that our results also suggest that (1) some additional elements can provide more protection from victimization; (2) some sex-sensitive elements would increase the effectiveness of prevention and intervention programs; (3) some race/ethnicity-sensitive elements should increase the effectiveness of prevention programs; and (4) race/ethnicity-specific intervention programs may be advised.

We must address the known risk factors for violence, and our work provides numerous avenues for prevention and intervention. We have also reviewed some of the existing model or exemplary programs that can address many of these factors, although it is not necessary for communities or organizations to adopt one of the existing programs to have an effect on youths. As long as programs target the known risk factors and adhere to the principles of effective intervention, youths should be affected in positive ways. Importantly, addressing even a few risk factors can have modest effects for youths who experience multiple risk factors in multiple domains.

It is still the case, however, that a significant proportion of violent offenders (25%), gang members (13%), and violence victims (31%) in our sample experience little risk (zero to five of the factors we examined). What is it, then, that propels these youths into violent experiences? It is likely that factors not included in our analyses are associated; indeed, other studies have identified a number of

risk factors in the community, individual, family, school, and peer domains that our data did not allow us to examine. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that, although our recommendations should help to prevent some proportion of youths from offending, becoming gang members, and being victimized, programs that also address risk factors identified by other researchers may reach additional youths. With its focus on the intersections of youth violence, gang membership, and violent victimization as they are related to both sex and race/ethnicity, our study advances the knowledge about shared and unique risk factors for, and pathways to, violence. Much remains to be done to understand the complexity of these issues, and we encourage our readers to take up the challenge.

APPENDIX

Demographic and Risk Factor Measures

The scales described in this appendix are part of a more comprehensive self-administered questionnaire that was completed by all students participating in this study. See Chapter 3 for a description of the study. Many of the risk factors listed below are also representative of a theoretical perspective described in Chapter 2 (see Table 2.1), and the specific perspective is indicated in brackets next to the name of the risk factor. The alpha coefficient is an indicator of the internal reliability of the scale.

Demographic Measures

- Sex: I am: 1. Male 2. Female
- Race/Ethnicity: I am:
  1. White/Anglo, not Hispanic
  2. Black/African American
  3. Hispanic/Latino
  4. American Indian/Native American
  5. Asian/Pacific Islander/Oriental
  6. Other (specify) _____
- Age: I am _____ years old.
- Family Composition: I live with:
  1. My mother only
  2. My father only
  3. Both my mother and father
  4. Other (specify) _____

- What is the highest level of schooling your father completed?
  1. Grade school or less
  2. Some high school
  3. Completed high school
  4. Some college
  5. Completed college
  6. More than college
  7. Don't know
- What is the highest level of schooling your mother completed?
  1. Grade school or less
  2. Some high school
  3. Completed high school
  4. Some college
  5. Completed college
  6. More than college
  7. Don't know

Individual Domain Risk Factor Measures

Impulsivity [Self-Control] (Alpha = .65)

Scored on a five-point scale: 1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree.

- "I often act on the spur of the moment without stopping to think."
- "I don't devote much thought and effort to preparing for the future."
- "I often do whatever brings me pleasure here and now, even at the cost of some distant goal."
- "I'm more concerned with what happens to me in the short run than in the long run."

Risk Seeking [Self-Control] (Alpha = .82)

Scored on a five-point scale: 1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree.

- "I like to test myself every now and then by doing something a little risky."
- "Sometimes I take a risk just for the fun of it."
- "I sometimes find it exciting to do things for which I might get in trouble."
- "Excitement and adventure are more important to me than security."

Perceived Guilt [Social Learning] (Alpha = .94)

Scored on a three-point scale: 1 = Not very guilty; 3 = Very guilty.

- This scale asks respondents to indicate how guilty they would feel if they committed different acts. The sixteen items are the same as the behaviors included in the "Association with Delinquent Peers" inventory described later in this appendix. For instance, respondents were asked how guilty or how badly they would feel if they skipped school without an excuse, stole something worth more than $50, or attacked someone with a weapon.

Neutralizations [Social Learning] (Alpha = .86)

Scored on a five-point scale: 1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree.

- This scale consists of nine items measuring the extent to which respondents felt it was acceptable to lie, steal, or hit people based on a variety of circumstances. Examples of mediating factors that would legitimate otherwise inappropriate behavior:

"It's okay to tell a small lie if it doesn't hurt anyone." "It's okay to steal something if that's the only way you could ever get it." "It's okay to get in a physical fight with someone if they hit you first."

Self-Esteem (Alpha = .82)

Scored on a five-point scale: 1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree.

- "I am a useful person to have around."
- "I feel that I am a person of worth, at least as much as others."
- "As a person, I do a good job these days."
- "I am able to do things as well as most other people."
- "I feel good about myself."
- "When I do a job, I do it well."

