Los Angeles Police Department gang unit officers question a member of MS-13 in Lafayette Park, September 2007. © Robert Nickelsberg/Getty Images

The Other Half

GIRLS IN GANGS

7

INTRODUCTION

The gang phenomenon has traditionally been understood as quintessentially 'male'. Historically and culturally women have been considered the peaceful and nurturing sex, while men are seen as more violent. Debates and research on gang violence have tended to focus on male-on-male crime, with less attention paid to young women who are involved as victims, supporters, or active participants (Fukuyama, 1998; Goldstein, 2001).

In recent years, researchers in the United States and Europe have increasingly undertaken studies on female gangs, paying greater attention to 'girl soldiering' and other forms of female involvement in armed conflict. An emerging international body of evidence is beginning to shed light on the range of roles that girls and women play in gangs and armed groups—though these two categories are rarely reviewed jointly. While focusing on gangs, this chapter notes parallels with armed groups, pointing to similarities and differences that merit further attention and research (see Box 7.1).

The chapter presents an up-to-date literature review, along with primary research on female involvement in gangs in Haiti, for purposes of exploring the intersection between gender, race, and ethnicity. It concludes that a full and nuanced understanding of gang formation and violence needs to take account of the roles and experiences of girls and women. Such knowledge is a prerequisite for the development of programmes aimed at preventing and responding to gang violence among both sexes.

The main findings are:

- Estimates of the female proportion of the gang population vary greatly. National youth survey data from the United States and the UK suggest that girls and women account for 25 and 50 per cent of all gang members, respectively, whereas US law enforcement data puts the figure at seven per cent.
- A conservative estimate of the global female gang population is 132,000–660,000.
- Although male gang members make up the majority of gun violence victims, girls and women appear to be more likely to suffer sexual abuse both within gangs and in the home.
- Sex composition may be a good proxy for a gang's engagement in violence. Evidence suggests that girls in all- or majority-female gangs may be less engaged in violence than male or female members of sex-balanced or all- or majority-male gangs.
- Girls and women tend to use weapons and engage in acts of violence less frequently and with lesser intensity than their male counterparts. They often opt for knives, stones, or tools over firearms as their weapon of choice.
- There are parallels between 'gangs' and 'groups' in terms of female involvement. Girls and women are motivated to join gangs and groups for similar reasons (often 'protection') and play comparable types of roles within them (mainly supportive but sometimes fighting roles).

Box 7.1 Definitions of 'gang' and 'armed group' for gender analysis

There is no single, generally accepted definition of a 'gang'. This chapter refers to gangs as 'any durable, street-oriented youth group whose identity includes involvement in illegal activity'.[1]

The term 'armed group' refers to any non-state or irregular armed group that uses arms for political reasons, as well as groups that are supported or aided by government forces but are not officially part of them. These may include rebel movements, pro-government militias, and politically neutral vigilante groups.

- Programming for girls is highly insufficient and rarely evidence-based. Much more research is needed to understand why they join gangs and engage in violence and to inform gender-sensitive approaches designed to effectively prevent and respond to the problem.

The chapter begins by describing the nature and extent of female gang membership. The next section explores girls and women's motivations for joining gangs, the types of gangs and activities in which they are involved, their experience in perpetrating and falling victim to acts of violence, and their use of weapons. The chapter ends by presenting a more nuanced understanding of female agency, drawing out key lessons for research and programming.

Detained female gang members of Mara 18 flash gang signs while shouting insults at rival gang members, San Salvador, May 2004. © Luis Romero/AP Photo

GIRLS AND GANGS

This section describes trends and patterns in female gang involvement. It provides a global estimate of the female gang population and shows that girls have long participated in gangs and violence.

Number of female gang members

Girls are present in gangs, sometimes in significant numbers. The observed degree of female involvement varies not only by research site but also according to the applied methodology (see Box 7.2). Ethnographic field studies, while producing detailed information about the nature of their involvement, are usually small and non-representative. National surveys of at-risk youth, on the other hand, provide generalizable results but rarely employ detailed gender analysis.

For national estimates, the two most common sources are survey data and law enforcement data. The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) is the only source of survey data on youth gang membership that is nationally representative in the United States (Greene and Pranis, 2007, p. 35). According to the 2006 survey, 3 per cent of boys and 1 per cent of girls aged 12–16 years identified themselves as gang members, which means that girls accounted for about one-quarter of the adolescent gang population (Greene and Pranis, 2007, p. 36). Data from the Offending, Crime and Justice Survey in England and Wales found that 6 per cent of both male and female 10–19-year-olds were classified as belonging to a 'delinquent youth group', implying that 50 per cent of gang members were female (Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina, 2006, p. 3). Smaller, non-representative studies have shown similar findings.

Box 7.2 Methodological challenges in estimating female gang membership

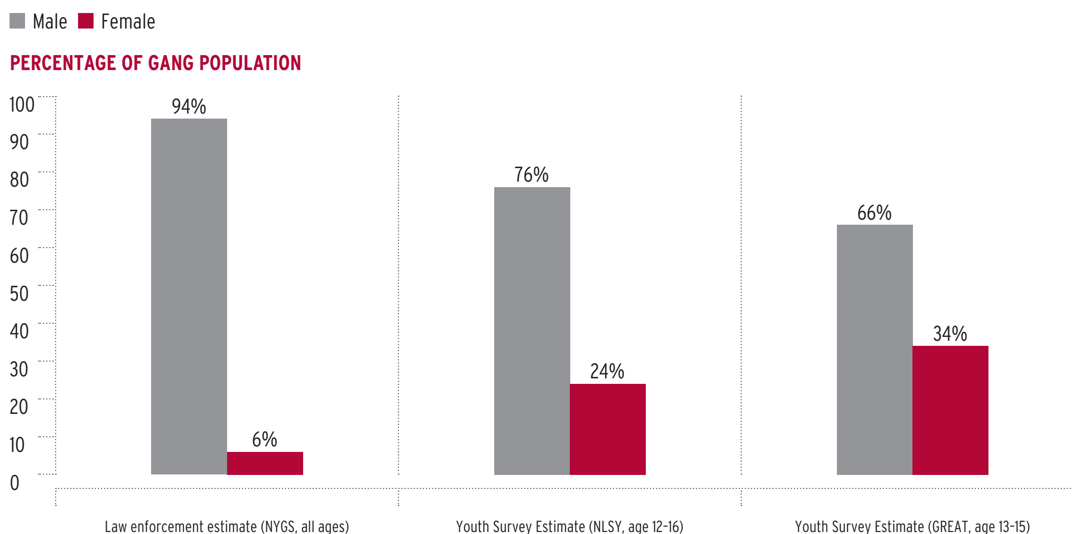
Different definitions of what constitutes a 'gang' have important implications for estimating the prevalence of female gang members. Some studies rely on the respondents' own definition, while others apply those of the researchers. Arrest data is continually plagued by variations in the definition of 'gang' across and within countries.

