Juvenile Street Gang Members and Ethnic Identity in Montreal, Canada

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April 2006

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy.

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Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-25126-3
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-25126-3

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Abstract

This study explores ethnic identity and ethnic culture and the role they play in the lives of young men in gangs. Fifty male youths between the ages of 14 and 20 were interviewed. These youths were of French (10), Haitian (10), Jamaican (10), and Latino (10) ethnicity. Ten youths from a variety of other ethnic backgrounds were also interviewed. All youths were confined in maximum-security detention centers in Montreal, Canada. Participatory observation of males who were full-fledged gang members or affiliated with gang members was conducted at these centers. Analysis for this dissertation was conducted following the Birmingham School perspective and Herbert Gans's theory of symbolic ethnicity. The Birmingham School perspective is used to explore symbolic meaning behind specific styles [i.e. hairstyles, image, demeanor] and the degree to which they are interrelated with these young men's ethnic culture and ethnic identity, and how these various styles are signifiers of resistance or belonging. Herbert Gans's conception of symbolic ethnicity is used to explore ethno-cultural identity and its meaning in gang life. The research shows that these gangs (the French, Haitian, Jamaican, Latino, and youths from a variety of other ethnic backgrounds) are organized along racial and ethnic lines. Latinos were most likely to explicitly identify preservation of ethnic identity and ethnic culture as important components of gang life. This research is exploratory and identifies important issues for further investigation.

Key words: youth gangs, delinquency, Montreal, ethnicity, culture, identity, style.

Résumé

Cette étude explore l'identité ethnique et la culture ethnique et le rôle qu'elles jouent dans la vie de jeunes hommes qui font partie d'un gang. Cinquante jeunes hommes âgés entre 14 et 20 ans ont été interrogés. Ces jeunes étaient d'origine ethnique française (10), haïtiene (10), jamaïcaine (10), et latino américaine (10). Dix jeunes venant de diverses autres origines ethniques ont aussi été interrogés. Tous les jeunes étaient détenus dans des centres de détention a securité maximale à Montréal, Canada. L'observation participante de ces jeunes hommes qui sont pleinement impliqués comme membres de gang ou affiliés avec des membres de gang s'est effectuée dans ces centres. L'analyse de cette dissertation s'est fondée sur la perspective de "l'École Birmingham" et la théorie de "l'ethnie symbolique" de Herbert Gans. La perspective de l'École Birmingham est utilisée pour explorer la signification symbolique derrière des styles spécifiques (ex. les coiffures, l'image, le comportement) et le degré avec lequel ils sont reliés avec la culture ethnique et l'identité ethnique de ces jeunes hommes, et comment ces différents styles sont des indicateurs de résistance ou d'appartenance. La conception de "l'ethnie symbolique" de Herbert Gans est utilisée pour explorer l'identité "ethno-culturelle" et sa signification dans la vie de gang. La recherche démontre que ces gangs (français, haïtiens, jamaïcains,latino américains et jeunes de diveres autres origines ethiniques) sont organisés autour de principes raciaux et ethniques. Les latino américains sont plus susceptibles d'identifier explicitement la préservation de l'identité ethnique et de la culture ethnique comme des éléments importants de la vie de gang. Cette recherche est exploratoire et identifie des sujets importants pour des enquétes futures.

Mots clés: gangs de jeunes, délinquance, Montréal, ethnie, culture, identité, style.

Acknowledgments

There are many people that I need to thank in the long process of completing this dissertation. The first that come to mind are my parents, Maria and Enrico De Iaco. I am grateful for their constant nurturing and encouragement throughout this whole process, and in reminding me that goals can be accomplished as long as you have faith and persevere. My sister Assunta and my brother Alberto also need to be thanked for your love, patience, and unending support. Your encouragement and interest in all my endeavors have always meant a lot. This reminds me to thank my dog Lucky who kept me company on those very late evenings, while I struggled to complete my chapters. Others who should be mentioned are Marian Smith – thanks for taking the time to offer editing advice, even when it was at the very last minute – and Jacques Challes, Sylvie Hamel, Ed Pottermal, for offering helpful information about youth gangs, and for providing the appropriate contacts in allowing me to gain access to my interviews. I would also like to thank all the intervention workers at Les Centres Jeunesse and Batshaw Youth and Family Services for taking the time to educate me about the workings of the youth centers, and for being so kind and accommodating. I also offer sincere gratitude to all my respondents for their honesty and good nature. Thanks guys for making this experience interesting and fun. I want to thank the support staff at McGill University who helped me over the years and these include: Sharon Barquiero, Franca Cianci, Johanne Terrasi, and Livia Nardini. I also extend my profound thanks to Lucia Benaquisto for her wonderful comments and support, which she provided at the beginning of this dissertation. Without my supervisor Morton Weinfeld's invaluable suggestions, corrections, support and patience, I could not have successfully completed this dissertation; I sincerely thank you. I want to thank Prue Rains and Giovani Burgos, members of my committee, for their great feedback and suggestions. Most importantly it is with sincerity and heartfelt thanks that I dedicate this work to my family, without whom I could not have come this far: thanks for being there when I needed you the most.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION: IDENTIFYING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

This research will explore whether ethnic culture and ethnic identity play a significant role in the lives of 50 young men involved in street gangs in Montreal; in addition, it will explore how gang dynamics differ between the majority and minority groups. The ethnic groups under analysis are: French, Haitian, Jamaican, Latino, and a final non-specific group consisting of various youth from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds (such as Portuguese, Italian, Algerian, German, etc.). Demographic information (i.e. ethnicity, age, educational status) and socioeconomic factors (i.e. dual parent households, single parent households, income, level of education) was collected about the interview subjects, but the central analysis relies on interview data obtained from these youths. In addition, data was obtained from participatory observation, that, with the interviews were conducted in the maximum-security detention centers where youths affiliated with or full-fledged members of gangs and who had committed gang-related crimes (e.g., murder, theft, drug dealing) were held. Detailed information about study subjects and methodology will be provided in Chapter 2.

The underlying goal of this research is to explore how or indeed whether race and ethnic identity and culture drive youth gang membership. It is well known that race and ethnicity are important stratifying factors in North American society. For many immigrants, these two factors are what prevent them from advancing in society – they are kept in low economic and social positions. Historically, youth have joined gangs because their race or ethnic culture was a sign of that lower status and because of discrimination,

exploitation, and economic struggle. In their gang life, youth found self-worth, higher status, acceptance, and personal protection.

Youth gangs are one of the major social problems of North American society (Shelden et al., 2001). Their place in contemporary Canadian society and the role of ethnic identity and ethnic culture on gang life is important to understand because gangs are an emerging issue in contemporary Canadian society – an issue complicated by the changing cultural and ethnic composition of this country.

This dissertation will provide a brief overview of the Chicago School perspective to explain, building on a historical context of earlier research, how various social forces such as immigration, mobility, poverty, urbanization, neigbourhood turnover, ethnic heterogeneity and segregation create gangs. Following on this, the Birmingham School perspective and the theory of symbolic ethnicity are used to explore in detail the role of ethnic culture and identity and its relevance in gang life. The Birmingham school perspective will explore the symbolic meaning behind specific styles [i.e. hairstyles, image, demeanor, language] and the degree to which they are connected with these young men's ethnic culture and ethnic identity. By using the Birmingham school, I will be able to explore whether these styles are perceived as signifiers of resistance to the social structure or of belonging. The concept of symbolic ethnicity will then be used to explore what ethnic culture and identity symbolize in the lives of these young male gang members and to further illustrate how ethno-cultural identity can be understood to ground gang culture.

As will be shown through a literature review, which discusses the major theoretical perspectives in the youth gang literature, ethnicity and race, cultural features

of gangs, territory (i.e., land), economic and political factors, and the pull and lure of gangs have all been used to explore and try to explain youth gangs. One thing that seems evident is that many gangs organize on the basis of ethnicity, yet the role of ethnic culture in gangs has not received much attention. Therefore, the focus of my research will be to examine some of the ways in which ethnic identity and ethnic culture impact on gangs.

Before I begin, it is important to consider gang members in the context of their degree of affiliation with the gang, defined here by Spergel's (1995) taxonomy of gang membership. He identified five different types of gang members; "wannabe," "peripheral," "core," "associate," and "veteran". For the purposes of this research, only three will be considered: "wannabe," "peripheral," and "core". The rationale for this is that there is insufficient difference between the "peripheral" and the "associate" to warrant separate consideration in this dissertation. In addition, since this review is limited to adolescents in gangs, I will dispense with a discussion of "veteran" gang members, since they are often adults, not adolescents. The term "veteran" will only be used to identify an individual youth who has spent considerable time in a gang.

As explained by Spergel (1995), the "peripheral" is often an individual who "hangs out" with, or near, the group without having made any overt vows of affiliation. The "wannabe," or the recruit, is an individual who has adopted the gang's dress code, may occasionally accompany the gang in its activities, may flash the gang's dress code or sign, and aspires to become a member of the gang but has not been formally inducted into the group. The "core" member is an individual who has made a firm commitment to the gang, flashes the gang's sign whenever possible (even when this could spell certain death), and is wedded to the gang's activities, licit and illicit. Regardless of commitment,

however, all gang members are targets of violence because even "peripherals" may be identified as members by those whose opinion ultimately spells life or death – rival gang members.

Much gang research has been conducted in the United States. Sociological research on gangs in Canada is in its infancy (Gordon, 2001; McCorkle and Miethe, 2001, 1998; Sheldon et al., 2001; Le Blanc and Lancôt, 1995; Matthews, 1993, 2000), even though the phenomenon of youth gangs is not new to Canada. There exists no formal definition of "gang," "gang member," or "gang activity" in the sociological or criminological literature. Statistics on gang activity are not gathered uniformly across police jurisdictions. There are no nationwide Uniform Crime report data on gangs or gang activity available in Canada. Canadian statistics referred to in this dissertation are based on secondary academic sources or self-report studies conducted by other Canadian criminologists and newspapers.

For the purposes of this dissertation, the term "gang" refers to a variety of adolescent peer associations between the ages of 14 to 20, whose common feature is ethnic and racial identity, and whose members show unity through clothing and language; a unified group that usually remains together during peaceful times as well as times of conflict (i.e., when facing rival gangs or being harassed by the police). Adolescents in gangs may impulsively or intentionally engage in behavior that is lawbreaking, antisocial, and/or violent. A "gang," therefore, would consist of a stable core of members who are recognized by themselves and others as a gang and who band together for cultural, social and other reasons (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Moore, 1991; Horowitz, 1990; Taylor, 1990; Thrasher, 1927, 1963).

Although I have provided a general definition of gangs, one must bear in mind that there is no consensus among sociological and criminological scholars about what a gang is or means. Since there is this definitional ambiguity, I have adopted an approach that has permitted my research respondents to decide for themselves what a "gang" is. Thus, the definition of gang remains open and exploratory. Other scholars such as Sullivan (2005) claim that the term "gang" can be used in a variety of ways: the gang can be defined as delinquent or non-delinquent, some gang affiliates may share ritual symbols of group memberships and others not, etc. In maintaining a more "open" definition, researchers avoid the biases of objectifying gangs as a "universal essence" (Sullivan, 2005, p. 187).

The Gang Literature: The Evolution of Youth Gangs

Over the years, gangs have developed as a result of immigration, poverty, discrimination and urban deterioration (Bernstein, 1964). Some experts believe that young people, undereducated and without access to good jobs, become frustrated with their lives and join gangs as an alternative to boredom, hopelessness and desperation that may be linked to their ethnic status (Altschuler and Armstrong, 1994). The following section examines whether gangs have always developed along ethnic and racial lines due to immigration and immigrants' resulting marginalization from mainstream society. I will also review studies from American and Canadian theorists of ethnic gangs; but these studies have not provided an in-depth analysis of how ethnic identity and ethnic culture is relevant to the experience of individuals in gangs.

Ethnicity and History of Gangs in the United States

Gangs in the United States are reported to have existed since the early 1800s. They were formed based on class (generally lower class) and ethnicity (homogeneity within the group), in order to gain protection, recreation or financial gain within the group and as a group (Asbury, 1927; Bernstein, 1964).

New York City was a stronghold for ethnic gangs, and in this city, gang membership appeared to be driven by increasing immigration. After the Civil War (ended 1865), the city saw the presence of Jewish, Italian, African-American and Irish gangs. The west cost of the United States (especially California) saw a predominance of Chinese gangs in the 1800s. The gangs that arose in the 1800s in the United States clearly were organized along ethnic and class lines with distinctly criminal interests – violence and drug businesses (laudanum, morphine and cocaine) (Collins, 1977; Knox, 1994).

The economic or class influence on gang formation could also be seen in the early 1900s, when in the United States the economy worsened, the population grew at a rapid pace, and the gap between the rich and poor widened (Knox, 1994).

During the 1920s African Americans migrated from the south of the United States to northern cities. And between 1941 and 1945 over half a million Puerto Ricans arrived in the United States, most settling in New York City. These changes in the ethnic make-up of the city led to a rise in youth gang activity in the post-World War II period; a fear common among the established Italian, Jewish and Irish inhabitants was that that these groups were "taking over" the city (Maxson et al., 1995; Cosgrove, 1984; Collins, 1977).

After World War II, gang membership became younger, and largely non-white (though Italians, Irish and other White groups still made up a fair percentage of gangs).

Again, drugs and violence were central activities of gangs. Gang activity centered around large-scale, well-organized street fighting, fire-arms were used more often and their organizational structure became more rigid; as a result, society at large became concerned with gangs as a social problem and an interest in rehabilitating gang members grew (Collins, 1977; Knox, 1994).

Youth gangs in the 1950s were very active, and it is during this period that we see the development of 'dress codes', mannerisms and violence – 'protecting' a girlfriend's honour and avenging perceived slights made against the gang gave these youth a sense of pride, of 'being somebody' (Miller, 1975). In the 1960s, however, with the rise of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, more black youth activity was oriented towards racial consciousness, civil rights, and Vietnam War protests. This led to the development of more legitimate or community-oriented organizations with specific social goals, such as The Black Panthers (born in Oakland, California, 1968) and the Black Muslims (Smith and Brookins, 1997).

The Crips, one of the more notorious Californian youth gangs, arose in early 1972 in southeast Los Angeles. This gang terrorized local neighborhoods and schools with assaults and strong-arm robberies and developed a reputation for being the "most fierce and feared gang in the Los Angeles area" (Smith and Brookins, 1997, p. 9).

Other African American gangs formed at about the same time to protect themselves from the Crips. One such gang was the Bloods, which originated in and around the Piru Street area in Crompton, California; thus, some Bloods gangs are referred to as Piru gangs. The Bloods, who were outnumbered at the time by the Crips three to

one, became the second, "most vicious African American gang in the Los Angeles area" (Cummins and Monti, 1993, p. 19).

The Crips and the Bloods became entrenched in Los Angeles youth gang culture. These gangs were predominantly African American, and extremely violent and territorial in nature. Gang members were very young, ranging in age from 14 to 24. Unlike the movements of the 1960s, these gangs were organized according to race and functioned as criminal entities. The Crips and the Bloods also established their own unique and basic trademarks such as colors, monikers, graffiti, and hand signs. The color blue is used by the Crips as a symbol of gang recognition, red has a similar connotation for the Bloods (Smith and Brookins, 1997; Richardson, 1992). These colors have also been adopted by Montreal-based Haitian and Latino gangs. As we shall see later, in interviews, the Bloods and the Crips of California are particularly relevant to the gang subculture of Montreal in that the Haitian gangs especially claim to be sub-gangs of these two gangs and admire them as heroes.

Since the 1980s, however, as America's ghettos have become increasingly overcrowded, a gang's territory has often been limited to no more than a single corner or a block. And youth gang activity in California continues to be extremely violent. Gangs are widely reported across the United States and are often ethnically homogeneous. Some gangs still arise in immigrant communities, populated for example by recent arrivals from Vietnam, El Salvador and Haiti. Moving to a new country may be a stressful experience as immigrants leave their family and friends behind and must establish new social contacts. They may be relatively unfamiliar with their new environment and may encounter language problems. Their cultural values may often conflict with those of their

adoptive country. Economically, they may face unemployment and poverty. They very likely will experience prejudice and discrimination, both overt and more subtle. These experiences may drive new immigrants to become gang members in order to survive because the gang provides what society does not and because employment and educational opportunities are scarce for these groups (National Drug Intelligence, 1996).

According to Moore (1978, 1991), many Mexican gang members are faced with continuing racial and ethnic discrimination. Most live in geographically marginal areas of the city, places such as gullies and other lowlands that developers consider undesirable. These enclaves are socially and physically separate from Anglo American neighborhoods.[1] Visibly different, and located around dirt roads, these barrios[2] have limited public utilities (in some cases none at all), older run-down homes, and so on, and are stigmatized as places where poor, unskilled "dirty" Mexicans live (Moore, 1978, 1991).[3] Mexicans of lower economic backgrounds often turn to gangs because they are then able to make money through illegitimate means and they also gain a sense of purpose.

From the recent Asian immigrant's perspective, it appears that the cards are stacked against the individual attaining financial success. Immigrants who face a language barrier will have trouble obtaining education as well as finding a job which does

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[1] They are literally considered the "other side of the tracks" (Moore, 1978, 1991).

[2] Neighborhoods.

[3] The barrios are still around, as are the poverty, stressed families, and the conflicts of schooling and cultural identity. The children of new immigrant families are pulled into the cholo life of the streets even more rapidly than those of previous generations. As in earlier decades, crowded housing and troubled familial conditions continue to push children out to the only space available – the streets. Without more effective intervention by social welfare and social control agencies, especially in the areas of family support, schools, and policing, the Mexican American gang problem will worsen (Vigil, 1990). "Cholo is what the American and established Mexican-American residents called these poorest of the poor, marginalized immigrants...Cholo is a term...has been associated with culture change, symbolizing a people caught between two cultures...cholo also meant a "marginalized" person's ethnic background and social status" (Vigil, 1990, pp. 116-117).

not require proficiency in English. Joining a gang then, is an attractive alternative for most of these youths, because gang membership serves as a means of achieving financial success (Sigmund, 1995). Others, such as Lam (1994), have claimed that Asian Americans are subject to plethora of social frustrations (i.e. discrimination and language barriers). Gangs do share characteristics across ethnic lines (such as territoriality, 'colors', language), but Asian gangs (especially Vietnamese, Chinese and Laotian) are more secretive than non-Asian gang members (Lam, 1994). It seems apparent, then, that street gangs reflect a social structure, fermented most notably among the unaccepted, the alienated, and the discouraged segments of our population (Klein, 1993). Even though youth gangs have been driven by ethnicity and class, youth may join gangs for reason of perceived safety; for example as gang activities in neighbourhoods increase, along with the threat of violence associated with those activities, some youth have joined or have affiliated themselves with gangs for protection.

Contemporary gang membership in the United States, then, can be described in racial, ethnic and class terms (Curry and Spergel, 1992). Most gang members live in poor neighbourhoods where the gang provides employment through criminal activity, especially drug dealing, theft and violence. We can broadly classify gangs as Asian, Hispanic, Black and White (Curry and Spergel, 1992, p. 27-30).[4] In California, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian gangs represent the bulk of the Asian criminal street problem (Lam, 1994).

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[4] The term "Hispanic" is merely a political designation that refers to people of Latino descent as a distinct population. Of course, Hispanic is not just "one" group, but includes a number of not only culturally different, but highly discordant groups as well, such as Chicanos, Mexicans, El Salvadorians, Cubans and other South Americans (Curry and Spergel, 1992: 30).