Social Isolation (Alpha = .71)

Scored on a five-point scale: 1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree.

- "Even though there are lots of students around, I often feel lonely at school."
- "Sometimes I feel lonely when I'm with my friends."
- "Sometimes I feel lonely when I'm with my family."

Family Domain Risk Factor Measures

Parental Monitoring [Self-Control] (Alpha = .73)

Scored on a five-point scale: 1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree.

- "When I go someplace, I leave a note for my parents or call them to tell them where I am."
- "My parents know where I am when I am not at home or at school."
- "I know how to get in touch with my parents if they are not at home."
- "My parents know who I am with if I am not at home."

Parental Attachment [Social Bond]

These questions relied on a series of semantic differential options in which polar opposite terms were provided (e.g., "can talk about anything," "can't talk about anything"), with numbers ranging from 1 to 7 between the two terms. Respondents were asked to think about their mother/mother-figure or father/father-figure and to circle the number that best represented their attitude toward the parent. The closer the number was to the phrase, the more they felt that way about their mother or father.

- Attachment to Mother (Alpha = .84)
  - "Can talk about anything."
  - "Always trusts me."
  - "Knows all my friends."
  - "Always understands me."
  - "Always ask her advice."
  - "Always praises me when I do well."

- Attachment to Father (Alpha = .88)
  - "Can talk about anything."
  - "Always trusts me."
  - "Knows all my friends."
  - "Always understands me."
  - "Always ask his advice."
  - "Always praises me when I do well."

Peer Domain Risk Factor Measures

Differential Associations [Social Learning]

Scored on a five-point scale: 1 = None of them; 5 = All of them.

- Association with Pro-Social Peers (Alpha = .84)
  - This scale employs responses to a series of eight questions following the lead-in "During the last year, how many of your current friends have done the following?" Examples: "Have been involved in school activities or school athletics?" "Have been generally honest and told the truth?"
- Association with Delinquent Peers (Alpha = .94)
  - This scale consists of sixteen questions asking: "During the last year, how many of your current friends have done the following?" Examples: "Skipped school without an excuse?" "Stolen something worth more than $50?" "Attacked someone with a weapon?"

Differential Reinforcements [Social Leaning]

Scored on a five-point scale: 1 = Not at all likely; 5 = Very likely.

- Commitment to Positive Peers (Alpha = .77)
  - "If your friends told you not to do something because it was wrong, how likely is it that you would listen to them?"
  - "If your friends told you not to do something because it was against the law, how likely is it that you would listen to them?"
- Commitment to Negative Peers (Alpha = .84)
  - "If your group of friends was getting you into trouble at home, how likely is it that you would still hang out with them?"
  - "If your group of friends was getting you into trouble at school, how likely is it that you would still hang out with them?"
  - "If your group of friends was getting you into trouble with the police, how likely is it that you would still hang out with them?"

Unsupervised/Unstructured Time with Peers [Routine Activities]

Scored as 1 = No; 2 = Yes.

- "Do you ever spend time hanging around with your current friends not doing anything in particular where no adults are present?"

Availability of Drugs and Alcohol [Routine Activities]

Scored as 1 = No; 2 = Yes.

- "Do you ever spend time getting together with your current friends where drugs and alcohol are available?"

School Domain Risk Factor Measures

Commitment to School [Social Bond] (Alpha = .81)

- Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Scored on a five-point scale: 1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree.)
  - "Homework is a waste of time."
  - "I try hard in school."
  - "Education is so important that it's worth it to put up with things about school that I don't like."
  - "In general, I like school."
  - "Grades are very important to me."
  - "I usually finish my homework."
- "If you had to choose between studying to get a good grade on a test or going out with your friends, which would you do?" (Scored on a five-point scale: 1 = Definitely go with friends; 5 = Definitely study.)

Perceived Limited Educational Opportunities (Alpha = .70)

Scored on a five-point scale: 1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree.

- "I probably won't be able to do the kind of work that I want to do because I won't have enough education."
- "A person like me has a pretty good chance of going to college."
- "I won't be able to finish high school because my family will want me to get a job."
- "I'll never have enough money to go to college."

School Environment (Alpha = .74)

Scored on a five-point scale: 1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree.

- "There is a lot of gang activity at my school."
- "Students get along well with each other at my school."
- "There are a lot of fights between different groups at my school."
- "Students beat up teachers."
- "There is a lot of racial conflict between students at my school."
- "I feel safe at my school."
- "I feel safe in the neighborhood around my school."
- "There is a lot of pressure to join gangs at my school."
- "There are gang fights at my school."

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Index

Page numbers followed by the letter f *refer to figures, those followed by* t *refer to tables, and those followed by* n *refer to footnotes.*