Furthermore, gang research has traditionally been conducted by men, on men. It is likely that a heavy reliance on snowball sampling through male respondents has contributed to the systematic exclusion of girls as subjects of research. Snowball sampling that starts with male subjects tends to lead the researcher to other boys or men or their girlfriends rather than female gang members themselves (Batchelor, 2009a; Campbell, 1990; Esbensen, Piper Deschenes, and Winfree, 1999). Male gang members have also been found to exaggerate their 'possession' of and 'sexual domination' over their female cohorts (Moore and Hagedorn, 2001, p. 3).

It is worth making a specific note of the importance of age of the sample. Girls tend to join and leave gangs earlier than boys, at least in the United States and Europe.[2] A longitudinal study of more than 4,000 secondary school pupils in Scotland found that a slightly smaller proportion of boys than girls were classified as gang members among 13-year-olds (18.8 per cent vs. 21.5 per cent); by the time they were 16, however, this ratio had reversed and the proportion of gang members was considerably higher among boys than girls (15.6 vs. 10.8 per cent) (Smith and Bradshaw, 2005, p. 10). A national survey in England and Wales found that male involvement was highest among 14–17-year-olds while female involvement peaked at 14 and 15 years of age (Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina, 2006, p. v). The tendency of researchers to work with older youths therefore naturally excludes girls who have already matured out of gangs.

The reasons why girls tend to join and leave gangs earlier than boys are not well understood. It is assumed that girls and women who play a peripheral or supporting role in a mixed gang may find it easier to leave than more actively involved boys and men. Another factor is motherhood. Research has shown that first pregnancy leads to a reduction in violence among female gang members (Hunt, Joe-Laidler, and MacKenzie, 2005, p. 336; Moura, 2007, p. 30). Employment is also important. In many areas young women have greater opportunities to find work in the service industry than men. With the decline in industrial employment in many countries, the job market for young men has collapsed, especially for those without high school qualifications. Income opportunities with a gang, especially as a result of drug dealing, may lead a man to remain in a gang, even after becoming a father (Moloney et al., 2009, pp. 310, 317–18).

Figure 7.1 **Estimated US gang composition, by sex**



Note: The NYGS (National Youth Gang Survey) and the NLSY (National Longitudinal Survey of Youth) use representative samples, whereas the GREAT (Gang Resistance Education and Training) study does not.[3]

Source: Greene and Pranis (2007, p. 36)

For example, a multi-site survey in the United States found girl membership to vary from 25 per cent of the total in Philadelphia to 45 per cent in Torrance, California (Esbensen and Piper Deschenes, 1998, p. 811).

National surveys of law enforcement agencies produce estimates of female gang participation that are much lower than those emerging from the above-mentioned surveys (see Figure 7.1). According to the latest data from the US National Youth Gang Center, the female proportion of all reported gang members is low and stable, ranging between 7.7 per cent in 1998 and 6.6 per cent in 2007 (NYGC, n.d.a). Although widely used, data derived from national surveys of law enforcement agencies (largely police departments relying on arrest data) is thought to underestimate girls' involvement in gangs substantially. Police have tended to be more systematic about documenting male gang members than female ones, and some US jurisdictions have not, as a matter of policy, identified girls as gang members at all (Moore and Hagedorn, 2001, p. 4). This means that while girls may see themselves as gang members, police officers may not.

It is possible to extrapolate from existing data to provide an assessment of the global population of female gang members. The Small Arms Survey estimates that the global gang population is between two and ten million (STOCKPILES) and the US National Youth Gang Center places the proportion of females in gangs at 6.6 per cent; taken together, these estimates suggest a figure of 132,000–660,000 female gang members worldwide. Methodological caveats are considerable, however, including underreporting and the absence of standardized and representative data for many countries.

It is therefore difficult to say whether these figures under- or overestimate the phenomenon. More precisely, 6.6 per cent is likely to be a conservative estimate in developed countries, yet it may be representative of other parts of the world where girls are probably less involved in gangs for cultural reasons. A more accurate global estimate will require extensive and rigorous data gathering and analysis (see Box 7.2).

Box 7.3 The meanings, expressions, and paradoxes of femininity

Female gang members, like other girls and women, have long been associated with stereotypes about their sexuality. They are frequently depicted as either too sexual ('bitches', 'sluts', 'hos') or not sexual enough ('tomboys'). In gangs, traditional 'macho' attitudes among male members tend to dominate, involving rigid expectations of gender roles (Vigil, 2008, pp. 59–60). While some girls support machismo stereotypes and purposively play submissive roles, others assert their equality by engaging in riskier 'male' behaviour such as excessive drinking, drug dealing, and violence.

The ways girls present their own sexuality and that of others is being explored in an increasing number of insightful studies.[4] This research reveals that ethnicity and cultural heritage help shape young women's discourse on sexuality, including notions of purity, loyalty, and autonomy, affecting their approach to 'femininity' in pursuit of 'respectability' (Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995, pp. 413–14; Schalet, Hunt, and Joe-Laidler, 2003, pp. 110–11).

Meanwhile, research from St. Louis, Missouri, and Columbus, Ohio, finds that girls who have been 'sexed in' as part of a gang's initiation process are devalued and regarded as sexually available by male and female gang members alike (Miller, 2004, p. 308).[5]

Continuity and change

Girls' involvement in gangs and related violence has long existed, with accounts dating back to Thrasher's seminal 1927 work, *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*. Early descriptions focused on girls' sexuality and promiscuity and tended to portray them as mere auxiliaries of boy gangs. They were often likened to 'sexual objects' to be controlled by the male gang members (Moore and Hagedorn, 2001, p. 3). Still today, female gang member sexuality continues to attract scrutiny from academics and the media, disproportionately more so than male sexuality (see Box 7.3).

Careful assessments of the experiences of female gang members only began to feature prominently in the 1980s and 1990s. Contributions came from multiple disciplines, principally criminology—especially feminist criminology—but also anthropology, sociology, economics, and public health.[6]

The lack of reliable historical data has made it difficult to determine the accuracy of early descriptions of the roles that girls and women played in gangs (Moore and Hagedorn, 2001, pp. 2, 8). Today, however, experts tend to concur that girls and women have long played important roles within gang structures but that their experiences were largely overlooked until recently. It is plausible that their roles have evolved since the early–mid-20th century, with girls becoming more central and active, although change appears to have been slow in recent decades. According to a historical review published in 2002, the proportion of female gang members and the nature of their involvement did not change significantly during the 1980s or 1990s, which suggests a continuity in girl gang involvement (Miller, 2002a, p. 176).

Gang types and female roles

Although most evidence on girls in gangs comes from the United States, literature is also emerging from elsewhere regarding girls' involvement in various types of gang (see Table 7.1). This includes studies from the UK, Germany, and Norway (Batchelor, 2009b; Bruhns and Wittman, 2002; Natland, 2006), Central America, including Nicaragua and Guatemala (Rodgers, 2006; Winton, 2007), as well as Hong Kong and New Zealand (Dennehy and Newbold, 2001; Li and Joe-Laidler, 2009).