Hispanic and Asian gangs form as a response to racism, or to combat their difficult immigrant experience. Barbarin (1993) argues that African American juvenile gangs develop as a result of the breakdown of the black family; that is, the single parent/absent male syndrome. Other researchers such as Gray-Ray and Ray (1990) claim that African American youth join gangs to economically support their families and to save them from poverty. In short, some of these youths have no other alternative but to remain in gangs in order to survive.[5]

In short, it appears that the Latinos, African Americans, and Asians who join and remain in gangs do so because they remain displaced, isolated, and alienated from mainstream society, as a result of poverty and discrimination.

Contemporary Canadian Gangs and their Ethnic Composition

The largest most prominent criminal gangs in Canada are the Hell's Angels, Rock Machine and Bandidos. As we will see from the research conducted for this thesis, membership in these gangs is often attractive to young White Quebecois. As well, gang membership is often part of 'family life'; that is, if a family member belongs to one of these gangs, it is more likely that the youth will join the gang.

Stamler (1996) and Wolf (1991) describe the Hell's Angels as an outlaw gang whose members own and ride only Harley Davidsons and wear the rebel's logo on their jackets. Some may even attend Harley Davidson motorbike conventions. Quebec has historically been an attractive location for motorcycle gangs in Canada. In Quebec, the Rock Machine are rivals of the Hell's Angels. They compete for control of all the exotic

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[5] Similar to Latinos, these African American youth live in poverty-stricken neighborhoods (Gray-Ray and Ray, 1990).

dancer clubs, and are involved in extortion, intimidation, drug trafficking, prostitution, and contract killing. The majority of members are White males.

Other significant ethnic gangs in Canada are Asian-based crime groups whose roots can be traced back to the first wave of Chinese immigrants, predominantly gold-field or railroad workers who arrived in the mid-1800s (Emerging Gangs, 1997). Asian Triads and Vietnamese gangs can be found in every province. The greatest amount of activity, however, takes place in British Columbia. Ontario and Quebec (Beare, 1996). These groups are known for their violent acts, such as drive-by shootings, home invasions, and blackmail.

The phenomenon of gangs is not new in Canada; however the recent proliferation of youth gangs seems to be much more of a concern. In fact, young offenders have been receiving considerable attention in recent years from the Canadian media and law enforcement agents. For instance:

> Federal crime statistics show that gang-related killings tripled in Canada between 1995 and 2000 (to 71 a year from 21). Half the gang-related homicides in 2000 (the most recent statistics) were in Quebec, although many of them involved the continuing biker war. In Montreal, which has the nation's second-highest homicide rate, one in four killings in the year 2000 involved street gangs. This year (2002) two of the eight homicides have been gang related (The Montreal Gazette, April 1st, 2002, p. A2).

Furthermore, another report from the Montreal Gazette reveals that

> . . . between 1990 and 2001, police say, there were 92 gang-related killings in Montreal. Add in the other gang-related crimes – attempted murders, assaults, robberies and kidnappings – and the numbers run into the hundreds or even thousands. And that doesn't take into account the large number of violent acts that go unreported because gang members prefer to take care of their own problems without calling the police (April, 22, 2002, p. A11).

Clearly youth gangs are a neglected component of our society. Research into their composition, especially how gang members' perception of their ethnicity influences their behaviour, could well provide greater insight into how they fit into society.

Cultural Features of Gangs

Gangs display common cultural features, the most important of which are attire (dress and colors), graffiti, and language (verbal and sign). These are used to identify gang members and nonmembers and facilitate intergang and intragang communication. They all display characteristics, which in broad strokes paint a picture of a "gang:"

1. They develop along racial and ethnic lines.
2. They develop as male-dominated groups.
3. They express their culture through unique colors, dress, language, and graffiti.
4. They stake out their own territory.
5. They may operate as an organization. This means that the level of the youth's involvement and activities within the gang is determined and solidified by a differentiated structure in which certain individuals are ascribed specific roles within, or around the gang (Huff, 2002; Thrasher, [1927]1963).

Gang members often display their membership through distinctive styles of dress (i.e., their "colors") and through specific activities and patterns of behavior. In addition, gangs almost universally show strong loyalty to their neighborhood, often marking out their territory with graffiti. All of these representations can be visible in local schools and on neighborhood streets (Huff, 2002).

Territoriality and Gangs

Whatever researchers define as a gang, an underlying feature is the 'ownership of territory' (Bing, 1991; Campbell, 1990; Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Moore, 1991; Scott, 1993; Spergel, 1995; Thrasher, [1927]1963). Territoriality can be driven by "machismo," pride, honor, or the protection of a drug-marketing area; as well, intrusion

into a gang's territory by a competitor is seen as an affront to the gang to which the gang must respond. These aspects can be differentiated across racial groupings (Spergel,1995). Latino gangs cite pride and honor as the main reasons for protecting territory, while Black gangs cite drug sales as the main reason for the protection of territory. Nonetheless, many of the activities of the gang are designed for the protection of "turf." As one Latino gang member described it:

> The only thing we can do is build our own little nation. We know that we have complete control in our community. It's like we're making our stand and we're able to express ourselves this way. We're all brothers and nobody f**ks with us...We take pride in our little nation and if any intruders enter, we get panicked because we feel our community is being threatened. The only way is with violence" (Vigil, 1988, p. 131).

Territory, then, becomes a central focus of the gang mentality, and it is an almost universal aspect of the gang experience. Racial differences in drug sales, or "machismo," or extortion, as explained by Spergel (1995), become subsumed under the directives of territoriality. In other words, whatever the underlying motive for defending territory (e.g., pride, "machismo," money), territoriality is the over-arching factor by which gang activities can be understood, and it represents a common thread in the activities of adolescent gangs.

Economics and Gangs

Many authors also focus on how economic benefits derived from gang activity motivate juvenile gang members (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Fleisher, 1998; Hazlehurst and Hazlehurst, 1998; Huff, 1996; Sheley, 1995; The Canadian Street Children Project, 1993; Dukes, et al., 1997; Chesney-Lind and Karen, 1995; Lasley, 1992; Moore, et al., 1983). Among youth living in urban

ghettos, hope, economic and social opportunities are limited; however the gang provides these youth with a way of making money through drug trafficking, and, therefore, unemployed and poor youth are more likely to join gangs (Harlan, 1997: 1).[6]

Politics and Gangs

Other definitions of gangs have been based on political ideologies and philosophies (Klein and Maxson, 1989), which in the 1950s and 1960s were oriented toward social reform, reflecting the United States' growing liberal ideology. During this period, society was becoming less conservative, and some ethnic gangs, such as the Black Panthers, were fighting for equal rights and opportunities. By the 1970s and 1980s, however, this impetus for gang activity had palled and gangs had generally become more violent and criminal.

Pull and Lure of Gangs

Decker and Van Winkle (1996, p. 65) found that an important 'pull' or lure of gangs is an opportunity to make money selling drugs,[7] to increase one's status in the neighborhood,[8] or both. Dukes et al. (1997, p. 141) cited four specific reasons for joining gangs: (1) protection, (2) the prompting of friends and/or relatives, (3) the desire to make money through drug sales, and (4) the status associated with being a gang member. Other external forces that compel gang membership include parental neglect, household poverty, crime and drug addiction, all of which induce social and emotional malignancies

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[6] Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1960) describe how juveniles become involved in delinquent sub-cultures. Cloward and Ohlin claim that individuals become delinquent where success is strongly emphasized while legitimate means are highly constrained. Thus economic success can be said to drive gang membership.

[7] A response indicated by 84 percent of gang subjects.

[8] Indicated by 60 percent.

in adolescents' lives (Fleisher 1998, p. 3). In contrast, some argue that gangs may serve as an alternate family, protecting the adolescent from family abuse and neglect (Chesney-Lind and Karen1995, p. 422-423), thus having some positive benefit.

> Although the "sistas and brothers" of the gang offer some level of support, it is understandingly difficult for some to cope with everyday life. One 18-year-old Samoan girl (Hawaiian gang member) who has been severely abused, physically and emotionally, by the parents, finds that her group provides "someone to talk to" (Chesney-Lind and Karen, 1995, p. 423).

Juveniles who become affiliated with gangs develop close social ties with their peers that draw them further towards a path of delinquency and crime.

Most researchers (Bodinger-deUriate, 1993; Goldstein and Huff, 1993; Gaustad, 1991; Chin 1990a, 1990b, 1986; Huff 1990; Vigil and Yun, 1990; Joe and Robinson, 1980; Miller, 1975) agree that most gangs share certain characteristics, such as they are typically 90 percent male (although there are exceptions) and tend to develop along racial and ethnic lines – two significant stratifying variables in American society and, indeed, in Canada.

Ethnic Identity and Gangs

In this section I will provide a brief summary of various existing studies that focus on the concept of ethnicity and gangs. It is clear, though, that what is common among all such studies is that the role of ethnic culture and its impact on gang life has not been thoroughly examined by most American and Canadian researchers. The emphasis of this research has been instead to identify specific ethnic groups that are more likely to belong to gangs or to describe or catalogue gang behavior by linking particular gang practices with perceived distinct cultural attributes of the ethnic gangs.

Symons (1999) examined ethnicity as significant in identifying Montreal street gangs, claiming there is a proliferation of youth gangs that are of Lebanese, Latin

American, Iranian, Jamaican, Haitian, Barbadian and Guaynese, Chinese and Vietnamese ethnic origins. Le Blanc and Lanctôt (1998) focused on whether gang violence and loss of self-control was similar and/or different between Haitian and White Canadian youth who belong to gangs in Montreal. Joe and Robinson (1980) focused on social cultural antecedents (integration problems, weakened parental supervision) that have contributed to the formation of Asian youth gangs in Vancouver.

American sociologists such as Kingery et al. (1996) focused on race being the primary risk factor for violent gang behavior among Haitians, Caribbean Blacks and Nicaraguans in inner-city Miami. Hagedorn (1994) examined whether gangs in Milwaukee are selling drugs "freelance" or whether drug selling is more organized among Latino, African American, and White adult gangs.

Jankowski (1991) studied gangs in New York, Boston, and Los Angeles and discovered that there is a variety of ethnic gangs – African-American, Jamaican, Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Irish. In particular, he identified ethnicity, age, leadership structure and organization as important factors of gang life (Jankowski, 1991). As we have already seen, some argue that Vietnamese youth gangs emerged in Southern California as a result of trauma from individuals' refugee experiences, family conflicts, poor schooling experiences, and poverty and racial harassment they encountered in the US (Vigil, 2002). A cross-cultural analysis of African American, Chicano, Salvadoran, and Vietnamese youth gangs (Vigil and Yun, 2002) found that members of these ethnic gangs had all encountered disruptions of social control in their families, schools, and were consistently harassed and arrested by law enforcement. Spergel (1992) has reported that Latino and Black gangs are more violent than White gangs. Chin (1996) reports that Asian gangs are

the most "secretive" and are less interested in reputation or status. Asian gangs are also involved in drug trafficking and extortion more than turf defense. Macleod (1995) reports that Latino gangs are notorious for defending their turf. Brotherton and Barrios (2002) and Kontos et al. (2002) have reported that black gangs struggle for economic survival and so turn to drug trafficking.

There is a focus, then, on gangs as criminal entities, as social problems, or as a 'job' for the poor. The current literature on gangs mainly examines the age of gang members, gang colors, and crimes committed by various ethnic gang members. It also discusses how some face discrimination as a result of their visible minority status, and have not fully integrated within the host country and that this is why they turn to gangs for support. Very little is discussed with regards to their ethnic culture (with the exception of Latino gangs (see Lopez et O'Donnell (2003).[9] The literature does not seem to provide an analysis of the ethno-cultural aspect of gangs and the role it plays in their daily lives. This is a particularly significant absence because, as we have seen, most gangs are organized along ethnic and racial lines.

Importantly, for this thesis, gang participation generally promotes an "us versus them syndrome" which is symbolized through youths' choice of attire, gestures, and vocabulary, all signals of in-group recognition. In fact, some sociologists, e.g., Martin (1981, p. 142), have claimed that skinheads are organized along "social class boundaries"; this means that no girls and no individuals of other ethnic origins are allowed in the gang.

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[9] Lopez and O'Donnell (2003) examined Mexican gangs in the Los Angeles area and found that gang members have a strong Mexican orientation that reinforces the Chicano identity and pride in it.

It is clear that most gangs have adopted a pattern of boundary and identity maintenance which involves the aggressive smashing of taboos and the creation of a tightly defined in-group (Martin, 1981). Therefore the gang provides an outlet to act out particular hostilities. It is not clear whether these hostilities are directed against one's ethnicity, "the older generation," mainstream society, or indeed which boundaries individuals in gangs are testing. Given the absence of literature in this area, it would be interesting to examine whether in fact gang members feel detached from their ethnic background and/or larger society. There is little research to show how ethnic identity functions in the gang, especially in terms of why it is so important for these youth to maintain distinctiveness. This study will explore ethnic culture and ethnic identity in juvenile Montreal gangs.

Theoretical and Research Perspectives on Youth Gangs

The existing gang literature has examined the ethnic composition of gangs, gang activity and gang history. Little has been written about the interaction between ethnic identity and culture and gangs. Before moving to the research of this particular dissertation, it will be useful to review some of the theoretical schools which have framed how this research has been conducted and the results interpreted. Two major schools of thought will be used to situate the research in the contemporary sociological literature. First and making a significant contribution to the theoretical orientation of the research conducted here, the Birmingham School Perspective will function as the main theoretical premise, used to explore how various cultural forms of style, such as image, demeanor, and argot adopted by young males in gangs, act as signifiers of belonging or signifiers of resistance and how such styles are linked with their ethnic identity. The theory of

Symbolic Ethnicity will then be used to explore what ethnic culture and identity symbolize in the lives of the study subjects. To begin, though, the Chicago School will be used to briefly explain how and why gangs develop, and thus illustrate the direction of past research on gangs.

Chicago School: Social Disorganization Theory

Gang delinquency has been described as a social and cultural phenomenon that often occurs in small groups referred to as 'subcultures'. This approach to the study of gangs developed from the work conducted by researchers at the University of Chicago in the 1920s. In fact, Thrasher's (1927) early work generated one of the first definitions of a gang; that is, an entity that is the product of neighborhood play groups, bonded together without any particular purposes or goals, and resulting in the development of tradition, internal structure, solidarity, morale, group awareness and attachment to local territory. He also focused on ecological factors that led to the formation of gangs. According to Thrasher, gangs emerged from urbanization, immigration, and poverty. Gang members experienced social disorganization because they had immigrated to a new country and were marginalized by mainstream society because of their ethnic minority status. As a result, they were denied full and equal access to education and employment opportunities because of language barriers, assimilation problems, resulting from discrimination and prejudice. Giving up hope, many adolescents from these groups turned to one another for support and a livelihood. Thus, gangs developed along ethnic and racial lines.

Thrasher argued that delinquency or the development of youth gangs was a consequence of growing up in a city where, because of the massive social changes taking place, adult control of adolescent behavior was absent. Thrasher viewed the phenomenon

of youth gangs in his era as "one of many symptoms of the more or less disorganization" of inner city street life (Thrasher, 1927, p. 37-38). Confronted by disrupted family patterns and a limited physical and social environment, young males reacted by constructing a distinctive subculture that set them apart from mainstream society. This usually resulted because one racial group was perceived as invading a district formerly dominated by another, therefore creating conflict between the two groups and resulting in intense competition over the use of territory. Thrasher also noted that gangs were located in particular areas of the city of Chicago, which he referred to as zones of transition, characterized by social disorganization. Such social disorganization resulted from the combination of poverty, ethnic heterogeneity, mobility and turnover. Gangs were one symptom of social disorganization. Gangs formed along ethnic lines, and gang rivalries as well as territorial rivalries were inter-ethnic (e.g., Polish youth versus Jewish youth).

Gangs in Chicago evolved in several ways: families moved out of the area as prospects improved, youth grew up and out of gangs, and the ethnic base for gangs changed as ethnic groups moved out of zones of transition to be replaced by new ethnic groups. Conflict continued to be expressed between ethnic and racial groups over land use, or as a result of discrimination. This in turn created ethnic and racial segregation where different ethnic groups tended to be concentrated in some areas and absent in others (Thrasher, [1927]1963).

Shaw and McKay (1969) report that crime and gangs develop as a result of urbanization, demographics, and residential turnover. According to this perspective, industrial growth and urban expansion are seen to erode the traditional social controls inherent in the family, the church, and the community, an erosion that is particularly

severe in the transitional zone, which is an area prone to crime and delinquency because of its composition. Since land is extremely expensive in the center of the city, most migrant workers take up residence adjacent to the core of the center, that is, the transitional zone. As workers take up residence there to live near their places of work, urban population size and density increase. Since landlords believe that buildings in the transitional zone will eventually be torn down to make room for industrial and commercial expansion, they do not maintain them. Residential areas deteriorate as higher status people flee to the suburbs. Groups with vastly different backgrounds and cultural traditions come together. These high rates of geographical and social mobility converge to weaken ties to the community. Therefore, the diversity of ethnic origin, language, religion, and occupation, inevitably produces conflict over differing values, norms, beliefs, and behaviors. Living conditions in the transitional zone deteriorate further as poverty and substandard housing are aggravated by inadequate social services, education, and recreation. Shaw and McKay argue that the social disorganization that pervades this zone fuels delinquency and the formation of gangs.

Ethnic gangs developed as a result of these changes in an attempt to make a place for gang members in this "new world". Employment and educational opportunities are closed to these individuals, because they have not been fully accepted by mainstream society, and their response as gang members is to make money illegally. Territoriality, then, becomes an important aspect of gang life, and banding with others from the similar social and ethnic backgrounds becomes an affirmation of gang identity.

Shaw and McKay (1969) observed that delinquency tended to be concentrated in certain areas of the city. That is, delinquency tended to be located in the core of the city,

just beyond a central business district, and declined progressively as the inner city area gave way to the suburbs. Moreover, these high-crime areas persisted over time, regardless of the shifting social and ethnic composition of the area.

Chicago School sociologists borrowed and adapted many concepts to form what was sometimes called a "human ecology theory of urban dynamics." The impact of urbanization (the transition from a relatively simple rural social order to a complex crowded urban arrangement) may cause social disorganization within a specific geographical environment. This concept is also known as ecological succession. Given the diversity of ethnic origin, language, religion, and occupation, conflicts over differing values, norms, beliefs, and behaviors are inescapable (Shaw and McKay, 1969).

Shaw and McKay (1931) went beyond the traditional focus of the disorganized nature of the delinquency area to develop the "cultural transmission theory of delinquency." They hypothesized that within criminally prone areas, particular forms of crime become a custom that is transmitted from one generation to the next. Teenagers living in crime-infested neighborhoods are pressured by their peers to commit crimes, and criminal behaviors and traditions are then passed down from older more experienced peers. By being lucky (not getting caught, earning money) in their criminal behaviors, older offenders engage in lavish exhibitions of wealth, status and talent, thereby becoming role models for youths living in areas with restricted legitimate routes to prestige and power. Displays of illegal behavior, as in other aspects of culture such as language and religion, are transmitted across generations. This cultural transmission theory thus explains juvenile delinquent behavior as both a component of social disorganization and a process of learning and culture. Most of the youth interviewed for

the Montreal youth gang study (data presented later) learned the specific techniques required to be successful at their criminal life-styles from older more experienced family members and/or peers, whom they also perceived as role models.

Moore, Vigil, and Garcia (1983) compared the situation of gangs in Chicago in the 1920s to the (then) contemporary Chicano gangs of Los Angeles. These theorists report that the ecological premise of the Chicago school no longer applies to modern gangs in the US. Instead, Los Angeles Chicano gangs are long-lasting, stable (not transitory), and scattered across different parts of the city. This situation differs from that of Chicago gangs of the 1920s, which were concentrated in the core of the city, with one ethnic group and its gangs succeeding another, resulting in gangs of different ethnic origins across time and, consequently, inter-ethnic rivalries (e.g., a Jewish gang fighting a Polish gang). The contemporary Chicano gangs of LA are long-term stable features of slums that are also not in transition. Chicano neighborhoods have continuously experienced waves of new Chicano immigrants but not non-Chicano immigrants. The result is intra-ethnic gang conflict (Chicano versus Chicano) arising among gangs that are graded by age and territory. Within these gangs, youth do not grow out of the gangs and families do not move out of the area as was seen with the Chicago gangs of the 1920s; thus, "some Chicanos remain members of gangs until middle age" (Moore, Vigil, and Garcia, 1983, p.183). The research of Moore, Vigil and Garcia (1983) is valuable, suggesting as it does that when researchers investigate gangs, they must consider the current elements of a city's social climate (immigration, residential segregation, etc.) and minority ecology (different environmental factors affect various ethnic groups differently). Such an approach will allow researchers to better understand the similarities

and differences among and between different ethnic gangs and whether they are transitory or stable. Although it would be valuable to apply these concepts to the situation of youth gangs in Montreal, this is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

British Subcultural Theory: The Birmingham school

The Chicago school provides a valuable foundation for understanding the socioeconomic and social structural factors leading to gang formation. However, the Birmingham School[10] perspective (also known as British subcultural theory) offers a major contribution for this research, as it will assist us in exploring how ethnicity plays a role in gang culture and how gang style is an expression of ethnic identity. In this section, I will provide a brief explanation of British subcultural theory, provide examples of youth subcultures that have been studied by different subcultural theorists, discuss the significance of such subcultures and their distinctive styles and explore how style has become a signifier of opposition to society but belongingness to the gang. This grounding will provide the theoretical direction for the research presented in this thesis in that knowledge of such subcultures will lead to a better understanding of ethnic youth gangs and how ethno-cultural identity is relevant to the experience of the youths interviewed. In particular, I will explore whether gang style is a symbolic expression or extension of male youth gang members' ethnic identity and whether gang style is a signifier of resistance or belonging. Finally, I will briefly explain how Birmingham school theorists adopted the labeling perspective to explain how societal reaction towards deviant youth subcultures creates moral panic and the consequences of this. This is important because societal reaction aids in creating and solidifying gang identity, racial and ethnic

[10] So-called because researchers in this field were based at the University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies.

stereotypes, and moral panic over specific population of youth. Consequently, youth in gangs may be treated differently by society not only because they belong to gangs but because they also represent a particular racial and ethnic group.

British Subcultural Theory

The Birmingham school is rather Marxist, seeing youth subcultures as a collective response of resistance by working class youth challenging the social structure. That is, youths are seen to rebel against the class structure and inequality that resulted from the massive social changes that occurred in Great Britain after the World War Two. After World War Two, Britain produced a number of deviant, but not necessarily delinquent, youth subcultures, particularly among working class youth. Most of these youth felt disdain for the limited job opportunity market which resulted from school failure. Youth who did secure jobs faced low paying class-segregated work, a far cry from the teenage consumer pattern that was seen as highly accessible to the affluent British bourgeoisie of the late 1950s. British subcultural theorists such as Downes (1966) and Abrams (1959) report that class inequality and the meaningless of work for working-class youth drove youth to rebel against the social structure, thus creating deviant subcultures that emphasized disassociation and disenchantment from middle-class dominated contexts of work and school. Style became a means of expressing resistance.

British cultural studies has been seen as highly political in nature, focusing as it does on the potentials for resistance in oppositional subcultures: valorizing the potential of working class cultures, then youth subcultures, to resist the hegemonic forms of domination. British sociologists examined the following: How are these youth subcultures informative? What are these youth rebelling and revolting against? Why do

they feel it is necessary to wear clothes and styles that shock and offend society? What is the symbolic significance behind such distinctive styles? What can we learn from such subcultures? How do they bring about social change? Cultural studies came to focus on how subcultural groups resist dominant forms of culture and identity, creating their own style and identities (Hebdige, 1979). Individuals who conform to dominant dress and fashion codes, behavior, and political ideologies thus produce their identities within mainstream groups, as members of specific social groupings (such as white, middle-class conservative Canadian). Youth who identify with subcultures (e.g., punk or Black Nationalist) look and act differently from those in the mainstream, and thus create oppositional identities, defining themselves against standard models. The Birmingham School focuses on what subcultures symbolically signify in the lives of these youth and how social identities are constructed within the group acting as a reference point of identification. These youth's social identities are further influenced and shaped by the reactions of wider society.

Very specific – and different – youth subcultures have been studied by British sociologists working in this field. These youth subcultures included Teddy Boys, Mods, Rockers, Punks and Skinheads (considered the most deviant of the other subcultures due to its embracing of racist ideologies, and violent outbursts against ethnic minorities and homosexuals). Some of these groups engaged in petty property crimes and vandalism and for youths who belonged to such subcultures, style became a form of revolt. Given the Marxist leanings of this theoretical approach, their resistance was perceived by researchers as rooted in class – resistance against the political and economic social structure of Britain.

These youth sub-cultures exemplify how groups adopt distinctive styles that act as cultural symbols of social identity. The exploration of such subcultures provides an entrée for the analysis of youth gangs and how they too use various cultural forms of style as symbols of resistance and/or belonging and how such cultural symbols adopted by young males in gangs are representative of their ethnic and cultural identity.

Teddy Boys

The Teddy Boys, working class boys, came out of the working-class districts of south and east London in the early fifties. Most of the Teddy Boys lacked grammar school education[11]; furthermore, they were unable to gain entry into white-collar work or apprenticeships into skilled trades, effectively excluded from upward mobility of post-war British affluence (Fyvel, 1963). As a result, the Teddy Boy dissociated himself from the so-called respectable working class, feeling condemned to a lifetime of unskilled work (Jefferson, 1976a). This dissociation included a sense of being disconnected from the routines of school, the job and home. These young men created a fantasy world by adopting an exaggerated style which juxtaposed two blatantly plundered forms – black rhythm and the aristocratic Edwardian style (Jefferson, 1976b). The Teddy Boys adopted a clothing style that consisted of bright turquoise, pink, or green high collar shirt with white frilly cuffs, long loose brightly colored "Edwardian" jackets usually detailed with black velvet lapels, pegged trousers colored apricot or orange, a thin rayon tie and neon green colored striped socks. They also favored thick-soled "brothel creeper' shoes; when an "italianate" trend came along, they turned to pointed winkie pickers (Bromberg, 1989; Frith, 1978; Hebdige, 1979). Their heavily oiled hair was carefully coiffed at the front and combed into a "ducks arse" or "DA" at the back, with full sideboards (Bromberg,

[11] Grammar school was the university track education system in Great Britain at this time

1989; Frith, 1978; Hebdige, 1979, Cohen, 1972).[12] They adopted the music of Elvis Presley ("Heartbreak Hotel") and Gene Vincent ("Be Bop a Lula") as part of their style (Hebdige, 1979).

The Teddy boys set the tone for future research into youth subcultures and for how society reacted to and dealt with these subcultures. From the outset they were associated in the media with public disorder (including race riots and quarrels in dance halls and other public places); sudden violence directed at other people; and a rise in juvenile delinquency post-World War Two. The Teddy Boy image thus served as a symbol and locus for adult alarm over juvenile delinquency and violence – the Teddy Boy was evidence of something gravely wrong with a significant sector of the youth population and, therefore, presumably with contemporary society at large (Widdicombe and Woofitt, 1995).

Mods

Styles evolve over time, and during the sixties the Teddy Boy went by the way side and many young people saw themselves as either Mods or Rockers. "The Mods originated in east London and the new towns of the south-east of England, and came from the lower white-collar, upwardly mobile sections of the working class" (Widdicombe and Woofitt, 1995, p. 9).The Mods, unlike the flamboyant Teddy Boys, were more subtle and subdued in appearance and behavior. The Mod style was grounded in a "quiet, subversive, self-conscious, code of coolness" (Bromberg, 1989: 19). The Mods sported conservative suits with neat narrow trousers, black ties, and black crepe-soled shoes. Their hair was generally worn short and greased with clear lacquer. Give away signs of

[12] The Teddy Boys adopted their name from King Edward VII (r. 1901-1910), a famously flamboyant dresser (Bromberg, 1989).

their presence were their cool Vespa and Lambretta motor scooters (Bromberg, 1989; Frith, 1978; Hebdige, 1979). Their music was ska or West Indian popular music and black soul music, a choice influenced by the mass immigration of Afro-Caribbeans into London's working-class communities and a resulting social rapport between blacks and whites (Hebdige, 1979). There was something edgy and rebellious about the Mods. Hebdige (1979) has noted that "the mods ...concealed as much as they stated [and] undermined the conventional meaning of 'collar, suit and tie,' pushing neatness to the point of absurdity" (p. 52). What they concealed under their veneer of coolness and alertness was their widespread amphetamine use. Thus, their neat, cool, style and too alert attitude allowed them to smoothly navigate between school, home and work, all the while masking a rebellious behaviour – that of popping pep pills (Bromberg, 1989; Frith, 1978; Jefferson, 1976, Hebdige, 1979).

Rockers

The Mods shared the youth culture stage with the Rockers. They were low-paid, unskilled manual labourers compared to the mods' semi-skilled white-collar workers (Barker and Little, 1964; Brake, 1985). "The rockers were either free spirited 'easy riders' or 'greasers' ...involved with the cult of the motorbike... a symbol of freedom, mastery and intimidation" (Brake, 1985, p.75). Their style consisted of greasy hair, jeans, and a tough guy attitude, and their music was rock'n'roll. They were butch, violent, sexist, anti-domestic and anti-authority (Brake, 1985). "Mod meant effeminate, stuck-up, emulating the middle classes, aspiring to a competitive sophistication, snobbish phoney. Rocker meant hopelessly naïve, loutish, and above all betraying" (Moore, 1993, p. 26). The mods and rockers were best known for their highly publicized and greatly distorted

squabbles at the English seaside resorts and along selected London streets; they were also associated with mob violence (Cohen, 1972). "The public image of these folk devils was invariably tied up to a number of highly visual scenarios associated with their appearance; youths chasing across the beach, brandishing deckchairs over their heads, running along the pavements, riding on scooters or bikes down the streets, sleeping on the beaches and so on" (Cohen, 1972, p.20). These kinds of highly public events created moral panic among the British public, who perceived both the Mods and Rockers as social monsters.

Skinheads

By the mid 1960s the Mods seemed to have divided into at least two groups, which Cohen (1972) designates as the hard Mods "wearing heavy boots, jeans with braces, short hair, the precursors of the Skinheads, usually prowling in large groups with the appearance of being jumpy, unsure of themselves, on the paranoiac edge, heavily involved in any disturbance...and the smooth Mods usually older and better off, sharply dressed, moving in small groups and usually looking for a bird" (Cohen, 1972, p. 187). Smooth Mods, then, seem to have been more grown up, more successful, socially rather than politically oriented. The hard Mods would have been more likely to be out of work, on unemployment compensation and feeling their future was more gloomy. Skinheads, as they came to be known, were perceived as aggressive working-class puritans who embraced "traditional conservative values, hard work, patriotism, defence of local territory, which led to attacks on hippies, gays, and minorities" (Brake, 1985, p. 76). The style emerging from these two very different value systems produced a subculture that

was proletarian, severe, chauvinistic, clean-cut, and combative (Hebdige, 1979; Frith, 1978; Clarke, 1976a).

The skinhead value system arose from the mixing of two seemingly incompatible sources: the cultures of the black Jamaican immigrant and the white working-class worker (Hebdige, 1979). The skinheads became fascinated by the style of a showy, hardened, Jamaican street gang called the Rude Boys, whose criminal escapades were preserved in a string of early reggae recordings (e.g., the Wailers' "Rude Boy," Desmond Decker's "Shanty Town," and the Slickers' "Johnny Too Bad") (Hebdige, 1979). The hero of this music was seen by the early skins as a "lone delinquent pitched hopelessly against an implacable authority" (Hebdige, 1979, p. 37). Skinheads' interest in black music ended when that music became associated with the expression of Black pride (Brake, 1985, p.76, Hebdige, 1979, p.59) and as skinheads were kept out of West Indian clubs, they instead became devotees of 'oi' music.[13] Bands like the 4-Skins, Last Resort and Criminal Class based their music on the tradition of British pub sing-alongs and male surge-chanting about the eminence of the British state (Dancis, 1978; Laing, 1985). Skinheads were common in the 1970s and 1980s, becoming more violent, racist and xenophobic (Brake, 1985), behaviours which led to increasing public concern about their overt violence.

Punks

During the mid-1970s the punk subculture enjoyed fairly widespread allegiance (Hebdige, 1979; Brake, 1985) and was typically dominated by working-class youth and middle-class artists (Frith, 1978). Punk style, however, was aggressively lower-class.

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[13] 'Oi" is an old gypsy expression used by cockney workers – and many other working class Britons – meaning "Hey!" or "Oi, you!".

Punks wore torn clothing held together with safety pins. They created clothing from plastic dustbin liners, adapted old school uniforms and used cheap material (e.g., lurex and mock leopardskin) for their home-made gear. They wrapped chains around their necks as if to symbolize their bondage (Cashmore, 1984). "The punk subculture...signified chaos at every level. . . .punks wore clothes that were the sartorial equivalent of swear words, and they swore as they dressed – with calculated effect, lacing obscenities into record notes" (Hebdige, 1979, p. 113-114).

Punk music reflected a counter-movement that encouraged open protest and anarchy. Its revolutionary and hard edge could be interpreted as a "challenge to hegemony...expressed obliquely" (Hebdige, 1979, p. 17). Punk music was perceived as overtly political, in that it dealt with issues of interest to the young (e.g., the Clash's "Career Opportunities"), and more importantly, it purposely courted vulgarity and unsavory reputation via contentious themes, song titles, and group names. Songs like "God Save the Queen" by the Sex Pistols were considered controversial and distasteful by most adults (Brake, 1985).

The over-riding impression of punk subculture and what seems to be its most important quality is that punks loved to be hated and managed to upset everyone. For instance, they sported symbols like the swastika without espousing its Nazism – they only wore it because it was "guaranteed to shock" (Hebdige, 1979, p. 116). They were famous for taking objects and transforming them into symbols of contempt and symbolic chaos. The safety-pins, chains, hair-dye, objects of sexual fetishism such as fish-net stocking, rape masks etc. "signified a relative material poverty which was either directly experienced and exaggerated or sympathetically assumed, and which in turn was made to

stand for the spiritual paucity of everyday life" (Hebdige, 1979, p. 115). Some of these symbols, then, might have had both direct and hidden meanings. For punks, no object was symbolically sacred or fixed, allowing punk style to remain elusive yet provocative – of rage (Hebdige, 1979). Punks gradually aligned themselves with the Rock against Racism movement and the Anti-Nazi league and became the enemies of the skinheads (Brake, 1985; Hebdige, 1979). Nevertheless, mainstream society thought their outrageous style was problematic.

British Subcultural Theory and Gangs

The British subcultural theorists have developed a rich literature on youth subcultures. The ideas developed by these theorists can be extended and applied to Canadian youth gangs, and here I will show how this will be done.

Brake (1985), in a cross-cultural comparison of youth cultures in Britain, the US, and Canada, showed that youth cultures share underlying unifying features based on class, race, age, and gender. He argued that in both Britain and the United States youth subcultures arose in response to the economic and social inequality youth faced in those societies. For British youth, this was directly linked to the rigid class and social structure and thus tended to be more linked to ethnic minority immigrants but also white working-class youth, while in contrast, youth cultural groups in the United States included immigrant groups as well as the native-born Black community, for whom impoverishment and disenfranchisement were long-term hardships (Brake, 1985).

In the United States, there is a powerful ideology of upward mobility; an ideology that is considered to be more relevant to White youth because they are less likely to be poor and working-class compared to Black and Brown youth. These youth are faced with

the harsh reality of limited economic and social opportunities, and consequently believe that upward mobility is more difficult to achieve (Brake, 1985). White working-class youth in Great Britain and Black youth in the United States, then, have symbolically rebelled against the economic and social structure by creating deviant youth styles[14] that signify opposition to the political and economic values of both countries.

In Canada, however, there is a muted appearance of deviant youth cultures, which is characteristic of a cultural emphasis upon individualism and an accompanying belief, as in the United States, in the possibilities of upward mobility. Brake argues that Canadian youth have adopted the styles of working-class British punk rockers and, more recently, the styles of the working-class American rap and hip-hop subculture. Canadian youth themselves do not always share the working-class backgrounds of their American and British counterparts but often come from middle-class backgrounds, thus are less driven by obvious political or economic motives. This reliance on US or British style, says Brake (1985), is due to the sheer physical size of the country, the linguistic division between the French and English, and regional differences and ethnic diversities, all of which inhibit the development of an indigenous Canadian youth culture.

There are two important elements of the Birmingham school perspective that are relevant to the discussion of youth gangs. "One [element] uncovers the relations of subcultures and class, and the other unravels the meanings of style and fashion; one looks at signs, the other at signifiers" (Brake, 1985, p. 68). These subcultures appeal to youth in similar age groups and social class. Youth subcultures in particular offer alternative modes of cultural expression; these become apparent of their distinctive clothing styles,

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[14] E.g., in Britain the Teddy Boys, Mods, Rockers, Skinheads and Punks, and in the United States the Rap and Hip-Hop cultures.

haircuts, and musical preferences, which become important signs and symbols of that specific youth culture. The group styles adopted may or may not be explicitly defined in terms of these youths' ethnicity, but what is common among such subcultures is that they celebrate and dramatise specific styles and values that appear to be rebellious and oppositional to dominant mainstream values. Style thus becomes a signifier of opposition challenging the social structure (Cohen, 1972; Hebdige, 1979; Brake, 1985). "They represent symbolic challenges to the symbolic order" (Cohen, 1972, p. 92). Various aspects of youth leisure (in particular music, clothes, and hairstyles) become an important site for youth revolt or "resistance." Therefore, Skinheads, Mods, Punks, and the rest are seen as resisting the dominant normative order and its major institutions, such as schools, police, employers. Style, then, becomes a form of revolt used by disenfranchised working class youth to contest or resist the class-based inequalities and injustices that confront them in everyday life (Brake, 1985). Style also expresses how committed individuals are to the subculture and indicates membership in a specific subculture, which by its very appearance disregards or attacks dominant values. In British subcultural theory, deviant styles are not direct inversions of bourgeois values; rather, they are self-conscious attempts to dramatize and resolve their marginalized status in class society. A minor effect of this participation in a subculture is that it may help marginalized youth feel better about themselves and provide them with a more positive alternative identity (Brake, 1985; Hebdige, 1979; Cohen, 1972).

The Birmingham school perspective will assist me in exploring how deviant youth subcultures, like gangs, offer a culture based on cultural elements of style, values, ideologies and life-style. For both types of cultures, an alternative identity is achieved

outside the ascribed identity offered by work, home, and school. In this dissertation I have added the variable of ethnicity to Birmingham School to investigate how it (in terms of ethnic culture and ethnic identity) is affiliated with gang culture and whether the group styles adopted by youth in gangs may be explicitly defined in terms of ethnicity. Although the youths of this study are gang members who have adopted particular styles influenced by and derived from American culture (not originated independently), what makes such gang styles relevant is whether they are used to express the youths' ethnic identity. The clothes, the music, and the hair-styles may be indicators of deviance and resistance, but may also embrace the symbolic accoutrements of their ethnic culture.