Table 7.1 **Typology of gangs that include girls**

Type of gang	Description
Mixed-sex gang	Gang composed of both sexes; usually boys and men predominate.
Female auxiliary gang	All-female gang affiliated with an all-male gang.
Independent female gang	All- or majority-female gang operating independently of any male gang.

Most female gang members are part of 'mixed-sex gangs' that are male-dominated in structure, status hierarchies, and activities (Campbell, 1984; Miller, 2001; Moore, 1991). The extent and nature of male control varies, and there is some evidence of girls gaining independence in mixed gang structures over time (Gover et al., 2009; Nurge, 2003). Girls in mixed gangs generally appear to be more engaged in the social aspects of gang life than defence of the gang or turf, or drug dealing. The 'sister' or auxiliary gangs are usually formed after the creation of a male gang and take on the feminized version of the male gang name, such as the Latin Queens of New York (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 2004, p. 70). These all-female gangs often create a unique sub-culture, becoming less and less attached to their male counterparts over time. Independent all-female gangs, although fewer in number, are reportedly on the rise in the United States (Delaney, 2005, p. 211).

Sex composition is related to gang type and affects the dynamics and relations between the members, which in turn conditions the use of violence. There is some evidence to suggest that girls in all- and majority-female gangs commit fewer 'person offences'[7] than male or female members of sex-balanced or all- or majority-male gangs (Peterson, Miller, and Esbensen, 2006, pp. 423, 427–31).

Within and outside the gang structure, girls and women—as mothers, sisters, daughters, wives, girlfriends, or members of the community—provide emotional and practical support to male gang members (see Box 7.4). They can also act as active instigators of conflict, urging men and boys to use violence. For example, in East Timor, women supported local gang members as they battled UN riot police during the second half of 2007 (Myrttinen, 2009, p. 6). Acceptance or 'buy-in' by women and girls enables many gangs to continue their operations (p. 7). Such support also acts as a source of attraction, with boys often citing access to girls or impressing girls as a motivating factor for joining gangs.

Box 7.4 **Haitian women's supportive roles in armed gang activities**

In Haiti, girls and women have played crucial roles in supporting or participating in armed gang activities. During the urban conflict in 2004-06, they provided food and took care of the children while also serving as lookouts. Girls and women kept an eye on people moving in and out of the neighbourhood as they went about their daily chores–such as cooking, washing clothes, and shopping at the market–and alerted the *baz* (armed group) if they saw anything troublesome or suspicious. In their supportive roles, girls and women took on the risks involved in hiding and transporting weapons. Firearms were concealed under mattresses or in sacks of rice and sand. Elderly women reported hiding weapons in their underwear and food baskets while transporting them from one place to another. Crowded markets were reportedly convenient places for the exchange of weapons.

Source: Lazarevic (2009)

A comparison of female roles in 'gangs' vs. 'groups' reveals both similarities and differences. In both contexts, girls are combatants, supporters, and wives, girlfriends, or dependents. Some, but not many, are leaders or strategists (Emmott, 2007). In armed groups, girls and women are also 'abductees', having joined under duress, though this phenomenon is relatively rare in gangs. In both gangs and groups, girls and women are often 'unofficial' members because they do not figure prominently in direct combat; consequently, they are rarely recognized in post-conflict demobilization and reintegration efforts or initiatives to disband gangs.

MOTIVATIONS FOR JOINING GANGS

This section explores why girls and women join gangs, the role of ethnicity, and how gangs—while initially liberating—are often socially harmful for female members in the long run.

Reasons for joining gangs

Both sexes join for 'protection' against abusive families or other youth.

A complex set of factors determines why girls—and boys—join gangs. Common 'push' factors for both sexes include neighbourhood disadvantage, existing gang-involved family or friends, and problems within the family, such as neglect, physical and sexual abuse, lack of supervision, and drug or alcohol addiction. A multi-state survey of adolescents in the United States shows that—with the exception of boys being more likely to join a gang to acquire money—there were no differences between girls' and boys' reasons for joining a gang (Esbensen, Piper Deschenes, and Winfree, 1999, p. 43). Both sexes join gangs for 'protection' against abusive families or other youth.[8] They run away from home, spend time on the streets, and, in order to survive, end up selling drugs and associating with delinquent peers. Some girls resort to trading sex for money or favours. 'Street socialization'—as opposed to conventional socialization experienced in homes and schools—appears to encourage gang membership among both girls and boys (Vigil, 2008, p. 50).

Problems facing girls and women include sexual abuse, battering, teenage pregnancy, single parenthood, and disparity in educational, vocational, and employment opportunities. Smaller quantitative studies suggest that violence in the family is a strong factor motivating girls to join gangs, possibly more so than for boys. Female gang members are more likely to have witnessed physical violence between adults in their homes and to have been abused by family members than non-gang girls (Brotherton and Salazar-Atias, 2003); they also tend to have low self-esteem (Esbensen, Piper Deschenes, and Winfree, 1999, p. 48). While abuse in the home is known to impel both boys and girls to join gangs, anecdotal evidence suggests that sexual violence against girls is especially significant.

These issues also apply to girls and women in armed groups. A workshop that brought together 32 women from 18 armed opposition groups with peace and human rights activists, humanitarian actors, and scholars in Addis Ababa showed that nearly all had joined the groups to try to shield themselves from 'further violations of their physical and mental integrity by state actors' (Mazurana, 2004, p. 6). Similarly, girl soldiers in Angola, Colombia, and the Philippines reported that they joined armed groups to escape physical and sexual abuse at home by a member of their family (Keairns, 2002, p. 2).

The gang provides an escape from abusive and dysfunctional families for both girls and boys, and, perhaps for girls in particular, it provides the means to 'fight back'. Yet since boys also experience sexual and physical violence in the home—much of which goes unreported—more comparative analysis is necessary to identify gender differences regarding the role of domestic violence in prompting youths to join gangs.

Three girl gang members arrested for possession of 'rugby glue' wait to be transferred to Maa City jail, Davao City, the Philippines. © Ryan Anson

The 'liberation' and 'social injury' hypotheses

A substantial amount of research on gang girls explores the extent to which gang involvement is liberating or socially harmful to women. The landmark study by Campbell (1984), *The Girls in the Gang,* examines the lives of African-American and Latina gang members in New York. She argues that gang membership is liberating for girls looking for 'respect'—self-affirmation, a sense of belonging, and a sense of position in a social network. Others emphasize that by joining gangs, girls and young women become more likely to enter the world of crime and become victims of violence at the hands of rival gangs or peers. They argue that gang involvement may initially be liberating or empowering, but over the longer term the negative effects outweigh the positive, affecting not only female gang members' future opportunities but potentially those of their children as well (Moore, 1991). Indeed, girls who turn to gangs to flee problems and pursue respect and opportunity usually find that, while offering some promising solutions, gangs also generate a new set of concerns (Curry, 1998, p. 108). More longitudinal studies are needed to explore the nature of positive and negative impacts over time.

The significance of ethnicity, race, and culture

Gang members grow up in communities racked by racism and crime, where ethnic marginalization goes hand in hand with poverty and social exclusion (Bell, 2009; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995; Walker-Barnes and Mason, 2001).