Birmingham Perspective and its Link with Ethnic Studies

Early work focused on white, male British youth subcultures, (Brake, 1984; Hebdige, 1979), but gradually researchers saw the value of this perspective for exploring ethnicity, e.g., looking at Rastafarian youth culture to show it represents deviance and opposition, but also serves as a powerful insignia of ethnic identity. Expanding on this, Hebdige (1979) found that Rastafarianism, with its dreadlocks, khaki clothing, and use of 'weed' was a style adopted by unemployed black British youth to express the alienation many felt in that society. Rastafarians then felt their style expressed their alienation and their plight as victims of a white, racist society, but for white society, that style demonstrated that they were not only dangerous but also representative of Caribbean ethnic culture (Brake, 1985).

American sociologists used this theoretical approach to investigate the significance of rap and hip-hop youth culture in America. George (1992) concluded that rap and hip-hop culture, which were 'invented' by young working-class blacks in

America's inner city neighborhoods, is strongly identified with Black ethnic identity. Moreover, he noted that most of these had been subject to profound economic and social change, which created unemployment and short-term temporary jobs. Rap and hip-hop music reflected black, disenfranchised youth in a white society, resisting against systemic racism by creating a style that combined the explosive elements of poverty, street knowledge and unfocused political anger (George, 1992). The culture and the music have also been expressed through graffiti art, break-dancing, and distinctive styles of dress – baggy pants, brand name running shoes, reversed baseball caps – all becoming symbols of Black ethnic culture.

Tricarico (1991) explored how and why ethnicity is invoked in the Guido subculture – a youth subculture that is distinguished by the ethnic Italian ancestry of its actors. This subculture is not committed to any ideology or political agenda but rather represents a group style. Further, the Guido subculture "neither embraces traditional Italian culture nor repudiates ethnicity in identifying with American culture. Rather it reconciles ethnic Italian ancestry with popular American culture by elaborating a youth style that is an interplay of ethnicity and youth cultural meanings" (Tricarico, 1991, p. 42). According to Tricarico (1991, p.50) "Guido and Italian, or Italian-American are synonymous". The Guido identity is expressed by youths' Italian Brooklyn accents and in their show of material success (e.g., the prominent display of gold jewelry, the luxury cars that display the ethnic insignia of Italian flag decals). The music of choice for 'a Guido' is disco or dance music and, more recently, rap. "There are also objects that are believed to have ethnic value, like gold jewelry imported from Italy and Italian designer clothing (e.g., Z Cavaricci jeans and Sergio Tacchini jump suits)"(Tricarico, 1991, p.51).

Such display of cultural objects are presented to others within the youth scene, signifying pride in ethnic culture imbuing it positive meanings.

The Guido culture resolves the "contradictions" of age and class status in modern urban society. "It is also a response to the tensions of immigrant ethnicity – to the low status assigned Italian-Americans on ethnic grounds within the American system of ethnic stratification" (Tricarico, 1991, p54). In this subculture Italian ancestry is valued, and the Italian look and image is imperative because it claims prestige "for what has historically been denigrated as a 'greenhorn'" (Tricarico, 1991, p.51).

Making the link: Subcultural Studies and Gangs

It is important to note that the various youth subcultures that have been studied (Rastafarianism, Rap and Hip-Hop culture, Guido culture) are not necessarily delinquent. What they share are elements of distinctive style that may or may not be symbolic of ethnic identity. In other words some youth cultures may be strictly defined in terms of ethnicity (e.g., the Guido culture), others may be defined by their political ideology (e.g., the Skinheads), and others, like the Rastafarians, may be committed to a particular symbolic ideology which celebrates freedom from white racist society.

Although youth culture and gang culture are not the same, research on youth cultures allows for the drawing of parallels between youth cultures that are somewhat different yet share certain characteristics. Gangs tend to be informally structured 'near groups', composed of a closely linked core of members who live in close proximity to one another, always hang around together in a close-knit group, and are criminally active. More broadly defined subcultures do exist: not all punk rockers live in the same area or know one another on a first name basis. An individual can adopt the punk rocker (or any

other) style but not necessarily hang out with other punk rockers (or other subculture). However, youths who belong to a specific gang all know each other on a first name basis and have developed strong friendship networks. They depend on one another for protection and usually commit criminal acts as a group.

The similarity between aforementioned deviant youth cultures and gang culture is that they share elements of style, values, imagery and specific lifestyles that form a symbolic community. They differ in that for some deviant youth cultures the peer group takes on a more pseudo-identity. In addition, youth may not dedicate all their time to participating in the gang culture. For instance, some may identify with a certain youth culture – wearing Rastafarian style clothes, for instance (Cashmore, 1979; Garrison, 1979) – but may still go to school and work part-time. They are not, that is, necessarily spending all or most of their time with other youth who have adopted the Rastafarian style. Such a style may be derivative of a pseudo-community, symbolic of a kind of life-style, but that life-style is not their whole identity.

In the gang culture, however, the peer group acts as a milieu for adolescents' spare-time and leisure activities, and these groups seek environments that will accommodate their own informal organisation. Partaking in gang life becomes a way of life, and specific gang styles, values, and imagery become part of the adolescent's identity. The peer group, then, acts as a reference point for the identity. As well, a youth cannot simply decide to emulate a particular gang style because he believes it is cool or because he agrees with a particular gang ideology. He has to be recognized, recruited and accepted by the members of a gang and then all activities, leisure or otherwise, must be spent in the company of other youths in the same gang pursuing gang activities. The gang

culture, therefore, requires a stronger commitment to the peer group while in a deviant youth culture, commitment is more likely to be emphasized by following the values of the group, not by the allegiance of individual subculture members themselves.

Belonging to a group confers social identity or a shared collective representation of who one is and how one should behave (Hogg and Abrams, 1990). The Birmingham School will allow us to better understand how belonging to a gang confers a social identity that reflect these young men's ethnic culture and identity. Their shared collective representation may be both oppositional and rebellious because they are delinquent. Their "gang style" may be a signifier of revolt or a signifier of belonging. Gang style may also be perceived as an alternative mode of cultural expression, apparent in the clothing style, hairstyles, music preferences, and language gang members adopt. These may or may not be important signs and symbols of their specific ethnic culture. Similar focal concerns, values, and norms may be shared and transferred among all youth in the gang. This subculture appeals to different age groups, classes, and ethnic groups.

Labelling

What is also important to note is that cultural studies has also incorporated the labeling perspective in explaining how deviant youth cultures provoke negative reaction from academics, parents, and the media. Cohen (1972) examined the societal reaction to the deviant, particularly vis-à-vis the general reaction of public opinion to the deviant and the reaction of the mass media. He argued that we should consider the effects of negative labeling on the deviant subculture and focused on this question: Are deviant subcultures accepted, rejected, or stigmatized and how does public reaction impact the deviant identity?

In an analysis of two subcultural styles, the Mods and Rockers, both of which became socially visible, Cohen reported that the mass media treatment of them orchestrated a public reaction which designated them as "folk devils" and created "moral panic." The mass media coverage of a small amount of damage and violence on the British seaside beaches led to a situation of deviancy amplification. Once the deviant "folk devils" were identified and segregated, there was a conscious embracing of the two deviant roles by a large number of British teenagers. Such labeling and identification enforced stricter punitive measures which served to further ground their deviant identity.

Similarly, youth in gangs may also be perceived as "folk devils" with a criminal agenda. The media paints them as dangerous and violent. We often see headlines along the lines of: "Machete attack Shocked City - Gangs of disaffected young people are becoming more organized" (The Montreal Gazette, July 15, 2004, p. A2-A3). This results in moral panic among the public, but the negative reporting can also have an opposite effect, creating deviancy amplification. In other words, youth in gangs may look at these newspaper headlines and boast to their friends about being famous, perhaps wanting to echo the deviant behaviour. This possibility has been raised by Cohen (1972) and Tannenbaum (1938), who have observed that youth participate in a wide range of activities in daily life, many of which are behaviors that adults find objectionable. Not only do adults disapprove of these activities, but laws prohibit and punish these acts. According to Tannenbaum (1938), sanctions, especially severe ones, are a "dramatization of evil" that can encourage young people to engage in more of the same behavior.

Rather than struggle to avoid the label, some deviants seek out and embrace stigma: "Juvenile gang members, for example, frequently view their newly acquired disrepute as a badge of honour and a sign of group acceptance" (Vold and Bernard, 1986, p.9).

The media then, by their description of gang life and behaviour may generate stereotyping. We have noted the tendency to emphasize violence, but media also describe the racial and ethnic composition of gangs. For instance, in the newspaper story cited above ("Machete attack") we learn that the most dangerous and organized youth gangs in Montreal are the Bo-Gars and CDP, both of which are of Haitian origin (The Montreal Gazette, July 15, 2004, p. A: 3). This is not to say that the newspaper's facts are wrong, but the fact that ethnic background is emphasized may provoke certain negative stereotypes targeted towards certain ethnic groups. This is important to note because although the peer group provides the reference point of social identity, that social identity is further influenced and shaped by the reactions of wider society. By emphasizing the ethnic origin of the delinquent we may be guilty of creating racial or ethnic stereotypes. And, on a more general level, we create moral panic by linking the criminal to his ethnic origin. This dissertation, then, will use the concept of labeling (also used by Birmingham school theorists) to explore how these young men's ethnic identities are socially constructed, amongst and between themselves and by agents of social control; that is, do these youth feel that their ethnic origins influence how they are treated by the wider society? This will allow me to further explore how these youth's ethnic identities are socially constructed in relation to

agents of social control. Do they feel accepted, rejected, or stigmatized by them? More specifically, how is ethnic identity relevant – and is it relevant – to the experience of youth in gangs, and if so, what role does it play (positive or negative) when interacting with agents of wider society.

The youths interviewed for this study have been confined to maximum-security detention centers, in some cases for long periods of time. As a result, most of these youth have frequently interacted with various agents of social control such as police officers, social workers, and intervention workers. It can be argued that these youths' identities have been formed and shaped by these interactions. Labeling theory will allow us to better understand how these agents perceive these young men in gangs and in return how these young men feel they are seen by these agents (i.e. police officers, intervention workers, social workers, and teachers). It will also allow us to better understand whether youths' negative reactions to agents of social control result from perceived or real racism triggered in response to their ethnic culture and identity.

Labeling theory argues that the police create gangs because they define them and because gangs themselves develop a 'group identity' based on police harassment. Sanders (1994) notes "when they [the police] arrest and lock up poor minority boys who are flashing gang symbols but not ready to back them up with violence, law enforcement agents powerfully intensify gang affiliation" (p. 170). Groups of individuals are labeled because of gang affiliation but may be further stigmatized because of the ethnic and racial group they represent. The community and police, then, label gangs due to a negative perception of gangs. The labeling

is based on the symbols, behaviour and language which are used by gangs themselves to self-identify and to identify other gang members (Zatz, 1985, p. 14-15).

Symbolic Ethnicity

Ethnicity is the key variable in this study and the theory of symbolic ethnicity will be used to explore the role of ethnic culture and ethnic identity and what they symbolize in the lives of these young men in gangs. Symbolic ethnicity is a way of expressing ethnic behaviour and ethnic affiliation (Gans, 1979). This symbolic ethnicity is frequently seen in the third and fourth generations of European Americans who do not rely on ethnic cultural associations or organizations to demonstrate their ethnicity; instead, they do so through the use of symbols such in a subjective, flexible, and voluntary way that permits them to express the "feeling of being ethnic" (Gans, 1979).

"Ethnic identity can be expressed either in action or feeling, or combinations of these, and the kinds of situations in which it is expressed are nearly limitless" (Gans, 1979, p.8).

Gans (1979) reports that ethnic identity is usually contextual and situational because it derives from social negotiations in which one declares an ethnic identity and then demonstrates acceptable and acknowledged ethnic group markers to others. "Any mode of expressing ethnic identity is valid as long as it enhances the feeling of being ethnic, and any cultural pattern or organization which nourishes that feeling is therefore relevant, providing only that enough people make the same choice when identity expression is a group enterprise"

(Gans, 1979, p.9). One's ethnic declaration often is open to the scrutiny of others who may validate or invalidate the declaration. Thus, symbolic ethnicity is somewhat subjective because it may be withheld[15] or exhibited[16] depending on a particular situation. Thus, symbolic ethnic identity is a psychological construct, expressed by the individual who will self-define as a specific ethnicity when it suits them, making ethnic identity both subjective and flexible. Gans's theory of symbolic ethnicity will be used to explore the symbolic role (if any) of ethnicity in gang life and how these youth maintain (or not) a symbolic connection to their ethnic heritage.

For Gans, "symbolic ethnicity can be expressed in a myriad of ways...it is characterized by a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; or a love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday life" (1979, p.9). To express symbolic ethnicity, gang members do not need to belong to a formal ethnic organization or association, but need only to affiliate with symbols of their culture as preferences prescribe and situations dictate. This means that ethnic belongingness is not measured by the degree of participation in ethnic clubs, knowledge of ethnic language, friendship circles, place of residence, and marital patterns (Isajiw, 1977); rather, group belonging is based on the voluntary freedom of ethnic expression. The subjective voluntary ethnocultural identification may not be demonstrated frequently or constantly, but only when the individual

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[15] For instance, intervention workers at the youth centres have punished Haitian youth for speaking Creole. As a result some of these Haitian youth do not speak Creole in the presence of intervention workers.

[16] Speaking Creole is something to be proud of and may be acknowledged in the Haitian gang as a way to signify belonging to the gang. As well as, the youths interviewed here, being Haitian is something to be proud of.

chooses to do so. Some of these youth may have a "strong attachment to an ethnic label, and a strong commitment to the idea of value of ethnic heritage" (Weinfeld, 1985, p.79) which may be personally significant to the individual. Ethnicity, then, may have an "affective attribute" (Weinfeld, 1985, p.78). What this means for a youth gang member, whose associates share a common cultural heritage, is that great importance is placed on the value of belonging to the group. Such ethnic belonging may be expressed through a shared language, or simply through a shared philosophy of life, or even through a shared love for the same cultural music. A commitment to the ethnic group may still be expressed without having to fully embrace "the traditional culture and life-style of [the youth's] ethnic group" (Weinfeld, 1985, p.79).

I will be exploring how youths in gangs express their ethnicity. I will explore whether commitment to ethnic culture is transmitted through a variety of symbols that are linked abstractly to their cultural identity such as morality, religion, and life view, all of which can be expressed verbally or non-verbally. For instance, a gang member's tattoo that depicts his country of origin could symbolise territoriality and loyalty. Religiosity could be shown by the wearing of a specific religious relic that is symbolic of that particular ethnic culture (e.g., Christianity and Latin American culture). Declaring a symbolic allegiance to ethnic culture might allow some of these youths to acquire an individual and a collective sense of belonging to and acceptance by the group. It may be that in some cases, young men in gangs may avoid situations where their ethnic identity is challenged, threatened, humiliated, and condemned, and instead seek out and pursue situations that favour their ethnic identity.

I will also explore whether ethnic identity is expressed at a more collective level, where individuals of the group have a common origin and participate in shared culturally significant activities. In particular, the concept of collective expression of ethnic identity will be used to explore and assess the communal sharing of clearly ethnic practices, such as food, religion, language and sports, specific cultural practices that comprise the core of the collective definition of an ethnic group. As a result individuals in gangs may share a "sense of we-feeling" collectively as a group which is derived from sharing a common ethnic origin. These youth may collectively pledge to a "peoplehood " at the exclusion of all who do not fit the chosen criteria.

External cultural identity will also be considered. This concept encompasses the particular external characteristics, such as skin colour, facial features, accent, tattoos, and clothing (such attributes are assumed within the identity of the group) that some gang members display. These external displays often result in the youth being negatively labelled as the "other" – as "blacks" or "deviants. Such characterisations label individuals as "different" from the idea of "French and English majority type" and in some external way are perceived as un-Canadian; consequently, the individuals themselves are unlikely to ever be considered Canadian (Herberg, 1989, p.91). Frequently prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviour result from these characterizations, which can have serious and negative consequences, such as ethnic segregation within the community (Herberg, 1989).

Having discussed the concepts necessary to explore the role of ethnicity in youth gangs in Montreal, it is possible to delineate the major points of investigation in this

study: The collective criteria of ethnocultural identity can be used to examine the degree of participation within an ethnic community. The symbolic aspect examines the more subjective "in-group identity." The external definition focuses on the consequences of being labelled "outsider," or "non-Canadian." The "collective" "symbolic" "external" viewpoint will be linked with the Birmingham school of subcultural theory. Symbolic in-group boundaries are expressed through specific clothing, styles, graffiti, tattoos, and music preference that "attack the roles, boundaries and categories of conventional society" (Martin, 1981, p.134). Such symbolic displays may express what is taboo or despised by gang members. Thus, we can describe gang subcultures as both 'deviant' and 'symbolic', emphasizing social boundaries which may be linked to members' ethnoracial identity. The role of ethnic culture and ethnic identity will be examined through factors of language, residential segregation, religiosity, food, music, sport, politics, and, finally heroes. In doing so, I will be exploring how "ethnicity continues to have a large impact on social, psychological, cultural, and political aspects" (Weinfeld, 1985, p.65) of gang life and how or whether gang life maintains a certain "ethnic survivalism," due to the belief that "stresses the continued salience of ethnicity for the English and French, and for all other ethnic groups in Canada" (Weinfeld, 1985, p.67). This dissertation will explore what ethnic identity symbolizes in gang life, whether there exists a continued expressive allegiance to ethnic culture for those youth in gangs, and how ethnic identity is maintained within the gang.

Gang Membership in Montreal

Montreal in 2004 faces a proliferation of Haitian, Jamaican, Latino, and French gangs, with members as young as seven years of age and some individuals remaining in gangs up to the age of 30 (Hamel, 2000). There is a clear alignment among gangs based on ethnicity, a variable of considerable importance to this study. The youth interviewed here are French, Haitian, Jamaican, and Latino and others of various ethnic backgrounds. Before describing the study methodology and sample in detail, I will briefly summarize the general features of French, Haitian, Jamaican and Latino cultures in order to provide some familiarity with the ethnic groups in question.

1. French Canadian /French Quebecois Culture[17]

French Canadians do not consider themselves to be an ethnic group. The community refers to itself as "we, the Quebecois," effectively excluding all French Canadians living outside Quebec. French Canadians seek to control their community in the face of "outsiders" (Louder and Waddell, 1983, p.61). Language and cultural retention, therefore, are very important for French Canadians. French Canadians had traditionally placed great importance on family and religion (Hobart, 1981); however, the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s changed society drastically, reducing the role and influence of the Church and creating a distinctly Quebecois society. Traditional religious, French colonial cultural values clashed with those of the urban working-class masses who were extremely fascinated by American values expressed in cinema, music, cars and fast-food restaurants (Pacom, 2001). Quebecois identity began to reshape itself and move "beyond Catholicism and its traditional puritan, natalistic, rural, and overall conservative

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[17] Most of the French-Canadian youths interviewed considered themselves Quebecois, not French-Canadians, because they were separatists, not federalists (Interview: June 2nd, 2001).

vision of life" (Pacom, 2001, p.444); thus, a secular society, uninterested in the Church, came to be. But there was also an effort to reshape Quebecois identity to espouse 'la Francité' (the French language), 'le Quebecité' (influence of Quebecois writers, scholars, artists, and humourists), and 'l' Americanité' (influence of US culture) (Pacom, 2001, p.445), in order to give rise to a strong native Quebec culture.

However, today most French Canadians are more likely to identify with American cultural influences, and importantly for this research, there appears to be a strong American influence on Quebecois youth identity: Nike, Tommy Hilfiger, Eminem, n'Sync, Christina Aguilera, and the Backstreet Boys transmit the same message everyday to thousands of young people. American culture is cool and sexy!" (Pacom, 2001, p.447). But even with such a strong American influence, Quebecois youth culture still distinguishes itself from other youth cultures around the world "by its vitality, creativity, openness" (Pacom, 2001, p.443). Such "openness, vitality, and creativity" have been expressed by several Quebecois artists such as "rock-and-roll bands such as Harmonium, Offenbach, Beau Dommage; singers, songwriters, and performing artists such as Michel Tremblay; and cinematographers such as Denys Arcand and Jean Pierre Lefebvre..." (Pacom, 2001, p.442). Quebecois identity is maintained through these homegrown artists in music, cinema and literature.

Music is an important aspect of French Canadian life (Pronovost and Papillon, 1988). A 1985 survey of Canadians aged 15 or older living in the Maritimes, Quebec, Ontario, the Prairies and British Columbia showed that music is indeed an important cultural activity for French and English Canadian population. At that time, most Francophones reported listening to American music: 77.2%, compared to 38.7% who

listened to French-Canadian music, 13.7% to English-Canadian music and 6.7% to British music (Pronovost and Papillon, 1988, p.332). The authors concluded that American and British music (i.e., new wave, punk – to a lesser degree) had penetrated the Canadian market and influenced French-Canadian youths' musical taste (Pronovost and Papillon, 1988). Contemporary French-Canadian youth have been heavily influenced by American (US) cultural music tastes. It appears these youth prefer to listen to rock, Hip-hop, and techno. Their music preferences vary because "French Canadian youth are more likely to listen to the melody line before the lyrics" (TG Magazine, 1999). Raves[18] are popular, and the liberal use of drugs such as marijuana, cocaine and MDMA (better known as Ecstasy) is common (Rieder, 2000, p.1829). "Ravers" seek a kind of "sensory amplification" through a combination of marathon trance dancing, drug use and music (Weir, 2000). Ravers have embraced a party etiquette of peace, love, unity, and respect, and raves can be a site for rebellious youth to act out against mainstream society in a pleasurable way. Raves can also be attractive to gang members; for example, those French Canadian youths who are affiliated with gangs (in particular biker gangs) find raves to be good places for selling drugs (Weir, 2000; Weber, 1999).

Quebeckers' family values also appear to be unique. A study of Cegep students between the ages of 18 and 22 living in Montreal suggested that the Quebec families are considered by youth of non-Quebec origins as more likely to encourage individualism and independence compared to their own traditional families, which included those of

[18] Raves are nocturnal dance parties, held in illegal spaces such as concert halls, underground parking lots and warehouses, and have become increasingly common since the late 1980s. They are usually alcohol free and are characterized by vigorous non-stop dancing to computer generated music (Weir 2000: 1846).

Latin American, European and Mediterranean origins (Meintel, 1989)[19] French Quebecois youth do not maintain frequent and ritualistic contact with their parents; indeed they are encouraged to come and go as they please. The traditional family evening meal was seen as less important to Quebec youth and their families than it was to the other subjects interviewed (Meintel, 1989).

Associated with this perception of the Quebec family as easygoing or lax, was the view that Quebec parents encourage independence and sexual liberty among their adolescents. If children are unhappy at home they are given the choice to leave their parent's home. For example, "Quebecois youth (as young as 16) are encouraged to leave their parent's home and to go live on their own or to go live with a boyfriend or girlfriend" (Meintel, 1989, p.87). Meintel also reports that Quebecois parents impose fewer restrictions on their children and are very open-minded. "They will allow the son's girlfriend or daughter's boyfriend to sleep over, and mothers will encourage the use of birth control pills, in some cases providing their daughters with the birth-control pills" (1989, p.88-89). Such attitudes are rare among other ethnic cultures, such as Greek, Portuguese, Salvadorian, or Chilean.

Meintel also found that Quebecois boys tend to be less macho; they help out with domestic chores at home, unlike boys other ethnic cultures (e.g., Latin American, European, Mediterranean culture) where the mother will most likely take care of the domestic chores and will not expect their sons to help with housework.

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[19] The individuals interviewed for this specific study included 20 respondents of Greek, 10 of Portuguese, 10 of Chilean and 10 of Salvadorian ethnicity as well as 20 Montreal-born Quebecois francophones (Meintel, 1989).

2. Haitian Culture.

French and Creole are the languages spoken in Haiti. Creole, spoken by most Haitians, is a product of mixing the African languages of slaves with French and other languages, including Spanish, English, and some Amerindian tongues. It later developed into a written language (Encyclopedia International, 1970, p.265).

Voodoo is a common element in the religious culture of Haiti. As we shall see, some Haitian youths interviewed here practice and/or believe in or follow voodoo religious practices. Voodoo , derived from African religions, came to Haiti with the slave trade in the 17th century (Metraux, 1972). It is believed that voodoo helped slaves to conquer slavery and Haiti to be an independent nation. Slaves practiced voodoo and found it to be a source of inspiration in the battle against their masters and to abolish slavery (Dash, 2001). In contrast, Catholicism was viewed as "the religion of colonial oppression and would be accorded no special status after independence" (Dash, 2001, p.52). Whites feared voodoo rituals because of their ignorance about the religion (Dayan, 1995, p.242). Most Haitians consider themselves both Catholic and voodoo worshipers (Dayan, 1995). Voodoo has an important significance for Haitians because it is very symbolic of their cultural past and may appeal to some Haitian youth because of its "supernatural" element.

A major issue affecting Haitian youths in Montreal today is relations with the white majority. Because Montreal is a French environment, it is an attractive destination for many French-speaking immigrants, including Haitians. However, in Montreal, Haitians are an ethnic group more discriminated against in the realms of work, education,

and social relations than any other ethnic group in the city (Clement and Noel, 1991). The ideas of racism and youth culture will be expanded upon below.

Haitian youth are influenced by Quebecois, American and Haitian cultural values. In most cases Haitian youth have adopted the values they liked and dropped those they do not (Revue Internationale D'Action Communautaire, 1994). Most Haitian youth are educated in a French Quebecois school system and are also mass consumers of Quebec society. In some cases some Haitian youth feel closer to the Quebecois values of "...autonomy, individualism, freedom...than those of their parents" (Potvin, 1999, p.43), which are the traditional values and life styles of the "old country" (Symons, 1999, p.129). Thus there may be a value conflict between Haitian youth and their parents in that Haitian youth may understand Quebecois culture better than their parents (Symons, 1999).

This conflict can especially be seen in the rights of children versus parents. In Haitian culture, Haitian parents have the right to exercise authority over their children. In Quebec the social institutions of education and the state have the right to exercise authority as well. If a youth commits a crime he is placed in a youth center, if he is not attending classes the school has a right to suspend him or enact other disciplinary measures. However, in Haiti it is the parents who decide what disciplinary tactics are needed if a child is delinquent or deviant. Moreover, in Haiti, the younger a person is the less likely they will have rights. In Quebec society children, regardless of their age, are deemed to have individual rights under the Youth Protection Act. Such a value system conflicts with Haitian cultural standards and emphasizes the child's independence (as seen above in discussing French-Canadian culture). "In Haitian culture the family plays a

more important role than education or the legal value system" (Revue Internationale D'Action Communautaire, 1994, p. 22-23), again a conflict with Quebecois values. Haitian youth may expect their parents to treat them the same way Quebecois parents treat their children, generating conflict between parent and child (Revue Internationale D'Action Communautaire, 1994). According to Symons (1999), youths' greater understanding of Quebecois culture may place them in a position of power in the family because they act as go-betweens for the family and larger society.

An added nuance to Haitian life in Quebec is that most first generation Haitians who arrived in Quebec did not perceive themselves as immigrants; most saw Canada as a temporary stay and they planned to return home to Haiti one day (Revue Internationale D'Action Communautaire, 1994). However, 2nd generation Haitian youth, who did not wish to return to Haiti, constantly heard about their parents' desire to return to their beloved country. Again, some Haitian youth may be caught between two different cultural realities – the desire to remain in Canada versus the desire to return home (Revue Internationale D'Action Communautaire, 1994).

Haitian youth are not only French but black too, and racism is a significant issue for them; indeed, being black is why complete integration is difficult for many – youth feel oppressed because they are constantly judged by the color of their skin (Potvin, 1997). This racism is seen in the socioeconomic environment too. Laperrière (1989) reports that Haitians are more likely to experience problems with poverty, unemployment, underemployment, and collect welfare assistance. Haitian children are more likely to have a negative image of their father because of "his real or affective absence or because he occupies a low socioeconomic professional status" (Potvin, 1999,

p44). In addition, because the father is often absent, mother-headed families are common among Montreal Haitians, and this places much strain on women occupying such roles. "Mothers are obliged to assume educational and financial responsibilities which had been eased by the extended family structure in Haiti" (Potvin, 1999, p.44). Older Haitian children may be helping out at home with younger siblings taking on the role of "surrogate-parent." Some children may feel like outcasts at school because they are obliged to wear second-hand clothing or hand-me downs, which makes them stand out in an environment where fashionable, trendy, clothing is the key to fitting in within today's youth. At school, some Haitian youths have faced discrimination from other students. All of these factors may contribute to the frustrations and maladjustment experienced by some Haitian youth (Laperrière, 1989).

A study of 2nd-generation Haitian young people aged 15-29, living in Montreal North, examined these individuals' perception of themselves in Quebecois society (Potvin, 1999). Interestingly, although the subjects saw themselves as being in close cultural proximity to other Quebecois youths (inasmuch as they are caught up in the same influence of mass, urban and democratic culture), they were more likely to confront factors of domination and subordination, significant issues for most Blacks in Canada (Potvin, 1999). These youths experience tension between social integration and exclusion. "These youth rebel against their social conditions, which are the result of an immigration trajectory in which they had no part. They also eventually stop believing in cultural integration, because even though they were born in Quebec, they have to struggle against social determinism, and are thereby confined to relations of domination" (Potvin, 1999:, p.47). Some of the Haitians believed that even if they were educated and had

diplomas or other qualifications, they would always be judged by the color of their skin. Others said that because they were constantly harassed by white youth and were constantly running away from them, they felt obliged to join gangs as a way to protect themselves against harassment and violent altercations. Gang membership for Haitians, then, could be a response to racism. This racism was not experienced only at school and work, but also in dealing with Montreal police officers (Potvin, 1999).

Ultimately, then, Haitians face social tensions due to cultural conflicts between values inherent to their ethnicity and to their host country. They faced cultural alienation, stigmatization, and racism. Many in Potvin's study, attempt to make sense of their experiences by turning to Black American movements. They idolize men such as Martin Luther King because he fought for "the extension of rights and opportunities of Blacks in a competitive space" (Potvin, 1999, p.46) and admire American social movements such as the "Black Panthers because they rejected the self-centered, imposed identity of White Universalism" (Potvin, 1999). Their ideas about racism are more likely to be shaped by ideas imported from American culture. However, their experiences with racism become realities experienced within a Canadian cultural context that enforces fair and equal treatment in theory but not always in practice.

3. Jamaican Culture

Not all black groups are equal (Davis, 1997). In fact, African Blacks, European Blacks, North American blacks (in Canada, escaped slaves and slaves of United Empire Loyalists), and Caribbean-born Blacks do not always share the same culture. This raises the question of whether Haitian gangs and/or Jamaican gangs exclude blacks who are non-Haitian and/or non-Jamaican. That is, do these youths bond based on shared country

of origin or ethnicity only or is bonding more broadly based on skin color without the complications of ethnicity? This research will consider those questions and also whether youth have a more difficult time reintegrating into society because of their visible minority status.

In Canada, Jamaicans have adopted cultural behaviors and values that may hinder their integration into Canadian Society (Henry, 1999). There appears to be a lack of commitment to Canada by 1st generation immigrants because, like Haitians, most wish to return to their country of origin some day. However, earning the money necessary to do so may prove problematic because "people of Caribbean origin face employment, housing, and other forms of racial discrimination" (Henry, 1999, p.15). And again, like Haitian youth, 2nd generation Caribbean youth are used to living in Canada and may not share their parents' wishes about returning to Jamaica (Henry, 1999).

Historically, Canadian blacks have always been more likely to be in the lowest socioeconomic bracket, a problem that continues today.[20] Like Haitian families, there is a pattern of single parent households (usually female-headed) among Caribbean families. In fact, single motherhood is an expected part of life in the Caribbean household. Among Caribbean immigrants in Toronto, the father is usually absent from the home, a pattern common among all social classes, but especially so within the working class (Henry, 1999). This paternal absence is common with marriage and relationship breakdown, which occur frequently under conditions of migration. Caribbean children expressed great hostility and resentment towards their fathers but had tremendous respect for their mothers, who managed to raise their children alone (Henry, 1999). But associated with

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[20] Henry (1999) reports that female single parent families of Caribbean origin earn far less than any other type of family. Their annual income is only $5, 143 as compared to couples with children (p. 68).

this is "a greater problem of lower income and poverty for mothers and children" (Henry, 1999, p.63). Such patterns may constrain the social mobility of these immigrants, placing financial strain on them, and may contribute to social exclusion from and difficulty integrating with Canadian society.

Another factor that may limit integration within Canadian society for Caribbean families is the tendency for second marriages or liaisons, which tends to lead to an increase in family size with the arrival of new children (product of the new relationship) and step-children (Henry, 1999). This change in family structure and associated increase in size may lead to estrangement and/or tension between the step-children and the step-father; some of the children may "suffer from real or imagined neglect or lack of emotional support" (Henry, 1999, p.99).

Racism and associated discrimination are significant problems for many black Canadians, born here or not, Jamaican, Haitian or other. Racism for Caribbean youth is most often experienced in the justice system, employment arena, and education system. Youth consequently feel socially excluded because of race; this sense of exclusion from Canadian society may encourage a non-committal attitude towards Canadian values. That is, Jamaican youth may find Canadian values of autonomy and freedom attractive but may also feel rejected by this same society that discriminates against them because of their race.

The change in educational system may be a source of conflict between parents and children and the new society. The Caribbean educational system is more authoritarian and disciplined than Canada's. Discipline and corporal punishment are emphasized in the Caribbean, and the teacher is a respected figure known to the parents.

This contrasts with the Canadian educational system, which emphasizes a more experiential and liberal point of view. Parents may be uncomfortable with the Canadian system, perceiving it to be less structured, less disciplined, and less able to instill values of respect and order. The Caribbean youth, however, may prefer the Canadian schooling system for just those reasons. In fact, Caribbean youth have "expressed a distinct liking for the 'morals and schooling' in Canada" (Henry, 1999, p.129). As a result, Jamaican youth, like Haitians, are caught between two worlds and two value systems.

Caribbean youths and immigrants are constantly negotiating their identity, caught between two cultures. In some cases individuals may agree with Canadian values; in others, those of the "home" country and vice versa. The Canadian multicultural environment allows all to be aware of their cultural roots and to develop a distinctive cultural identity. Such distinction is expressed through religion and language that may allow Jamaican youth to resist complete incorporation into the 'White Ethos' of society (Henry, 1999).

Most Jamaicans speak English and/or Patois. The characteristic speech of the lower class is Patois which "is based very largely on English, but with its own peculiar structural forms, and with the infusion of African words and phrases" (Phillips, 1973, p. 34-35). Patois speech has been referred to as a provincial dialect of the uneducated and is often seen by the middle-class Jamaican as vulgar speech or jargon (Phillips, 1973). Patois appears to be a common usage among Jamaican youth of both middle and lower classes.

Music and religion have always played a significant role in Jamaican culture, particularly as a way of dealing with or distracting from the conditions of exploitation

and despair that are still very much present in poor Black communities. Reggae music grew out of this desire to speak to the world about the social conditions facing poor Jamaicans.

Along with the emergence of reggae, Jamaica saw the rise of Rastafarianism. In the Jamaican Rasta context marijuana (Ganja, the 'holy herb') plays a significant role. The use of marijuana symbolized a protest against the oppressive "White Babylon", or power structure, which made it illegal in the 1930s. Rastafarians justified their smoking of ganja by claiming that it would bring the members into a state of intense happiness and freedom. Some grew it on their property even though it was against the law (Troyna, 1977). The Rastafarian movement eventually became associated with violence. Rastafarians' long hair and facial hair was seen as a good cover for a criminal. Their use of marijuana also helped establish a negative reputation for Rastafarian members in Jamaican society (Davis and Simon, 1979). Furthermore, the Rastafarian "apocalyptic" (Troyna, 1977, p. 11) way of speaking also brought people to fear that the violence spoken of by the Rastafarians would actually come to pass. As a result, the people of Jamaica began to look at the Rastafarians as a violent and dangerous group who threatened Jamaicans' safety (Troyna, 1977).

However, associated with these developments came the rise of another group of Rastafarians, the "pseudo-Rastafarians" (King, 1998, p.1-2), who mimic certain practices of the Rastafarians (e.g., the long hair and marijuana use) without following any of the actual practices and beliefs of the real religion. As we will see in this research, some of the Jamaican youth resemble Rastafarians but do not follow all the religious practices and culture. We may think of Rastafarianism as being a religion of Jamaica, but Jamaican

youths may only express some symbolic aspects of the religion without practicing or believing in it.

4. Black Culture (Haitian and Jamaican)

What is similar among Haitians and Jamaicans is that they are marginalized as visible minority and as such are more likely to have limited access to educational and occupational opportunities (James, 1990). As a result, most struggle with racism and discrimination which operates to reinforce their disadvantage (James, 1990). Consequently some of these youth turn to the illegal subculture to make lots of money and to gain the respect they feel they lack from the "real world" (Henry, 1994, p. 193). "It is an activity in which low-income, working-class people become involved because they are attracted to the money they can earn" (Henry, 1994, p. 199). These so-called "marginalized" youth may feel they do not fit into Canadian society and the illegal subculture allows them to get "what the white man has" (Henry, 1994, p. 194). The White man is perceived as having the money and the respect that these young black males feel are blocked from achieving because of their racial, social and economic status (Henry, 1994).

As we have heard, features of American culture are often imported to Canadian youth culture. And in contemporary US youth culture (both black and white), gangsta rap is significant – and is significant for the Haitian and Jamaican youth interviewed here. Gangsta rappers attack law-enforcement agencies with their lyrics, angry about their denial of free access to public space and the media's complicity in making Black youth out to be criminals. Yet these very stereotypes of the ghetto as "war zone" and the Black youth as "criminal," as well as black youths' struggles with notions of masculinity and

sexuality, also structure and constrain their efforts to create a counter-narrative of life in the inner city (Perkins, 1996, p. 118). When Gangsta rappers do try to speak of their social reality, their work loosely resembles a street ethnography of racist institutions and social practices, told more often than not in the first person. Whether gangsta rappers step into the character of a gang-banger, hustler, or ordinary working person (that is, products and residents of the "'hood"), they constitute an alternative voice to mainstream journalists and social scientists.