Box 7.5 **Gendered gang behaviour in Hong Kong**

An ethnographic study within a public housing estate in the New Territories of Hong Kong reveals interesting parallels between the clear but unarticulated gendered structure of gangs and the patriarchal family system in Hong Kong. Researchers observed 20 male and female gang members aged 15 to 25 years, conducting in-depth interviews in ten cases. They found that the 'alternative family' provided by the gang is not simply a group of 'brothers' and 'sisters' but involves an organization and hierarchy based on gender. The male members had the greatest influence, while the girls and women were perceived by all members to be weaker than their male counterparts and in need of protection. Boys and men would, for example, accompany girls and women home late at night. Although many female members denied behaving differently from their male peers, field observations revealed that many acted in accordance with cultural expectations. One girl describes:

> Most of [the girls] were [weak in front of the guys]. They looked pensive or they would coquet sometimes. Or sometimes they would let fly at the boys [. . .]. [The boys] were gentlemen in front of the girls. They used foul language when they talked to the guys. But they had reservations on using foul language when they talked to girls.

Source: Li and Joe-Laidler (2009)

Ethnicity and cultural heritage are prime determinants of young people's attitudes to masculinity and femininity (Schalet, Hunt, and Joe-Laidler, 2003, p. 117). In the United States, for example, African-American and white female gang members might be expected to be more autonomous and Latinas more subordinate to men. 'They usually are, but not always' (Moore and Hagedorn, 2001, p. 6). Other intervening factors, such as immigration status, may complicate the picture. Hispanic women have been shown to be more involved in gangs than Hispanic men, except among first-generation immigrants, arguably because the girls may be under greater parental control and therefore less likely to join gangs (Bell, 2009, p. 379).

Cultural expectations of what it means to 'be a woman' are dominant not only among ethnic minority groups but also in mainstream culture, with implications for how girls choose to succumb to or rebel against gender identity, expectations, and norms. In Hong Kong, for example, surveyed female gang members appear to want to free themselves from traditional female roles, yet they conform to cultural expectations of femininity, such as being passive, following the lead of male peers, and avoiding public displays of aggression (see Box 7.5).

Ethnicity, race, and culture are important, not only because they inform gender roles and power relations within gangs, but also because they influence public perceptions of female violence. In the United States, where the image of a female juvenile delinquent as 'black' persists, there has been a greater public outcry over middle-class white girls being violent because they challenge mainstream cultural norms. The anxiety over girls' violence and delinquency is perhaps therefore 'not solely an anxiety about blurring and shifting gender norms. It is also an anxiety about blurring and shifting racial norms' (Luke, 2008, p. 45).

GIRLS AS PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENCE

Girls' aggressive behaviour contradicts conventional views of women being the peaceful sex. This section examines the interplay of guns, gangs, and gender and draws parallels between girls and women in gangs and armed groups.

Female gang violence

Despite the media hype, girls and women generally account for a small proportion of criminal offences, in particular violent criminal offences, with recent increases more a reflection of changes in police practices than a rise in the rate of violent acts committed by girls and women (see Box 7.6). Within gangs, girls generally commit fewer violent crimes than boys and are more inclined to commit property crimes and status offences.[9] Nevertheless, young women in gangs appear to have higher offence rates than both male and female non-gang members.[10]

The nature and extent of female gang violence varies from place to place. For example, in a sample of 380 male and 237 female gang members in the United States, 83 per cent of the boys and 65 per cent of the girls reported having carried a hidden weapon at some point, and 34 per cent of boys and 21 per cent of girls reported having shot someone at some stage in their lives (Esbensen, Piper Deschenes, and Winfree, 1999, p. 41). During a study carried out in Scotland, on the other hand, only a small number of girls reported using physical violence frequently, specifying that they did so mainly against other female members of the same gang in defence of 'respect' (Batchelor, 2005, p. 369).

Girls engage in 'horizontal violence' directed at other girls for reasons including respect and jealousy (Hagedorn and Devitt, 1999, p. 273). Girl-on-girl violence is a form of 'othering' to cement the dichotomy between 'good girls' and 'bad girls'. The process is supported by both boys and girls who insist that girls be subservient, respectful, dependent, sexually accessible, and faithful to their male peers (Artz, 1998, p. 179; Irwin and Chesney-Lind, 2008). Through violence and gossiping, girls cast suspicion on peers' behaviour in order to consolidate their own reputations as true gang members and preserve the status quo, including their own continued oppression (Schalet, Hunt, and Joe-Lailder, 2003, p. 116). Ironically, girl-on-girl violence therefore becomes the means of upholding patriarchal values and men's control over women (Irwin and Chesney-Lind, 2008, p. 843). 'Pretty' girls may be targeted if they 'don't know their place', while 'ugly' or

Box 7.6 Are girls becoming more violent?

Official sources frequently indicate that, over time, arrests of girls have increased, or decreased less than arrests of boys. Recent US data shows that total arrests of boys under the age of 18 decreased by 18.7 per cent in one decade (1999–2008) while total arrests of girls decreased by 7.8 per cent (FBI, 2008, table 33). US data for the period 1980–2005 shows that arrests of girls increased nationwide while arrests of boys decreased (Zahn et al., 2008). Similarly, England and Wales saw a 25 per cent increase in all offences committed by girls aged 10–17 between 2003–04 and 2006–07, compared with a 2 per cent drop for young men (Youth Justice Board, 2008, p. 15).

Trends in female arrest statistics have supported the 'gender convergence' theory that girls are increasingly behaving like boys. Coupled with high-profile cases of female delinquency, these statistics have become a staple for the media, leading to sensationalist headlines such as:

- 'Why Good Girls Turn Bad' (*The Straits Times,* 7 October 2007)
- 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fights' (*The Boston Globe,* 16 February 2009)
- 'Rise of the Thugettes' (*Daily Mail,* 26 May 2009)
- 'This Goes beyond Catfight' (*Daily Mail,* 30 May 2009)

Arrest statistics frequently suggest that girls account for a growing proportion of total arrests. These statistics are, however, at odds with other forms of data—at least in the United States, where the issue has been rigorously studied. Self-report studies, victim reports, national and regional surveys, and hospital and health department statistics do not corroborate trends in official statistics nor claims that violence among girls is increasing. These sources suggest that involvement in violent activities has remained relatively low and stable (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 2004; Steffensmeier et al., 2005; Zahn et al., 2008). Variations in arrest data may therefore have more to do with the changes in justice system policies and practices than any dramatic changes in girls' behaviour (Chesney-Lind, 2004; Luke, 2008; Steffensmeier et al., 2005).