Most rappers (Biggie, Snoop Dog, etc.) consider themselves somewhat politically conscious. Tupac Shakur (1971-1996) in particular has been described by the media as the most controversial of these rappers. Tupac Shakur is also perceived as a hero for most of the youths interviewed for this study. They look up to him as a role model because he was born in the ghetto, experienced poverty and understood what gang life was all about. He had run-ins with the police, was caught with drugs, and was arrested several times and jailed (XXL, 2002). His music is attractive to these youth gang members because it exemplifies what it means to be in the gang; that is, respect is achieved through violence and gang life. He was murdered at the age of 25; a death (still unsolved) that is thought by many to be a reflection of the relationship between gangsta rap and gang culture.

Tupac Shakur's music also appeals to Haitian and Jamaican youth because it demonstrates the oppression faced by most Black youth and also explains that belonging to a gang is a way of rebelling. His rap songs can be understood to have a double meaning: one depicts the righteous rebellion of African American youth (as is the case for the sample of both Haitian and Jamaican gang members) who have an obsessive generational preoccupation with social acknowledgment and respect, and the other says

that such respect is achieved through violence and gang life. Tupac Shakur's music justifies predatory and antisocial behavior as a response to oppression of black men and women. Gangsta rap, like reggae, has a political agenda that revolves around the themes of "oppression of Blacks" and "rebellion of Blacks". Their music and chosen lifestyles symbolize those culture by "keeping it real" (Farley, 1999).

In the song "Changes", Tupac Shakur describes the oppression of young Black Urban youth as a result of racism:

I'm tired of bein' poor and even worse I'm Black...
Cops give a damn about a negro
Pull the trigger kill a nigga he's a hero
Give the crack to the kids who the hell cares
One less hungry mouth on the welfare
First ship em' dope and let 'em deal the brothers
Give em' guns step back watch them kill each other (verse 1).

5. Latino Culture

Latinos are a varied group: white like Caucasians to as black as native Africans; extraordinarily wealthy, to profoundly impoverished; and when it comes to religion, there are devout Catholics, skeptical atheists, and more recently, a move to the protestant denominations of Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Pentecostals, and Presbyterians (Trueba, 1999).

Music is an important aspect of Latino culture. In fact much Latino music is quite similar to African American music – both have adopted rap and hip hop, but rap is more the preference of African Americans than of Latinos. Latinos, though, are strongly connected to the music of salsa. Loosely translated, the word Salsa stands for "spice"; literally, it means "sauce." In cultural terms, Salsa is often thought of as Latin essence, much as the word "soul" has been used by black Americans (Flores, 2000, p. 115-139). Indeed, salsa emerged as the music of the barrio people – an entertaining, dancing style

that also carries a heavily politicized lyrical component, filled with themes and messages about the everyday lives of Puerto Ricans. These messages might be to warn Latinos not to sell their dignity as a people, to seek truth, work hard, and to be proud of their "race" (Flores, 2000, p. 117). This music has symbolic significance for Latinos; the powerful lyrics describe the Latino way of life, offer hope for a better life, and at the same time unify Latinos as a community.

One of the most common and pervasive stereotypes held about Hispanics is that of the "macho" man, an image which generally conjures up the rough, tough, bravado men who are abusive and oppressive towards women. Women, in turn, are seen as submissive and long-suffering. Sexually, "machismo" is expressed through an emphasis on multiple, uncommitted sexual contacts beginning in adolescence. This is in stark contrast to stereotypes about women, who are expected to always refuse sexual advances and maintain their virginity until marriage (Harris, 1988, p.63).

Meintel's cross-cultural study of 2nd generation youth born in Montreal, aged 18-22 (described earlier) produced interesting findings about Latin-American youth. These youth prefer to speak Spanish, although they are generally able to speak French and/or English; oddly, depending on ethnicity, some prefer English to French or vice versa: "Salvadorians are more likely to speak and be fluent in French and individuals that come from Chile will speak and are fluent in English" (Meintel, 1992, p.76).

As was the case for Haitians and Jamaicans, there is a high rate of single parent households, also usually female-headed; however, Latin American youth (the males more so than the females) do 'help out' their mothers by contributing financially (Meintel, 1992). Another common feature of Latin families is that children are expected to live

with their parents until marriage. In Latin American families, "marriage is perceived as a rite of passage to adulthood" (Meintel, 1992, p.76). And although sexual promiscuity is condoned among males, most young males are reluctant to bring girls home to meet their parents unless they are sure the girl is the one they will marry (Meintel, 1992).

Meintel (1992) also reports that Latino youth to a certain degree have polar identities and (like the Haitian and Jamaican youth) may be "torn between two cultures and confront the crisis in identity" (Meintel, 1992, p. 74). The Latino way of thinking is not the same as the Quebecois way of thinking. Although most 2nd generation Latino youth may want to retain their ethnic identity, a crisis of identity may occur as they negotiate which cultural values to adopt and which to reject. For example, the Salvadorian subjects of Meintel's study report that they disagree with some Salvadorian values, such as how some men from Salvador can be "macho" and expect "their" women to do everything for them and sometimes also be violent towards "their" women. "They [Salvadorians] will slap their wives just because they are so macho (18-year-old student from Cegep, who was born in Salvador who immigrated to Canada at the age of 12)" (Meintel, 1992, p. 83).

There is a hierarchy in the Chilean community "between parents and their adult children or between adults and children or between teachers and students" (Revue Internationale D'Action Communautaire, 1994, p.18), similar to Caribbean culture, but quite different from Quebec's culture. Within a Chilean family, respect - specifically for individuals in a position of authority such as parents or teachers – is key; in Quebec, teachers and parents encourage a less hierarchical, less authoritarian relationship. Moreover, there is no separation between the private and the public life for Chileans, who

tend to invite friends, professors and other acquaintances to their homes. This is quite different from Quebecois society, which sees a more formal separation between the two spheres: French Quebecois are very selective of who they invite into their homes (Revue Internationale D'Action Communautaire, 1994).

Chileans feel a strong sense of communal connection among friends, neighbours, students and teachers and students. In Chile, parents are often closely involved with their children's education – even calling a child's teacher at home to inquire about his/her progress. In Canada, Chilean children and parents feel cut off from this system. "Chileans have complained that there exists an absence of community with neighbors within Quebecois society and believe that people in Quebec can be quite cold and distant. Chilean parents also feel that they have been cut off from the schooling experience of their children" (Revue Internationale D'Action Communautaire, 1994, p. 24).

Latino youth, like Haitian and Jamaican youth, may then be constantly negotiating the paths of their identity, accepting the cultural values and practices they prefer and rejecting the cultural ideologies and customs they dislike; choosing Canada or choosing the ethnic homeland.

Summary

The cultural overview gives a sense of how immigrant non-Caucasian youth may experience the difficulties and pleasures of Canadian society. Canadian values and beliefs and those of the parents' homeland may play a role in why youths join gangs, whether they express any aspects of their ethnicity (as part of or apart from the gang), and the relationship between gang life and ethnic culture. French, Haitian, Jamaican and Latino youths may experience similar cultural realities that are distinctive of their ethnic origins

allowing them to maintain a degree of ethnic allegiance, whether they are members of gangs or not. These youths, then, from different ethnic groups share many social experiences. Some go on to join gangs, but some do not. This dissertation concentrates on those youths who do belong to gangs; the question of why youths with similar backgrounds and upbringing do not join gangs is beyond the scope of this work. My research will explore the role of ethnic identity and ethnic culture in gang life as well as how distinctive gang styles may be cultural and symbolic expressions of ethnic identity.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

Focus of Research

This research will explore ethnic culture and ethnic identity and its role in the lives of youth gang members in Montreal. I will attempt to determine the importance youth in gangs place on their ethnic backgrounds and how these are organized in their lives. More specifically, I will ask what membership in a gang symbolizes for these youths. This investigation will allow me to examine to what degree ethnic identity acts to protect against racism or provide a sense of belonging to their ethnic culture and identity. The level of participation in the respective ethnic communities of the study subjects will measure the importance of ethnic culture and/or identity. This participation will be defined through the language they speak, the kinds of food they eat, the music they listen to, their gender relations and whether or not they are religious and/or politically active. This study will attempt to identify whether the need for social acceptance through ethnic identity plays a role in choosing to be in a gang.

The symbolism of the gang will be examined through the youths' perception of what they feel are the advantages of selecting these kinds of gangs. As well, how do these young men maintain their own distinct boundaries (i.e., separateness)? Are they testing boundaries and if so, how? Are they rebelling against their own ethnic community, the outside society or both? Understanding the symbolism of the gang will allow us to understand against whom these youth in gangs are rebelling.

Addressing these issues will also lead to understanding whether ethnic identity is expressed collectively, symbolically, and/or externally. Youth in gangs may express their ethnic identity collectively as a group; that is, everyone in the gang shares a common

ethnic culture and participates in similar culturally significant activities (i.e., eats the same ethnic foods, speaks the same language, etc.). Others may choose to express ethnicity at a more individual level through the use of symbols so as to demonstrate a nostalgic allegiance to ethnic heritage. This dissertation will also address how these youths may experience external cultural identity (based on the physical appearance – i.e., skin colour – of the individual); as a result of this experience, some may feel they are perceived by the host society as un-Canadian or different.

Gangs might be viewed as peer groups "with attitude" that share "distinctive styles." Gang style may be a signifier of "revolt" or a signifier of "belonging," while at the same time express these young men's ethnic identity. I will thus explore the distinctive styles adopted by young men in gangs, how such distinctive styles and symbols set them apart from other gangs, and the importance of these symbols in the gang. I will investigate to what degree existing explanations (e.g., Latinos are attracted to gangs because they are rejected elsewhere) can be applied to ethnic gangs, and if they cannot, how these explanations can be adapted or made more accurate.

Not only are these symbols of identity important in understanding the dynamics of gangs, they are also important in understanding the attractions gangs hold for individual youths and whether (if at all) ethnicity is organized in and around gang life. A basic research question is whether youth in minority ethnic gangs (Haitian, Jamaican and Latino) perceive ethnic culture in the same way as those individuals in gangs representative of the majority group in society (French Canadian). In order to achieve the research goals, I will compare the symbols of identity of members of youth in French Canadian gangs with those of youth in Latino, Haitian, and Jamaican gangs.

Examining youths' attitudes towards authorities, schools, and social service agencies allows one to better understand the degree to which ethnic identity plays a role in the formation of "real" or "perceived" ideas of racism towards gangs and alienation of gangs from mainstream North American society and the impact this has on an individual's successful reintegration into society.[21] Thus, does ethnocentrism play a role in the formation of gangs and if so, how much? Do these issues stem from gang members' attitudes towards their home life, school, authorities, or from their distinctive language and ethnic cultural identity? This information will allow us to analyze the various pressures these youths may or may not face from their peers, from the adult world, or from themselves.

Interviews and Observations

Interview and observation sessions formed the basis of the data collection. I conducted a qualitative study of youth gang members through semi-structured interviews supplemented with direct observation. The subjects of the study were 10 French-Canadians (considered the majority ethnic group), 10 Latinos, 10 Haitians and 10 Jamaicans (the latter groups considered minority ethnic groups). In addition to this, I interviewed 10 youths from other ethnic backgrounds (Italian, German, Arab and Cree) who also belonged to youth gangs. This "other" category of youths is included in order to compare whether or not only certain gangs are ethnically homogeneous or whether all gangs are ethnically homogeneous. All youths were between the ages of 14 and 20. The

[21] "Perceived racism" is experienced when an individual thinks s/he is a victim of racism but perhaps may not be according to conventional understandings of what "racism" is. For example, individuals who belonged to a Jamaican gang claimed that most White people (i.e., police officers, youth workers, teachers, and social workers) discriminate against them and /will never accept them. However, some of these youth had never actually experienced racism but still believe that all White people are racist because that is what their friends in the gang tell them. "Real racism" is experienced by youth in Haitian gangs who are constantly harassed by White police officers, in some cases have faced unnecessary force when being arrested, or who have had a schoolteacher who has made derogatory remarks about their race.

total sample size was 50. All youths were held in closed custody facilities. The kinds of offences committed by these youths consisted of the following: murder, assault causing bodily harm, drug dealing, gun smuggling, and pimping. All of their criminal activities had been committed while they were members of youth gangs. This was a self-selected sample. All of the individuals interviewed were the most serious of young offenders and were described by their youth workers as violent and aggressive.

This qualitative research was conducted at two locales in Montreal between June and November 2001. The interviews as well as the observations took place in the closed custody facilities where all of these youth were being held. Most of the interviews took approximately one hour and a half to complete; the longest interview lasted the full hour and a half and the shortest forty-five minutes. The interviews were pre-tested and given to four different sets of youth in the following ethnic categories: French, Haitian, Jamaican, and Latino. This was done to verify whether the respondents understood the questions and if the questions were clear. Thirty-nine of the 50 interviews were conducted in French. For these interviews I used the English questionnaire which I translated into French. I then transcribed and translated the audio-taped French interviews into English. All the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The reader will notice that in some of the quotes, however, a handful of respondents have used what might be considered sophisticated language in their responses. This may lead some readers to question the authenticity of responses. What I found in my interviews is that some of these youth were very bright and spoke eloquently.

The room observations usually lasted for half-hour, but in some cases only took about fifteen minutes. This all depended on the length of time the youth had been in

closed custody. The longer this had been,[22] the more settled in he became, having had ample time to make his room more comfortable according to his taste.

Two groups that provide social services for youths provided the source for interview subjects and a place for interacting with and observing youth directly in a non-interview setting. These were Les Centres Jeunesse de Montreal (primarily services for French youth) and Batshaw Youth Services (services to English youth).

Access to Interview Subjects and Room Observations

Access to Les Centres Jeunesse de Montreal was obtained through Sylvie Hamel, a contact at L'Institut de Recherche pour le Développement Social des Jeunes. Access to Batshaw Youth Centres was obtained through contact with Edward Pottermal, who is in charge of research placement of students at Batshaw Youth and Family Centre. Mr. Pottermal agreed to help me with the research on condition that my research proposal met the youth center's ethical standards. I chose to study both French and English youth centers because this would provide a more complete picture of juvenile gangs in the Montreal area. Most interviews (N=42) took place at the Centres Jeunesse De Montreal and a smaller number (N=8) took place at Batshaw Youth and Family Center (total sample of 50).

The Montreal-based research center Institute De Recherche Pour le Développement Social Des Jeunes deals with the prevention of juvenile delinquency and intervention with at-risk youths. It also provides information and help to youth centers such as Les Centres Jeunesse de Montreal and Les Centres Jeunesse de Laval on how better to deal with the problem of delinquency. Sylvie Hamel, one of the principal

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[22] Some remained in closed custody for up to two years, depending on the gravity of their crime.

researchers at this center, specializes in the study of juvenile gangs and agreed to assist me to gain entry into the Centres Jeunesse de Montreal. In return, I am participating in her Phase III project of juvenile gangs. In this project, various students (mostly from l'Université de Montréal and l'Université de Québec à Montréal) work with Ms. Hamel to provide different perspectives of the gang phenomenon: for example, some will present findings on gangs and ethnicity, others will focus on gangs and gender, while others may focus on gangs and crimes.[23]

Ms. Hamel and Mr. Pottermal contacted the supervisors responsible for the units in the closed residential facilities and their intervention workers, and informed them that a McGill post-graduate student was interested in conducting a study on gangs and ethnic identity. They were also informed that I was interested in interviewing and observing individuals of specific ethnic cultures. I provided Ms. Hamel and Mr. Pottermal with a copy of the consent letter and interview questions. They in turn provided these to the supervisors from these two youth centers so that they would know the purpose of my research. Permission to conduct the interviews and observation sessions was granted by these supervisors, either by a phone call to me at home or by my calling them at their offices. The supervisors then provided me with the names and telephone numbers of the different intervention workers in charge of the units that I had to contact. I then had to gain the permission of the intervention workers to do the interviews and observations. These intervention workers dealt with the youth on a daily basis and also had knowledge

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[23] My role is to provide information about other issues about ethnic gangs: how youth are recruited, how to get these youth to leave gangs and reintegrate into society, how to eliminate the cycle of gangs, etc. These issues will not be addressed in my thesis. As part of our agreement, once this dissertation is completed, I will combine my research along with the other research on gangs that Ms. Hamel is coordinating with other students from l'Université de Montréal. We will present the results together to the Board of Directors of the Centres Jeunesses, their intervention workers and social workers, with the objective of expanding our understanding of the juvenile gang phenomenon.

of who were in gangs and who were not, usually from the youths themselves or in some instances; sometimes they had suspicions but were unable to confirm them.

I proceeded to contact the intervention workers in charge of the units and explain the goals of my research. Once they gave me the go-ahead to proceed, we set up an appointment to meet. As I met with the intervention workers in charge of the units, I gave each and every one of them a copy of the consent letter and the interview schedule. I explained to each of them that I only wished to interview male youth who were in gangs and who were from specific ethnic categories, and within a particular age range. This of course later grew to include youth from various other ethnic backgrounds, which allowed me to assess whether the relevance of ethnic culture was perceived similarly or differently among these youth in comparison to others that fell within the ethnic group category of majority or minority.

There were some delays and setbacks in contacting the intervention workers and attempting to schedule appointments to meet with them. Intervention workers often did not return phone calls in a timely manner; at times it took several calls on my part before they agreed to meet with me. At other times we would set up appointments to meet but our meeting would be cancelled at the last minute because something had happened with a youth or they were too busy to meet with me. For instance, on one occasion I had an appointment to meet an intervention worker but had to wait forty-five minutes before the worker showed up. On his arrival, he told me that this was not a good time to meet with me and that I should call him again to schedule another appointment. When I called the intervention worker again a week later to reschedule an appointment, he apologized for canceling our first meeting and explained that he had not been able to see me for our

original appointment because it had been a day filled with crises: one youth had attempted suicide, another youth had set his room on fire, and another had erupted into a violent and aggressive out-burst and assaulted a female worker. I was only able to go back and meet with that intervention worker a month later, when things began to settle down in his unit. Regardless of such setbacks and delays, all of the intervention workers I contacted were kind enough to accommodate me as best as they could.

Once I gained entry into the detention institution I explained the purpose of my research to the intervention workers (IW). I showed each IW the questionnaire (Appendix A) and the consent letter (Appendix B) to assure them that teenagers who participated would not be harmed by their participation. I asked the IWs if they could provide me a list of names of individuals who had been identified as members of gangs and if they would also allow me to spend some time in the center before I recruited individual teenagers for interviews. The reason for this is that most of these youths are suspicious of outsiders; thus, spending time with them would enable me to establish a sufficient rapport and comfort level with them to facilitate the interviews. This observation period also enabled me to obtain first-hand information from these youths about whether or not they were gang members.

The process for recruitment of interviews was as follows: intervention workers introduced me to the youths as a student who was doing a study on gangs and told them that if anyone was interested in volunteering to participate in my study they should let me know. The intervention worker usually gathered all the youths in one (often the main floor of the residence) to introduce me; in some cases I was introduced while the youths were outside in the yard, having their smoking break. After this initial introduction, I

always re-introduced myself, explaining to all of the youth that I was doing a study on gangs and was interested in exploring the importance of ethnic identity within the gang. I informed them that their identities would remain anonymous, that I would use code numbers rather than their names in the study results. I also let them know that I would be the only one to know who said what. I also informed them that the interviews would last an hour to an hour and a half, that I was also interested in observing their rooms, which would take between fifteen minutes and half an hour. I told them that the observations would allow me to find out what kind of music they liked, what posters they had up, and how much of what was in their rooms reflected their ethnicity. I also specified that I was only interested in interviewing individuals who were involved in gangs. I told them that I was aware that there were different definitions of gangs, and I provided several examples of what I meant by "gang,"[24] leaving it open enough that my research would not be limited to one specific definition of gang.[25]

After I had introduced myself and explained the objectives of my research, the youths who are the participants in this study approached me one by one and volunteered to do the interviews and to have their rooms observed. I set up appointments with the youths and made sure that their intervention workers also agreed to the times when the interviews would take place. At the same time, my confirming the interviews with the intervention workers also allowed the workers to confirm whether the youth who agreed to do the interviews was involved in a gang or suspected of having some kind of gang

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[24] I explained to the youth that I was aware that some gangs came from specific neighborhoods, while others wore specific colors. I also explained that not everyone who was in a gang wore specific colors but that some individuals in gangs adopted a specific dress style instead. As well, I told them that what was common among all gangs is that they always hung around in a group, were there for each other, protected one another from harm or conflicts, shared a sort of camaraderie, etc.

[25] This approach proved beneficial because, as I later discovered, Haitian gangs wore specific colors, while French gangs did not but instead committed their crimes in a group.

connection. All fifty respondents interviewed were involved in gangs, a fact confirmed by their intervention workers.

Once an individual agreed to the interviews, I showed each one the consent letter and explained it to him (I did this just in case some of these respondents had difficulty understanding the letter themselves). All respondents read and signed the consent forms. I then asked each respondent whether or not he would grant me permission to tape record the interviews and informed him that the interview would take approximately one hour to one hour and a half. I assured each that his responses would be kept confidential to a certain degree; their identity would not be revealed in the study results but responses would be presented. I also explained to them that they would be allotted an identification (id) number, along with their age and ethnic background, to act as a key for me to be the only one able to identify him. I also informed them that the notes and the tape from the interview would be safely stored, and that only the people in charge of this research (i.e., me) would have access to them. I also explained to each youth that the interview tapes would be destroyed after the research was completed. They were notified that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they were free to discontinue their participation at anytime without negative consequences. In addition to this, all respondents were notified not to reveal under any circumstances any criminal and illegal acts being committed, their times, dates, specific destinations and/or names of individuals committing such illegal actions as I would then be obligated to report the name of the victim or persons in danger to the proper authorities.

I was able to observe the youths from the time they woke up until they went to bed. There were days that I was at the center for twelve hours at a time. I would "hang

out" with the teenagers during breakfast, lunch and dinner. The first time I went to the center I brought along a lunch with me, and one of the intervention workers seeing my lunch squealed, "No! You can't bring your lunch with you!" I was somewhat startled by her reaction and asked, "Why not?" She went on to explain, "because if they see you bringing your own lunch, this sends out the message that you are better than them and that the food at the center is not good enough for you! And this will surely turn them off to you." I had learned my first lesson: as much I was observing the teenagers, they were also observing me. I was in their territory now.

I was also able to observe these youths while they played sports. Several times I went to the center to watch them play indoor rugby, basketball or soccer while I cheered them on. Many of the youths thought it was "cool" that I went to see them. The advantage of this was that I became familiar with the environment and at the same time was able to develop a more positive rapport with the youths, who began to trust me a little more.

I observed how the youths interacted with their intervention workers, which allowed me to examine first-hand how the youths dealt with agents of social control. I was also able to watch these youths interacting with one another as they played sports, ate in the cafeteria, had breakfast in their units, or went for smoke breaks. During this time I was able to look at some of the tattoos and colored bandannas these youths were wearing and could use the opportunity to ask them what the symbols meant and if they were related to gang membership. This allowed me to verify whether their affiliation in their respective gangs was permanent or transient. I was also able to examine whether some of

these youths displayed any particular hand gestures that seemed foreign or different signifying strong or weak gang membership.

During mealtimes and breaks, I noted whether the youths hung out with individuals from the same ethnic background or from different ethnic backgrounds. I did this in order to determine whether these youths preferred to interact with individuals from similar or different cultural backgrounds. I was also able to listen to the language they spoke while they were together. For instance, some of the Haitian gang members spoke Creole to one another, signifying some form of in-group membership (Martin, 1981). However, speaking Creole was strongly discouraged by the intervention workers, who wanted to make sure that they understood what these youths were saying for fear that some might have been planning some future deviant activity to take place within the center.

Room observations were conducted to see what type of posters were on the youths' walls, what music they listened to, what books and/or magazines they read, and if any religious relics or other decorations were present. This allowed me to identify whether cultural identity was expressed in ways other than language and music.

It usually took about fifteen minutes to a half-hour to observe their rooms and ask some questions (e.g., who their heroes were). Some youths would go into detail about why they put up a particular poster or read a particular magazine. Others indulged in graffiti art on sheets of paper; some kept this artwork hidden in their drawers, while others displayed it on their walls. When I asked one Latino youth why he still did graffiti, he replied: "You ask me why I do this graffiti while I am in here, knowing that I may get into trouble? It is simple, they are still my brothers [referring to fellow gang members]

and I will never forget that and besides I am good at it and I like designing" (Interview with Latino youth).

I was able to observe first-hand the symbolic ways gang members maintained their ethnic boundaries within the closed custody juvenile youth center. I was able to observe the language and gestures used by different gang members and assess whether these were or were not expressions of ethnicity and personal identity. All 50 respondents agreed to have their rooms observed, and most of them (N =49) agreed to be tape recorded; in the case of that one who was uncomfortable with the idea of being tape-recorded, I recorded his responses in my notebook.

Data Analysis

All my interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed (by the researcher). The transcripts of the interviews were then grouped together according to the youth's ethnicity, to generate categories of French-Canadian, Haitian, Jamaican, Latino and Other. I read each interview from beginning to end a multiplicity of times, looking for significant and common themes throughout each interview.

The themes I looked for were those that addressed questions such as: what did the French, Haitian, Jamaican, Latino, and "Other" youth have to say about gang culture and ethnic culture and how the two were interrelated?

I explored which ethnic groups and how many individuals in each ethnic group participated in graffiti, adoption of nicknames, wearing tattoos and to what degree such cultural gang styles reflected their ethnic identity. I compared the responses in each ethnic group to find out which one(s) adopted gang styles that reflected their ethnic identity. I then analyzed the responses using a Birmingham school perspective. I

continued by examining the relevance of ethnic culture in gang life by exploring the cultural practices of language, food, religion, sports, politics, music consumption, and gender relations, and to what degree they reflected these young men's ethnic identity. I assessed the responses again by separately exploring one ethnic group at a time and then moving on to the next group and so on. These factors (eating ethnic food, speaking ethnic language, listening to ethnic music, etc.) were tabulated and compared to assess which category of ethnic group portrayed a stronger or weaker ethnic allegiance and why. I analyzed such responses using the theory of symbolic ethnicity.

On each hard copy of the interviews, I highlighted each theme in a different color. If I wanted to verify for example, how many Latinos prefer eating Latino food, I could always go back to the appropriately highlighted section in the transcripts to do so. This technique also allowed me to choose the most significant quote that expressed, for example, why Latinos prefer to eat Latin American cuisine. I was constantly rereading my transcripts; even after I highlighted the themes, I reread the highlighted themes several times again to verify if I had missed any points or should include more information in my dissertation. This method of analyzing the data was beneficial because it also allowed me to find a pattern of responses by following the differently colored highlighted sections – it clearly showed which themes were relevant and which themes were discussed most by respondents. I followed the same steps described above when I examined the information accumulated from my notes of the room observations. The information from the observations was categorized into themes of heroes, posters, music, clothing, religious relics and reading material, and I was able to use this to assess whether

anything displayed reflected their cultural heritage, if indeed it reflected cultural heritage at all.

Issues of Security

During my stay at the center I was very sensitive to issues of security. This meant that while I conducted interviews, I made sure that an intervention worker was always nearby. I always conducted the interviews in a private room that intervention workers used for their one-on-one talks with the youths; sometimes I conducted interviews in the offices of intervention workers. These private rooms and offices were located in the residences where the youth were staying. I took precautions: ensuring that the door was never locked and that I was always provided with an alarm in order to protect myself. Even when I conducted the room observations (which, again, took place in the residences), I made sure that I always let an intervention worker know beforehand that I was going to go into the room with the youth to begin the observations. This ensured that an intervention worker was always somewhere close-by. As well, when I conducted my room observations I made sure that the door was always kept open and that I had a personal alarm device with me (provided by the intervention workers to ensure my safety).

On one occasion after an interview, I asked one of the youths if he would allow me to go into his room so that I could conduct my observations. The youth escorted me to his room, I knew from the intervention workers that this youth in particular had anger issues towards women as well as being heavily involved in the gang; in fact, he had been sentenced to close custody for attempted murder. The intervention workers confided that this individual in particular often boasted about how he kept his girlfriend in her place by

beating her up and that every time he hit her, she was nicer towards him. Having this type of information about this particular individual was a little unnerving, but it did not stop me from going into his room and conducting the room observations and interviews. When we did enter his room, what I did not expect was that he would decide that it would be a good idea to close the door of his room, which would automatically lock us in. One can imagine my panic when this violent offender thought it would be a great idea for us to be locked in the room together. This was quickly resolved when an intervention worker saw that the individual was about to close the door of his room and lock us both in there. The worker came to my rescue by ordering the individual not to close the door. Much to my relief, the individual complied and I was able to go on with my observations with no worries.

On the whole, I often felt protected and safe at the residences because I was never completely alone. If I was in danger of any kind, all I had to do was sound my alarm, which I often kept hidden under my shirt, or signal an intervention worker for help.[26] In fact, the walls of the private rooms and the offices where I conducted the interviews were covered with windows, which mean that although no one could hear what we were saying they could still see what was happening. I never had reason to use the alarm. The only time I felt uncomfortable was in the situation just described above. On the whole I rarely felt that I was in danger, and there was always an intervention worker around to protect me from any kind of harm.

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[26] I kept the alarm hidden in case the youth had the idea of taking it away from me.

How the Youth Cooperated in the Interviews and Observations

All of the respondents were polite and cooperative during the interviews and room observations. All were willing to provide the researcher with the answers to her questions, often taking time to explain their responses in great detail. They appeared to relish the opportunity to share the particulars of their lives so that gangs could be better understood within the context of ethnic culture as opposed to focusing on their criminal conduct. In fact, some respondents even said to me that they would not mind it if I mentioned their names in my research. Some even confided that doing the interview was quite therapeutic and even thanked me for asking them to participate.

I believe that what worked in my favor in gaining access to all of these interviews was that I was able to blend in easily among these youths. I often took care to be non-threatening and relaxed in my appearance and dress. I usually wore my long hair down and conducted interviews wearing jeans and t-shirts or cargo pants with hooded sweat-shirts, so that I appeared less threatening and less authoritarian. The fact that I am female also worked to my advantage as this meant that for most of these male youth I did not pose a threat because of my gender.

I also asked the intervention workers whether it was okay to bring cigarettes to the respondents since most of them smoked. Most of the intervention workers (except for the ones at Batshaw) agreed and allowed me to bring cigarettes, which I offered to the subjects who smoked while hanging out with them outside during their smoking break. I offered cigarettes even to those who did not participate in my interviews.[27] On other occasions, I brought Tim Hortons Tim Bits, and all the kids (even those who did not

[27] I told the individuals in the units that whether or not they decided to participate in my research, those who smoked could take a cigarette if they wanted one and everyone was welcome to eat the Tim Bits I brought.

participate in the study) and the intervention workers helped themselves. These gestures allowed me to break the ice with some of the youth, while providing me with the opportunity to get to know everyone better and for everyone to relax a bit more around me. What seemed to win points with them was the fact that I offered the cigarettes and Tim Bits to everyone in the residence whether or not they participated in my research. Most of these youths perceived my gestures as generous, and they appreciated them. My efforts also allowed me to appear "cool", not stuck up, and nice to everyone – not just to those who participated in my research.

The Goals and Legal Status of the Youth Centers

Les Centres Jeunesse de Montreal and Batshaw Youth and Family Centres are federally funded institutions that provide services for young offenders and youth protection for French and English speaking children from across Quebec, including aboriginals from remote northern regions. These institutions deal with children from birth to 17 years of age. They function primarily under the terms of the Youth Protection Act (YPA, under the civil law which focuses on the protection of the child and looking after the best interest of the child) and the Young Offenders Act (YOA, which focuses on youth who have committed crimes under the Criminal Code). The YOA youth are at higher risk and require early intervention and adequate supports in order for them to succeed in reintegrating into society (Batshaw Youth and Family Services; Les Centres Jeunesse de Montreal, 2000).

Les Centres Jeunesse de Montreal and Batshaw Youth and Family Centre services provide residential care for those youth who have behavioral problems or who suffer neglect or abuse, as well as for youth who have committed a crime. Residential care is

offered under both the Youth Protection Act (YPA) and the Young Offenders' Act (YOA), and this implies presence of significant behavioral problems, which may or may not have led to criminal conduct. In some closed units the two groups are kept separate (although they may sometimes be housed together depending on the availability of space). These residential treatment services also provide social reinsertion services to youth returning home or going into independent living.

The Federal YOA applies to youths between the ages of 12-17. In general, the legislation sees the young person as someone whose behavior must be corrected and who may require special assistance, rather than viewing society as needing protection from the criminal acts of young people (Batshaw Youth and Family Services, 2000). A youth sentenced under the YOA has usually committed a crime under the Criminal Code; punishment for such a crime requires the youth to spend time in closed custody.

Some young people are held in closed custody in Les Centres Jeunesse de Montreal or Batshaw Youth and Family Center residential treatment resources prior to being charged or tried. The Crown prosecutor presents the case against the young person, and the youth is defended by his or her private or legal aid lawyer. If found guilty, the judge usually requests a predisposition (pre-sentence) report, prepared by Les Centres Jeunesse and/or Batshaw staff. Then the judge orders measures which can range from restitution of some sort, to community work, to probation, or to open or closed custody (Batshaw Youth and Family Centres Services, 2000). Les Centres Jeunesse and Batshaw have specified goals. They are given precise legal mandates under the Young Offenders Act and Youth Protection Act that guarantee that proper help and protection is accorded to children experiencing difficulties as well as their families. Under the law, Les Centres

Jeunesse de Montreal and Batshaw Youth and Family Centres are required to provide youth and their families with health and social services, family mediation, and a justice penal system for adolescents. Such establishments must guarantee the protection of the youth, through compromise and ensuring the security of the child for a healthy development. They must help youth and young mothers (by helping them develop better parenting skills) who are experiencing adaptation problems; the institution's goal here is to help them by restoring equilibrium. Finally it is important for these establishments to enforce the law through structure and discipline. In confining youth to closed custody, the state can then take action against youth who have committed crimes. Confinement also places an end to their delinquent acts by teaching young people to take responsibility for their delinquent behavior and thus functioning as a way of restoring retribution to society (Les Centres Jeunesse de Montreal, 2000).

I dealt with youth who had committed crimes, had been charged under the (YOA) and sentenced to "closed custody" residence.[28] Their crimes ranged from committing theft (breaking and entering) while using force and intimidation, property damage and mischief, drug trafficking, attempted murder, assault with a weapon etc. All of these crimes were a result of their affiliations in the gang. These youth were perceived by the State as being a threat to themselves and a threat to society.

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[28] In "closed custody" the youth cannot leave the residence. Most often youth who have committed crimes such as attempted murder are charged under the YOA and are sentenced to closed custody. Some youth who have behavioral problems, family problems due to divorce, abuse or neglect etc., may be placed in "open custody," in which case the youth stays in the resident only for a specified amount of time, may be granted permission to leave the resident for a few hours, but must obey curfew. "Closed" or "Open" custody can be provided by the same institution or unit. Alternatively, a youth can be sentenced to live in a "group home"; Batshaw and Centres Jeunesse operate several that are located in a different area than the residences that house youth confined to closed or open custody.

Setting Description of Les Centres Jeunesse de Montréal and Batshaw Youth and Family Centre

In the Centres Jeunesse I conducted interviews within six different closed custody residential units (i.e., youth could not leave the premises). I was introduced to and met with different intervention workers that were in charge of the units that housed 42 of the respondents I interviewed. At Batshaw I met with and was introduced to intervention workers that were in charge of the sole closed custody unit where I conducted the interviews and observations of eight of the respondents. The sample can be described as follows: At Les Centres Jeunesse de Montreal I interviewed 10 French, 10 Haitians, 9 Latinos, 9 Jamaicans, 1 Algerian Canadian, 1 Polish Canadian, 1 Portuguese Immigrant, and 1 Cree Canadian for a total of 42 subjects. The French, Haitian, and Latino subjects spoke French, and I conducted the interviews with them in French. At Les Centres Jeunesse there was one unit that was referred to as the "English-speaking Unit", and this was where I obtained interviews with the Jamaican, 1 Polish Canadian 1 Cree Canadian subjects; all their interviews were conducted in English. At Batshaw Centre I interviewed 1 Jamaican, 1 Latino, 1 Portuguese Canadian, 1 Italian Canadian, 2 Irish Canadians, 1 German immigrant, 1 Jewish Canadian for a total of eight. All these interviews were conducted in English.

At Batshaw and Les Centres Jeunesse, each youth in closed custody was allotted a private room with a bed, a chair, and a table. Each room had a number on the front door, indicating an address, and a small window with a glass so if the youth needed something all he had to do was peer through the window to the youth worker's attention (all one would see would be the youth's eyes and the top of his head).

The setting of the closed custody residents at both Les Centres Jeunesse and Batshaw were very similar. In all the units[29] there was a main room with a desk and chairs (usually occupied by two youth workers on duty) in the middle of the floor and facing the rooms the youth occupied. Every unit had several floors of rooms (in some units there were three floors, in others there were two floors or one floor, depending on the size of the unit). On each floor there were six rows of rooms, five feet wide. These youth spent a lot of time in their rooms, which were their recreational quarters, not just their sleeping quarters. During the daytime, all the youths were allotted a specific time slot to go into their rooms to relax; some would read magazines or books, others would listen to their music. A favorite past-time for all fifty respondents was listening to music. Their bed-time curfew at Les Centres Jeunesse and Batshaw was 10:00 p.m., and the youth were up by 8:00 a.m.

Being sent to one's room could also be a punishment for insubordinate behavior. This would typically be something like disobeying the youth worker. Other punishments might be having some of their privileges revoked. For instance, the youth workers had a right to take away youths' CD walkmans, stereos, books, and magazines and remove the items from their rooms; the youths would then be forced to stay in their rooms in silence, thinking about why their behavior was wrong. Solitary confinement was a more severe form of punishment. The solitary confinement room was located in the same building as the youths lived in, but at a distance from their rooms. It was furnished with a cot and a urinal, and there were always two security guards sitting in front of the solitary

[29] The reason they are referred to as units is because in Les Centres Jeunesse de Montreal or Batshaw Centre, within the same building there may be different sections (or units) that have names and numbers that identify a specific place of residence. There are usually 12 to 15 youth that live in the same unit, and everyone has their own separate rooms.

confinement room constantly monitoring the youth's behavior. Sometimes, one security guard remained in front of the room and the other went to get food to bring to the youth to eat. The adolescent would also be often stripped down to his underwear (so that he had nothing around him to cause him harm – one youth attempted suicide with bed-sheets and a belt). Most were compelled to remain in solitary confinement for three days and sometimes even up to a week, depending on the gravity of their behavior. Behaviour perceived as posing a threat to themselves (e.g., refusing to eat), attempts at self-mutilation with knives or forks, or behaviour that is too aggressive and violent (e.g., assaulting other youth or intervention workers) were grounds for being sent to solitary confinement.