'dirty' girls may be picked on because they 'deserve it'. Male gang members may encourage girl-on-girl fights for their own amusement:

> *sometimes the boys encourage girls to fight to see who is stronger. The winner of the fight gets money from the boss [. . .]. It is something like entertainment for the boys, especially when they have been smoking* (Lazarevic, 2009).[11]

Girls may also choose to overlook or 'ignore' male violence against other girls. Sometimes they even participate in setting up rapes as part of ongoing rivalries among female members and to gain respect by 'pleasing the males' (Dennehy and Newbold, 2001, pp. 113, 153). It should be noted that gang girls who engage in violence tend to display higher rates of victimization and abuse than their non-violent counterparts; they also report greater fear of sexual assault, especially from their boyfriends (Artz, 1998, p. 44).

Female gang violence can be compared to female violence in the context of armed groups in conflict settings (see Box 7.7). While the two contexts vary enormously, as do the nature and purpose of the violence, the international body of research shows that—although less frequent than for men—female aggression and brutality in conflict or non-conflict settings is universal and has existed throughout history. Often it is the outcome of violent victimization. In particularly hostile environments, women join gangs or groups and perpetrate acts of violence to ensure that people will not disrespect them (or their families) and to signal that they can defend themselves.

Box 7.7 **Female combatants in armed groups**

History has shown that women have long participated in insurgency, revolution, and war. Evidence from several recent conflicts shows women serving in combat and implicated in the commission of acts of brutal, and sometimes sexual, violence, including in Haiti, Northern Ireland, the Russian Federation, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and as US troops in Iraq.[12]

Girls and women join armies or armed groups either voluntarily or under duress and tend to have different, potentially overlapping roles such as combatant, support worker, or wife/dependant. In Sudan, women and girls formed a significant contingent of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and other armed groups during the first and second Sudanese civil wars (1955–72 and 1983–2005). Some fought on the front lines, while others played a more supportive role, carrying ammunition and food and providing sexual services and medical support to the men. Their roles were complex and multiple, and while some served willingly, others were forced. Many perceived their actions as the only viable means of livelihood (Small Arms Survey, 2008, p. 1).

Women often join armed groups as children. Like adults, child soldiers[13] play both supportive roles and active combat roles. Girl soldiers face additional hardship, with some being assigned as 'wives' of their commanders. Unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases are not uncommon (Small Arms Survey, 2009, p. 197). Between 1990 and 2003, girls were in fighting forces in 55 countries and involved in armed conflict in 38 of these countries (McKay and Mazurana, 2004, p. 21).

Contrary to popular belief, women perpetrate sexual violence against other women. Examples include women as enactors of torture in the US forces in Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo, or in Rwanda, where some Hutu women encouraged the rape of Tutsi women (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007; Wood, 2009). In Sierra Leone nearly one in five incidents of all reported rape cases during the civil war was perpetrated by groups that included women (Cohen, 2009, p. 1). Women in the armed rebel Revolutionary United Front acted not only as liaisons to find potential victims, but also served to physically hold down victims while they were being raped (p. 23). Sierra Leone may not be an anomaly; women participate in sexual violence more often than is currently believed (Alison, 2007; Faedi, 2008).

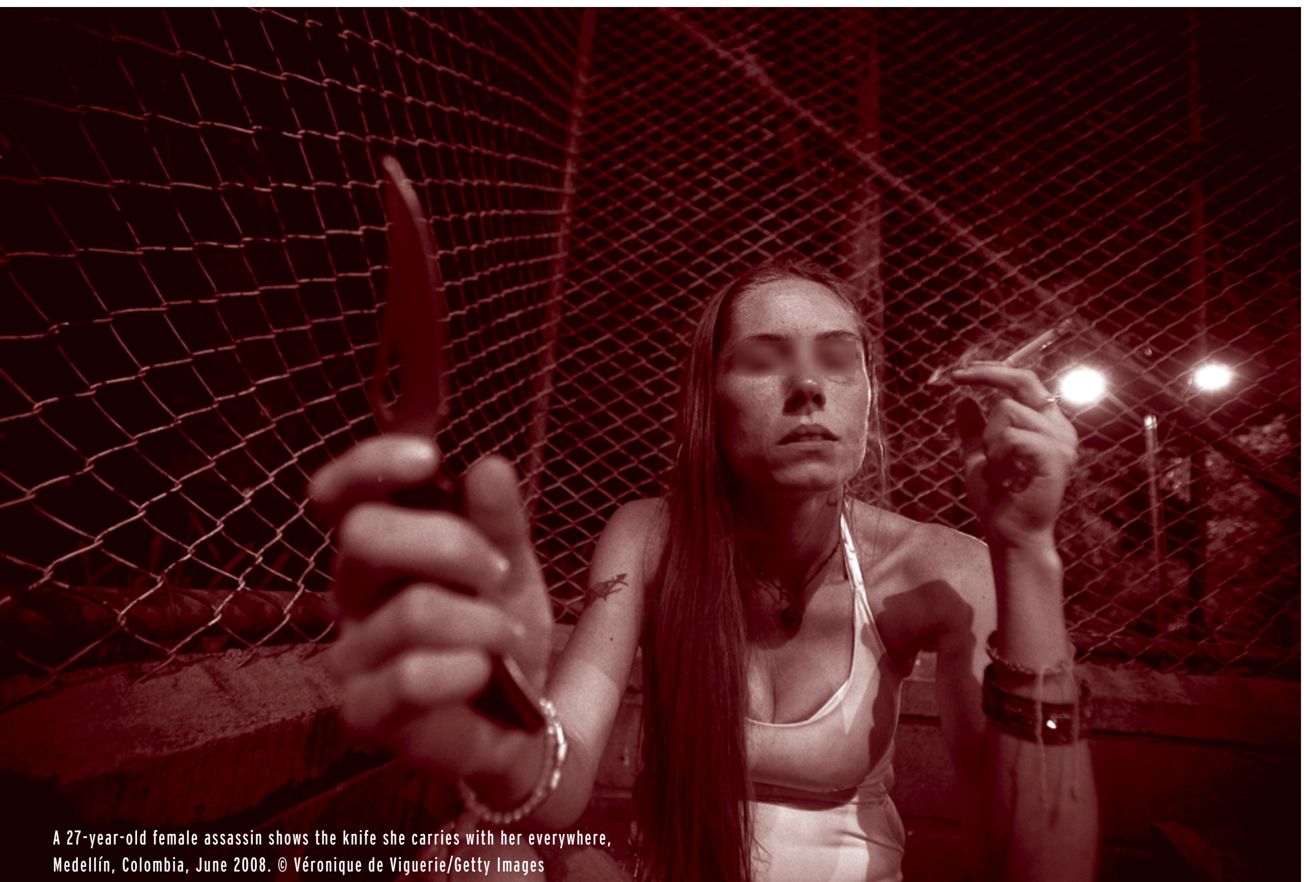
Reports of female 'suicide bombers' have made the headlines in recent years. Women were active as suicide bombers in Sri Lanka as part of the LTTE and in the Russian Federation as part of the Chechen *shahidkas* ('black widows'), who were responsible for the Moscow theatre hostage crisis in 2002 (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007; Speckhard and Akhmedova, 2005; Zedalis, 2004, p. 2). Statistics show that women are increasingly blowing themselves up in order to attack people or property, including both military and civilian targets. Between 1985 and 2006, there were more than 220 female suicide bombers, accounting for approximately 15 per cent of the total (Schweitzer, 2006, p. 8). A rise in the number of female suicide bombers has been observed within both secular and religious organizations, even though religious groups initially resisted using women (Bloom, 2007, p. 95). In Iraq, for example, while overall violence fell in 2008 to levels unseen since early 2004, there was a dramatic rise in the number of attacks by women deployed by Sunni Arab militants as suicide bombers (Reuters, 2008).

Guns, knives, and fists

With a few exceptions, little attention has been paid to the interplay between guns and gender (Farr, 2005; Farr, Myrttinen, and Schnabel, 2009; Harcourt, 2006). The following assessment of general social trends suggests that females are generally less likely to carry and use weapons.

During a study carried out in schools in six European countries and the United States, 2 to 5 per cent of girls compared with 10 to 21 per cent of boys reported carrying a weapon within the last 30 days. Among weapon carriers, 3 to 11 per cent of girls and 7 to 22 per cent of boys opted for a firearm (Pickett et al., 2005, p. e855). Among convicted offenders, weapons use is also lower among women than men. In the United States, 15 per cent of female offenders vs. 28 per cent of male offenders used weapons during the offence for which they were convicted, including a firearm, knife, or a blunt object (Greenfield and Snell, 1999, p. 3). A prison survey of more than 160,000 inmates showed that 7 per cent of women vs. 19 per cent of men had used a firearm during the offence (Harlow, 2001, pp. 4, 9).[14]

Gang girls use weapons less frequently than boys—and in different ways. Of 70 female gang members interviewed in Milwaukee, only 6 per cent of African-American gang girls and 2 per cent of Latinas reported using weapons 'most of the time' whereas many more—50 and 36 per cent, respectively—said they 'never' did (Hagedorn and Devitt, 1999, p. 274). Although girls are involved in confrontations with rival gangs, these altercations rarely escalate to violence, and even more rarely to serious fights involving weapons (Miller and Decker, 2001, p. 126).



A 27-year-old female assassin shows the knife she carries with her everywhere, Medellín, Colombia, June 2008. © Véronique de Viguerie/Getty Images

Box 7.8 **Weapons used by Haitian women during urban conflict**

Girls and women actively supported the armed gangs, or *bazes*, during the latest period of urban conflict (2004–06) in Haiti. They used a variety of tools in fighting rival *bazes,* including stones, sticks, bottles, knives, and machetes. Female gang members rarely carried or used firearms during combat, largely because male gang members would not share their firearms with the girls. Women reported that the restricted access to firearms exposed them to increased risk of victimization since they were not always able to defend themselves.

Men acknowledged the important roles girls and women played during conflict—protecting their men and defending their neighbourhood. They noted that women were rarely part of decision-making processes and seldom played leadership roles, but that they would still be persecuted by police and rival armed groups for their knowledge about gang activities.

Source: Lazarevic (2009)

When girls do use weapons, they tend to report a higher level of 'guilt' for doing so than boys (Piper Deschenes and Esbensen, 1999, p. 85).

Females tend to choose knives or blunt instruments over firearms (Piper Deschenes and Esbensen, 1999; Nurge, 2003, p. 171) (see Box 7.8). Members of the all-female Gulabi Gang in North India, which consists of several thousand vigilante women campaigning for justice and protection of powerless women, use the *lathi* (a traditional Indian stick) to intimidate others or for self-defence (Pal, 2008, pp. 184–86). In addition to direct combat, weapons are also used to 'mark' rivals. In Philadelphia, it was commonly known that gang girls would attempt to cut the faces of other girls with knives, because, as one girl describes: 'This way she gonna see herself in the mirror every day and remember what I did to her' (Ness, 2004, p. 43). Scarring can serve as a constant reminder of the victim's defeat and limit her attractiveness to other men.

Cross-country studies often highlight similarities and differences in patterns and determinants of weapon carrying and use. A survey of more than 500 'high-risk' adolescent girls in Amsterdam, Montreal, Philadelphia, and Toronto shows that Toronto had the highest rates of violence perpetrated by armed girls (33 per cent of the sample 'threatened or tried to hurt someone with a gun' compared to 12–20 per cent in the other cities). The study revealed that the degree to which access to firearms was legally restricted in each country was not necessarily reflected in weapons use (Erickson et al., 2006, pp. 795, 799).

In addition to carrying and using weapons for themselves, girls and women help facilitate men's violence by smuggling, transporting, and hiding weapons. A former gang member who was deported from Brooklyn, New York, to Haiti explains how girls may be more mobile than boys, which can facilitate gun violence:

> *Girls are sometimes sent into enemy areas to shoot people. They are paid for their mission. The amount they are paid varies from mission to mission. These girls can be more dangerous than boys, because the police let them move. For example, when a shooting happens in a club and the police comes in, boys lie down on the floor, but the girls take the weapons and run out* (Lazarevic, 2009).

Guns are a symbol of power over life and death, and they are often ascribed overt or hidden masculine and sexual meanings (Myrttinen, 2003; Bevan and Florquin, 2006). Even if they do not carry or use weapons themselves, girls may have attitudes that endorse gun ownership by boys and men. In dangerous environments, girls and women may support the idea that access to guns increases their protection. Many women also report a certain amount of prestige in being associated with men who carry weapons (Page, 2009, p. 5).

VICTIMIZATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN

Many gang girls are victimized by boys and men in the same gang, rival gangs, and other groups. While male gang members make up the majority of gun violence victims, female members appear more likely to suffer sexual abuse.

Victimization by fellow gang members

Girls in gangs report having been victimized more often than do girls outside gangs. For example, in the US state of South Carolina, 28 per cent of female gang members had experienced sexual assault in their lifetime—be it at home or in the gang—compared to 12 per cent of the 2,451 non-gang girls surveyed (Gover et al., 2009, p. 109). Sexual exploitation of girls within gang structures has received special attention by researchers, leading to a categorization of girls into two groups: those who are 'as tough as the boys' and fight to defend themselves, and those who become involved with gangs and are sexually exploited, sometimes on the premise of being 'initiated' (Batchelor, 2009a, p. 3).

Gang initiation rites and internal rules may require individuals to be exposed and submitted to gang violence. 'Jumping in' is a beating issued by gang members to test a member's ability to endure punches and blows, while 'sexing in' refers to initiation by way of sexual intercourse with multiple gang members. While it is not clear how regularly or systematically such initiation rituals are practised, the sexual abuse undoubtedly reproduces a sense of hierarchy and status, not only between the sexes but also among girls themselves (Dorais and Corriveau, 2009; Miller, 2004, p. 308).

Fear of punishment leads girls to remain silent.

The type of gang and its sex composition may predict risk of victimization. The 'sisterhood' of all- or majority-female gangs is found to be associated with less intra-gang violence, although these young women may have to protect themselves against attacks by external actors (Joe-Laidler and Hunt, 1997). In contrast, girls in mixed-sex gangs or in female gangs with close affiliations with male gangs face stricter rules about their behaviour, especially by boyfriends, and risk being beaten or abused if they do not obey. Fear of punishment leads girls to remain silent about gang activities, including violence (Dennehy and Newbold, 2001; Lacey, 2008). It may also prevent them from trying to leave the gang. A girl affiliated with a gang in New Zealand provides an example:

> *[T]he girl was really being put on the block [being gang-raped] because she was seen mucking around with a couple of people who associated with a rival gang, and that she had told them vital information about her mob's plan for a fight they may develop within the near future. After finding that she had opened her mouth, it was planned to put her on the block to teach her a lesson. Not all the members would block her, only something like five or six* (Dennehy and Newbold, 2001, p. 115).

Victimization by rival gangs and others

Like their male counterparts, female gang members are at risk of violence by rival gangs. Girls are seen as weak and 'safe targets' with poor means of defence, or 'easy targets' who cannot retaliate (Miller, 2004, p. 299). While both boys and girls are exposed to physical attacks, threats with weapons, stabbings, or shootings, girls are especially vulnerable to sexual violence by rival gangs (Delaney, 2005; Molidor, 1996).

A multi-site survey in the United States found that 64 per cent of female members had been hit and 27 per cent had been attacked by 'someone trying to seriously hurt them' (Esbensen, Piper Deschenes, and Winfree, 1999). In Haiti, members of an independent all-female gang reported that during fighting with rival gangs, girls got hit, stabbed with knives, and also killed. Several girls also reported 'offering themselves' to enemy groups in order to save their boyfriends, which frequently involved being raped (Lazarevic, 2009). In some countries, gang girls also become implicated in prostitution, sex slavery, and sex trafficking (Schmidt, 2006, pp. 5–6).

A 73-year-old woman hides weapons for local gang members in her home, Medellín, Colombia. © Véronique de Viguerie/ Getty Images

Female gang members who have 'masculine attributes' and who are actively involved in risky behaviour and committing offences are more vulnerable to attacks by rival gangs, including sexual violence, than females who do not partake in such behaviour (Miller, 1998, pp. 433–34). Operating on the front line, these girls may gain status within the gang but risk being victimized as a result and getting into conflict with the law. At the same time, however, these girls might be more protected from sexual abuse within the gang (Miller, 2002b, p. 93). Once victimized, girls may be blamed and labelled, which in turn increases the risk of repeat victimization within the gang—physical, sexual, emotional—by male and female members alike.

TOWARDS A MORE NUANCED UNDERSTANDING OF FEMALE AGENCY AND VIOLENCE

So far this chapter has demonstrated that gangs are not a male-only phenomenon that operates in a male-only vacuum where women have no influence. On the contrary: girls and women play important roles within gang structures and even engage in violence. This section draws out key themes of the chapter and examines knowledge gaps and next steps for programming.

The problem of female violence in and outside the gang

The notion of a 'female fighter' or 'female combatant' remains troublesome for many observers. Some feminist researchers present female violence as emerging from the nexus of victimization, resistance, and agency. They argue that women primarily use violence as a 'protective measure' to control risks to their security. Women's aggression may be viewed as 'a temporary loss of control caused by overwhelming pressure and resulting in guilt'; in contrast, men use violence as 'a means of exerting control over other people when they feel the need to reclaim power or self-esteem' (Campbell, 1993, p. viii). Others argue that women and men perpetrate violence for similar reasons: 'women, like men, are capable of violence. As women's freedoms increase, so will their violence' (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007, p. 4).

There are no simple explanations for why girls and women join gangs and engage in violent behaviour. Often girls' own viewpoints contrast with those of outsiders who see violent women in opposition to idealized gender stereotypes. Media coverage suggests that female aggression is more shocking to the public than similar violence committed by men. Intersecting with attitudes towards race and ethnicity, gender stereotypes about femininity and masculinity fuel public attention to 'bad girls', often leading to the reporting of distorted or 'misrepresented' statistics.

Researchers, practitioners, activists, and policy-makers in this field need to be aware of the methodological challenges in quantifying female gang membership and violence; they must also be sensitive to the complex dichotomy between girls' 'victimization and exposure to risk' on the hand and 'resilience and agency' on the other. Evidence shows that girls and women who engage in violence often do so in response to victimization, as a means of protection, or as retaliation. At the same time, they often take on 'countercultural' roles such as gang members or combatants because they are purposely seeking alternatives to untenable domestic situations. Seen in this light, they are not passive victims but active agents who make choices and organize collectively in response to difficult situations.

Friends carry the body of a female member of Pandilla-17, killed during clashes with rival gang members, San Salvador, February 2007. © Edgar Romero/AP Photo

Knowledge gaps

Despite the accumulation of accounts of female agency and violence within gang

research, many practical questions remain unanswered. For example, does female aggression and the commission of offences challenge the argument that violence and weapons are symbolic of heterosexual masculinity? In practice, how can research be used to identify important variations in young women's experiences while simultaneously identifying parallels and connections that could usefully inform the design of gender-sensitive interventions of general applicability?

Female gang research stagnated following a flurry of studies in the early 1990s. Kick-starting the research agenda would involve undertaking more multi-site surveys that generate comparable and generalizable data on girls in gangs and the needs of at-risk youth. Such surveys should be complemented by longitudinal studies to examine longer-term impacts. Comparative analysis of boys and girls is needed to shed light on the causal links between domestic abuse and gang membership, which would also inform prevention strategies. In addition, qualitative studies are required to explore context-specific meanings given to 'girls', 'women', 'boys', and 'men'; research should also be undertaken to increase awareness about experiences of violence and the use of weapons, essential for a full understanding of the causes and impacts of gang violence. As an example, and given that gender is fundamentally linked to other forms of oppression and privilege, such studies in the United States should focus on the lives and experiences of the 'young women of color on the economic and political margins' (Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995, p. 428).

The field of female gang research may also benefit from cross-fertilization with the field of 'armed groups' because—as this chapter demonstrates—there are stark parallels in women's motivations to join these groups, the type of roles they play, and the risks they face. Certain themes may be relevant to both gang and group contexts, for example the role of 'sex composition' in predicting girls' risk of victimization. If that causal link can be established, it would support a call for systematic collection of data on sex composition as a key gang or group characteristic. Recognizing overlaps is necessary in dynamic post-conflict and urban warfare contexts, where distinguishing between gangs and groups is difficult, if not impossible, and where demobilization and rehabilitation efforts will share many features and challenges.

Implications for programming

Programming for girls is insufficient and rarely evidence-based. The specific needs of girls and women are not being addressed at the various levels of intervention and there is a dearth of evaluations (Chesney-Lind, Morash, and Stevens, 2008, p. 169).

At present, many prevention efforts miss the critical 'at-risk' years for girls, which in the United States is thought to be earlier than for boys at around 9–15 years (Chesney-Lind, Morash, and Stevens, 2008, p. 169; Hawkins et al., 2009). Girl gang members sometimes participate in secondary prevention measures designed for boys, but invariably find themselves outnumbered and often 'either short-changed or simply ignored' in such programmes (Chesney-Lind, Morash, and Stevens, 2008, p. 169). Because girls and women in some countries are not deemed to be 'fighters' or own weapons, they are not considered to be official gang members and may, as a consequence, be excluded from programmes altogether (Coulter, Persson, and Utas, 2008, p. 22; Schwitalla and Dietrich, 2007, p. 58).

Not enough is known about what works in programming for girls. Carefully designed and targeted gender-specific interventions can be effective and have the advantage of being less costly than broader multi-component approaches that focus on prevention. Evidence suggests, however, that the latter strategy is most valuable (US DoJ, 2000, pp. 34, 55; Williams, Curry, and Cohen, 2002, p. 256). A comprehensive prevention programme in Colorado successfully reduced five of seven delinquency measures by intervening across risk factors and domains, and by providing services to the individual, families, peer groups, and communities, as well as specific measures targeted at gang members or gang-involved girls (William, Curry, and Cohen, 2002, pp. 255–56). These results suggest that the provision of opportunities for girls at the margins of society offers an important means of addressing girl gang membership and violence.

Programmes that cast females solely as victims may unintentionally reinforce passivity.

The increasing number of girls and women being incarcerated signals a lack of appropriate alternative community-based responses and effective measures to tackle underlying structural problems of inequality and poverty (ABA and NBA, 2001; Chesney-Lind, Morash, and Stevens, 2008). Some argue that punitive responses are legitimized by the dominant 'masculinization perspective', the belief that girls and women are 'acting male' when involved in gangs and violence.[15] Because most criminal justice systems are oriented towards boys and men, girls and women are unable to access services that address their unique needs, such as counselling for abuse and education about sex and sexuality (Chesney-Lind, Morash, and Stevens, 2008, p. 175). In some countries, the lack of basic facilities for girls exposes them to the risk of victimization after they have entered the justice system, particularly when detained in mixed-sex facilities or when children are not separated from adult inmates. In the absence of trained female staff, male staff have been reported to engage in 'sanctioned sexual harassment' and may even perpetrate sexual violence themselves (Pinheiro, 2006, p. 196).

It is important to stress that young women enmeshed with the justice system represent a high-risk group. They tend to lack permanent and supportive families, they have usually experienced considerable trauma, and they often suffer from a range of physical, sexual, and mental health problems. Rehabilitation and reintegration services must recognize the specific needs of girls and women according to their age, ethnic and cultural background, experience within the gang, and local dynamics and needs. For example, girls who have been raped or 'passed around' within a gang have an especially difficult time reintegrating in society after leaving a gang and need special attention (Miller, 2004, p. 308). At the same time, programmes that cast females solely as victims may unintentionally reinforce passivity and acceptance, rather than harness inherent energy, capacity, and creativity. After all, the future health and opportunities of young women—the main caregivers in most societies—will not only affect them as individuals, but will also have implications for their children and, as a consequence, the rest of society.

CONCLUSION

Girls and women are not necessarily pitiable or powerless victims of gang or armed group presence or violence, but often committed supporters and members. Like men, they are active agents who make choices in response to difficult situations.

Gang membership can empower girls to resist traditional gender role expectations while providing protection and a refuge from violence and oppression at home. Yet at the same time gangs and armed groups tend to put girls at heightened risk of violence, while also increasing their social marginalization through involvement in crime. Therefore, though potentially rewarding in the short run, gangs are often socially harmful for girls and women (and potentially their children and society at large) in the longer term.

Female violence in the gang context—and generally—remains poorly understood. Despite media attention that might suggest otherwise, girls and women engage in less frequent and severe violence than boys and men, and rarely use firearms. Public and professional concern with female violence appears to be more indicative of cultural anxiety over changing social norms than any significant change in female behaviour.

Some parallels between female involvement in gangs and armed groups warrant further attention. Many become members after they or their families have been victimized. In both gangs and groups, female members fight, spy, and transport weapons and messages. Some play leadership roles. They support violence perpetrated by men, and sometimes perpetrate violence themselves, including against other women.

Programming for girls is insufficient and rarely evidence-based. Much more research on girls' needs in difficult circumstances is required to inform prevention and policy responses, along with evaluations of existing initiatives. Available evidence points clearly to the need for programming to recognize the specific risks facing girls while building on their resilience. ■

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GREAT	Gang Resistance Education and Training (US)
NLSY	National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (US)
NYGS	National Youth Gang Survey (US)

ENDNOTES

1 This definition was developed by the Eurogang Network with reference to street gangs (Weerman et al., 2009, p. 20).

2 Bjerregaard and Smith (1993); Esbensen and Huizinga (1993); Esbensen, Piper Deschenes, and Winfree (1999); Sharp, Aldridge, and Medina (2006).

3 The NYGS is based on a nationally representative sample of 2,551 law enforcement agencies, largely police departments (Egley, 2008). It asks respondents to report information solely for youth gangs, defined as 'a group of youths or young adults in your jurisdiction that you or other responsible persons in your agency or community are willing to identify as a "gang"' (NYGC, n.d.b). The NLSY covers nearly 9,000 youths (aged 12–16) using cross-sectional and supplemental samples to ensure adequate representation across both geographic and race/ethnic lines (Greene and Pranis, 2007, p. 35). Sample size data is not available for the GREAT study.

4 See Chesney-Lind and Eliason (2006); Herrington and Nee (2005); Joe-Laidler and Hunt (2001); Kehily (2008); Miller (2004).

5 See the section on 'Victimization of girls and women', below.

6 See Bjerregaard and Smith (1993); Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn (1999); Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995); Joe-Laidler and Hunt (1997); Moore (1991).

7 Person offences include threatening to hurt a person, attacking someone with a weapon, robbing someone, and shooting at someone.

8 See Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995); Batchelor (2005); Campbell (1984); Fleisher and Krienert (2004); Moore (1991).

9 In relation to children, a status offence is a type of misbehaviour that is best described as conduct illegal only for children, including violations of parental authority, truancy, and running away. See ABA and NBA (2001); Piper Deschenes and Esbensen (1999); Moore and Hagedorn (2001); Zahn et al. (2008).

10 See Bjerregaard and Smith (1993); Delaney (2005); Piper Deschenes and Esbensen (1999); Esbensen and Winfree (1998).

11 Author interview with a former male gang member who was deported from Brooklyn, New York, to Haiti, May 2009.

12 Alison (2004); Cohen (2009); Faedi (2008); Myers (2003); Small Arms Survey (2008); Sjoberg and Gentry (2007).

13 Child soldiers are generally defined as any person under the age of 18 years who is a member of or attached to government armed forces or any other regular or irregular armed group, regardless of whether an armed conflict exists (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008, p. 411).

14 Similar patterns have been observed in Canada (Kong and AuCoin, 2008, pp. 5, 17).

15 This perspective—which emphasizes women's deviance and perversity when they engage in violence—emerged during the 1970s women's liberation movement; it has since dominated accounts by the media, academia, and criminal justice practice (Irwin and Chesney-Lind, 2008).

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