To summarize: I conducted the interviews in the different closed custody residences that were owned and operated by Batshaw or Centres Jeunesse; this is also where I conducted my observations of the youth's behaviors during their recreational activities, work-related activities,[30] and mealtimes at the cafeteria. I spent some time each day in the company of these youth in the gang, hanging around with them, talking with them, and letting them get to know me a little bit better and me them. The whole experience was completely fascinating and interesting. I learned a lot about these young men in gangs and I also discovered unlike adults, youth are not afraid of being straightforward and candid about their thoughts and feelings. There was much to learn and understand from such a population of young men, and as I discovered this I began to listen more intently and learn more about who these individuals were and the details of their cultural preferences and identity.

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[30] Some youth were placed in work programs that allowed them to save money and buy themselves goods such as cigarettes.

Choice of Qualitative Approach

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary data source for this study because interviews generally offer a more complete and detailed context of interpretation. Further, the interviews have allowed me to probe for answers in order to obtain more complete responses. Finally, if the respondent clearly misunderstood the intent of a question, it was possible for me as the interviewer to clarify the question, thus obtaining relevant responses.

Other researchers (Thornberry, et al., 1993; Fleisher, 1998) have reported that the best and oldest method of collecting data is by direct observation, supplemented with face-to-face interviews. In fact, Fleisher professed that "street ethnography is a perfect technique for researching a hidden population" (1998, p227) because it provides researchers with the opportunity to study gang members who have not been caught committing crimes. Street ethnography thus provides a more accurate measure of the distribution of the delinquent behavior of gangs than the "official" statistics, which only represent gang members who are caught and incarcerated (West, 1984). It is also a better method than self-report questionnaire surveys, because most often studies asking for self-reports of offenses committed have almost always used "high school student populations that probably differ considerably from dropouts or non-attendees" (Dukes, et al., 1997, p.143-144).

I would argue that ethnographic interviewing and direct observation of gang members in their natural environment is not necessarily always the best approach. According to a street worker from "Pact de Rue: "It takes street workers sometimes years to develop trust and an on-going rapport with identified gang members, something not

easily achieved" (March 6th, 2001). Therefore, gathering data from such an approach is clouded with several problems. When I attempted to gather my data this way, I was notified by one of the principal street workers that this would be difficult to say the least, and she gave me several reasons. It takes street workers several months, and in more extreme cases several years, to actually get some of these kids to open up. These kids would be suspicious of me for fear of repercussions (e.g., that I might pass on information to the police).The youths might view the fact of the street worker even asking them to speak to me as a betrayal of their trust and thus avoid future contact with her at all costs. It can be challenging for the non-initiated to differentiate who is or is not a gang member; thus information obtained from individuals mistakenly identified as gang members or non-gang members would be decreased in value.

Given the difficulties associated with street ethnography, it was clear that this approach would be neither useful nor safe for this researcher. Thus, the most effective way to identify research subjects was to approach those who were officially identified as gang members by social service agencies, as well those who identified themselves as gang members in an interview setting and in a more controlled social setting (i.e., in a detention center).

Data Collection and Analysis: Reliability and Validity

While some may argue that the research methods used here have limitations, I would dispute that I made every effort to ensure the data collection and analysis are valid, reliable and credible. This was done primarily through triangulation of several research methods: prolonged engagement in the field; persistent, direct observation; semi-

structured interviews; personal reflexive journal entries; intensive review of interview transcripts; literature review; and finally, discussion and peer debriefing with non-subjects – intervention workers, colleagues, and fellow researchers working in the area of and direct observation.

Prolonged engagement in the field (Erlandson, et al., 1993) and persistent observation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) permitted me to gain an in-depth picture of this group's behaviour, customs and beliefs through participation in social activities (e.g., as a spectator at sports events); nevertheless, I retained some distance. Cross-checking interview statements with direct observation, as well as various records and documents provided a rigorous check for the validity and reliability of the data by addressing potential for bias with others (Barbour and Barbour, 2003; Eakin and Mykhalvoskiy, 2003; Erlandson, et al., 1993; Lincoln, 1995; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

A literature review of Canadian and American studies on youth gangs provided important background information about gang life and set the stage for doing the study.

To ensure reliability and validity, the questionnaire was pre-tested with four respondents (French, Haitian, Jamaican and Latino). This led to a re-wording of the question that was designed to access to some degree ethnic identity.

The combination of techniques permits not only this researcher but also reviewers of this research to acknowledge the credibility of the data collected, because the material obtained from all aspects of the work provide the 'ring of truth' about the data and the conclusions drawn from it (Erlandson, et al., 1993).

Replicability of Findings

This study is exploratory but nonetheless provides a thick description of gang life and

ethnic identity which brings the reader "vicariously into the context being described" (Erlandson, et al., 1993, p. 33). This dissertation may be perceived as providing preliminary information on the relevance of ethnic culture and ethnic identity and their role in the lives of these young males in gangs, leaving the findings both open and probing.

But can these results be replicated? Would another researcher uncover the same findings and draw the same conclusions? In truth, it is impossible to generalize widely from these data as all interviews and observations are defined by the specific context in which they occur (Erlandson, et al., 1993). It is unlikely, then, that any researcher will exactly replicate the raw data. I am a white woman and both race and gender (as well as age) likely had an effect on the willingness of the study subjects to answer my questions the way they did. Would a white man, a black researcher (male or female), etc., achieve the same result? Given the sensitive nature of the topics under discussions, likely not. But it is to be hoped that they would be able to draw the same conclusions based on the answers they did get – and, importantly, based upon my description of my methods (including the questionnaire), my choice of theoretical perspectives, and a reading of the same literature.

Ultimately, the only way for the results to remain consistent across time and space is for another researcher of the same ethnic and racial background (and even age) as me to enter the field and conduct the identical study. Finally, it must always be remembered that those under study are not always passive subjects ready to open up their lives to all-comers.

CHAPTER 3: GANG MEMBERS and their GANG LIFE

This chapter will focus on six aspects of gang membership: 1. Gang definition (including differentiating between street gangs and more formally organised criminal gangs); 2. Initiation rites; 3. Recruitment; 4. Maintenance of gang membership; 5. Advantages of gang membership; 6. Quitting the gang. This chapter will conclude by again relating ethnic identity to gang membership, in particular to the ethnic homogeneity or heterogeneity of the gangs.

The demographics of the individuals in the five groups to be discussed (French, Haitian, Jamaican, Latino and miscellaneous ethnicities) are presented in summary form in Appendix C (the interview schedule is presented in Appendix A).

1. What is a Gang?

Interviews with the research subjects revealed that the definition and conceptualization of a gang by its members can be broadly categorized into five recurring themes. Perhaps the most compelling of these is the idea of the gang as a group of people who consider themselves friends, who hang out together, and who provide a semblance of family to members. This sentiment is echoed among all ethnic groups. The gang is also generally defined around territory or neighborhood boundaries, providing protection and acquiring respect. The gang is also clearly understood as an opportunity for making money – generally by criminal means. Differences between formal criminal groups and youth gangs were clearly recognized by the research subjects. As will be seen, ethnicity played no role in any of the definitions of 'gang' to any interviewees, except for Latinos, who found that the gang provided some sense of ethnic identity in a non-Latino world.

These five themes, a) gang as family/friendship group; b) territoriality, power and respect; c) business opportunities; d) differentiation of formal and youth gangs; and e) ethnicity in the gang will be discussed below. The number of individuals in each ethnic category who define 'gang' according to each theme identified above are shown in Table 5.1. Each of these themes, as understood by the subjects, will be discussed in detail below.

Table 5.1. Distribution of gang attributes or features by ethnic group

Quality	*French (10)*	*Haitians (10)*	*Jamaicans (10)*	*Latinos (10)*	*Other (10)*
Family	10	6	10	10	10
Territory	6	10	10	6	5
Money	10	4	10	3	5
Formal/Biker	10	10	----	---	5
Ethnicity	10	10	10	10	5

Note: columns may sum to greater than 10 as respondent may cite more than one quality

a) Gang as Family or Friendship Group

Family and friends were key terms repeated again and again by respondents; clearly, for many of these youths, the street gang provides companionship and peer acceptance. A 20-year-old French-Canadian gang member observed:

> *It is a group of friends who hang out together and have fun together. If you see someone who is from another gang you bug them and tell them off and things like that, just for fun. When I started hanging out with them I saw them as friends first and as members of gangs second. I saw them more as a family and if I had a problem I knew they could help me with it, I considered them almost like my blood brothers. I would do anything for them.*

> *There is a sense of belonging. We would kid around with each other by hitting*

each other; this was a sign of affection. I guess what we are all looking for is to be loved somehow and most of us don't get this at home but we get it in the gang. By love I mean people that actually give a shit about you and about what happens to you and that they rather see you alive than dead (6).

Another 19-year-old French-Canadian gang member commented that gang membership provided an antidote to boredom because it was hanging out with his friends:

A street gang is young people that are bored and don't have that much going on for them in life except being with their friends. They hang out together and they are trying to make a place for themselves (18).

Again, the view of the gang as a family or friendship group is seen in this commentary by two Haitian gang members.[31] First of all, the commentary of a 16-year-old Haitian immigrant (interviewee 1), followed by that of a 15-year-old gang member (interviewee 7).

A gang is like a family; if something happens, they are there for you to back you up and help you to get revenge on someone that has done you wrong. It never stops (1).

A gang is a family. Like a family, when one of our 'street family members' has problems, everyone in the group tries to help out and help solve the person's problem. In a gang there is different parts: there is friends that you ask them for money and they will say, "yo, here is the money". You ask them, I have problems, speak with them. You have a problem and you say, "yo, just come and chill with me". There is people like that and then there are people in the gang. You just walk with them and you go with them when you have problems and they help you out. They are your family you know, still (7).

Jamaican gang members also define a gang in terms of friendship and family. A 17-year-old Jamaican-Canadian said:

A gang in a sense is not exactly something bad, it is more like a family. It is like

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[31] Chesney-Lind (1995) also reported that gangs serve as an alternate family

something, you are being brought in and like everyone is tight, you know, and it is like everyone respects each other, you know. Everyone feels each other's pain and they are there for each other, and it is not always necessarily something bad, it is not like we are always doing something bad. It is a sense of keeping that bond strong and respecting one another and keeping that respect there, you know. Basically, what else can it be. Most of the time the gang is not meant to really have problems – it is to have fun, they are just trying to do their thing. They make sure that they stay protected and you are with people where you feel safe with them, they are your people and no one is going to fuck around with you because they know that you have protection from your friends. Nobody will come to disrespect you because you are with your people. The term of gang is being exploited too much. It is being exploited in the sense that you can be a group of friends, and it is automatically called a gang, you know what I mean. Once you are a number of three, four, five, you just become a gang. This is what people assume, you know, their assumptions. There are some places where I have been to I have seen real gangs, and you can't fuck around, like the Bloods and the Crips of New York. I have a few friends that are down there, and Crips, when they see a Blood on their territory, it is automatically war, it starts right there. It is the same thing if the Crips is in the blood area. They would get fucked up right there (27).

This individual's views are reinforced by another Jamaican-Canadian:

Me and three of my friends (there are five friends that I am really close with), but three of the people, they know each other (and the other two don't know each other or whatever). I wouldn't even call it a gang. I just call them my Niggers. I hang out with my Niggers. My Niggers means my buddy, someone that I am close with. When my friends say, "hey, Yo, you are my Nigger", that is a compliment (45).

Again, these two Jamaican-Canadians emphasize the ideas of friendship and family as being integral to the definition of a gang. This type of discourse de-emphasizes any type of deviant activity and focuses on ideas of friendship, family, reciprocity, protection and enjoyment. Most Jamaican youths were aware that mainstream culture attached negative connotations to the idea of 'gangs', and they attempted to address this by emphasizing the positive aspects of friendship and belonging, companionship and support. This softened the perception of what a gang is and also glamorized it – something harmless and fun that entertained you and where you could make friends. This happy picture is somewhat spoiled in further discussions about initiation processes,

recruitment and activities associated with gang membership, as will be seen later in this chapter.

All the young Latinos interviewed defined the gang in terms of a friendship group or being like a family, a group that stakes out their territory. For instance, a 17-year-old immigrant from El Salvador defines the gang as a family:

> *They understand all of your problems. They give you all they got and they help solve your problems. You can go to them and talk to them whenever you want and they understand where you are coming from, I guess just like family (8).*

All of the youths of varied ethnic groups defined the gang in terms of family or friendship, as observed by an 18-year-old Cree:

> *A gang could be anything. My definition of a gang is that people are friends, good friends, they get together, do stuff together, and go out to party – writing on walls, "graffing"* [writing graffiti], *and stuff like that (28).*

An immigrant from Portugal (interviewee 26) and an Irish-Canadian (interviewee 43) also emphasize the idea that the gang is a group of people who are considered friends or family – a group of people to hang out with.

> *A gang is a group of guys that all act the same; they all do the same things and have the same goals. They all have the same attitudes; it is probably because they are looking for the same things. It is basically, they are looking for their kind of lifestyle, you know. They were brought up like that and they just continue that sort of shit. I think people join gangs because they think they want to be like 'I am part of this' and now I am something and before I was nothing (26).*

> *For me it is a bunch of people just hanging out, and actually a gang doesn't have to be a bad thing, they can be a good thing. A good thing is not doing bad things. I don't know if I can tell you it is bad smoking drugs, you know, and drinking. My gang, we do this to sort of fool around – like drink, smoke and stuff [. . .] We don't consider ourselves a gang, we consider ourselves a crew[synonym for gang]. The difference between a crew and a gang is that the gangs, they do a lot of things and they tax[32] people and stuff, but we don't do that. We chill, we smoke, we drink and we wear bandannas (but everyone wears different colors) (43).*

Thus, as any individual would spend time with family, these youths spend time with their

[32] In Montreal taxing refers to the act of youths harassing younger people for protection of money.

fellow gang members. There is a sense of shared trust among gang members, to the extent that youth can depend on their gang-mates for help when they are in trouble. Gang members provide protection and support. For many Haitian youth, the street family fills in where the immediate family has failed. A major difference between the two types of families is that within the street family, delinquent behavior is condoned and these youths have someone to go to for help, something that is not always accessible to them in their home life. Thus, the street family fills in where the blood family has failed. Being part of the gang provides an individual with a sense of identity and a sense of community. In other words all the members behave in an identical manner and everyone adopts the same lifestyle – every member is expected to commit crimes, must always hang out together. And in fact, most of the youths from the non-specified ethnic group revealed that they would die for the gang if they had to.

b) Territory, Power and Respect

After family and friendship group, the most commonly mentioned conceptualization of 'gang' was that it was often based on territory, and membership accorded power and respect to individuals. We may assume that territory is a key foundation for the formation of a gang in that it provides a base for criminal or quasi-criminal activity.[33] Also, these youths appear in the main to be ghettoized in poor neighborhoods, this is their world – a world that does not expand beyond their neighborhood. The following quotes clearly demonstrate these ideas, beginning with a 16-year-old Haitian immigrant who explained:

> *A gang is guys who have problems. A way to regulate the problem is that some get into really violent situations where if they get upset or someone hurts them in*

[33] The issue of territory has also been discussed by other researchers such as Bing, 1991; Campbell, 1990; Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Moore, 1991; Scott, 1993; Spergel, 1995; Thrasher, [1927] 1963).

some way, they get back at that person by using physical violence with the intent to hurt and teach the person who hurt them a lesson. . . . . it's always someone trying to be avenged for some wrongdoing of some kind and your friends are always there ready to help you accomplish this goal. Guys that are in the gang usually like this because they feel they have power and that no one can step on their toes and take advantage of them. It makes you feel tough, it makes you feel protected.

Sometimes it [being in a gang] *is a question of territory. You see a guy and he steps into your neighborhood but he doesn't belong there. For instance, I live in St. Michel, and St. Michel and Pie IX are together and Montreal Nord and Rivieres des Prairies are together* [kids coming from the gang in each neighborhood]. *St. Michel is against Montreal Nord and Rivieres des Prairies. Let's say I am in my corner of my neighborhood. If I see a guy of RDP and Montreal Nord, the first thing that comes to my head is to go and hit that guy who is in my neighborhood. This is usually what happens, we hit this guy – we don't kill him, but we do this as a warning to other gang members not from our neighborhood. The guy who is hurt goes to his gang. This pisses his gang members off and this is what starts gang wars. His members try to get revenge on my members of the gang. The reason why a member of another gang would come into our neighborhood is to make trouble or to try and steal some of our clients and do some business* [like selling drugs] *in our corner of the neighborhood. (1).*

And a 17-year-old Chilean-Canadian commented:

It [the gang] *represents what they want to be in the territory (29).*

Latino youth gang members also described a gang in terms of territory but they in particular emphasize that membership in the gang endows them with power and earns them respect.

A 17-year-old originally from the Dominican Republic said that gang membership allows for the development of power and respect from others:

They are all Latinos in the Punto Negros [name of the gang]. *By being in the gang, it allows us Latinos to get power and respect, especially a Latino as myself where people still have a hard time seeing me as Latino because of my darker complexion (3).*

This feeling of having power and respect by gang membership is further emphasised by a 20-year-old immigrant from Ecuador.

> *Apart from easy money and lots of girls, I would say that it gives you a sense of importance and of belonging, it is the power. People look at us like we are a bunch of stupid Chicanos that are macho and always like to dance like faggots like that estupidos* [i.e., stupid], *Ricky Martin. We are not only that, we are more than that. You try to cross us and we will show you how estupidos we are man. You won't be calling us estupidos when you see me and my boys all together if you know what I mean. What I mean by that is you call my Raza estupido...me and my boys will beat the shit out of you and show you who's stupid now (22).*

Haitian and Jamaican youth also paint their neighborhood as an important element in gang membership. These youths live in neighborhoods that are heavily gang affiliated and because of this (their local environment), they have no alternative but to join the gang. If they do not join a gang, they run the risk of being victimized. Most of these adolescents revealed that if they had decided not to become a gang member they would definitely have been targets of assault, robbery, and harassment by gang members. Joining a gang, then, provides an individual with protection from potential victimization. Thus, youths who join such gangs do so because they are living in predominantly poor, Black neighborhoods that encourage membership in gangs. Living in a bad neighborhood serves as the initial criteria for membership, and being black and Haitian or black and Jamaican may be part of this identity. Such a way of life becomes an extension of their ethnic identity.

c) Gang as Business

Many of these youths are unemployed and likely will not get pocket money as average middle-class teens do. Thus, the opportunity to make a little money (or a lot), get a kick out of the whole proceedings of earning that money and be able to show off to girls

and friends, is evidently quite appealing to these youths.[34] Indeed, the gang as business opportunity is clearly understood. A Jamaican-Canadian notes that

> *Being in the gang is also a way to make money. By selling drugs, and the guys tell this person that he did a good job, that makes someone want to sell drugs some more. . .. . . Most of us, regardless of what gang we come from, like money and we would do almost anything to get this money (24).*

Several Haitian youths also emphasized the business aspect of gang membership. For instance, a 15-year-old Haitian born in Montreal, reports:

> *In a gang there is usually a lot of guys that stick together and in a gang we make a lot of money. We do crimes and there are some people that kill as well. There are some of us that make a lot of money, and being in the gang for some is easier to make money than to go to work (9).*

In contrast, a 17-year-old Irish-Canadian considered that friendship and business did not mix, and pointed out that for him, those he did business with and those he considered friends and hung out with were two separate groups or gangs.

> *For me there are two kinds of gangs. There is a gang of people where they hang with their friends all of the time. They once in a while get into street fights and things like that. Then the other gang these are just business associates or people that help you to make money and with these guys you just do business and that is the only type of relationship you have with them (42).*

Out of all the respondents interviewed (32 out of 50) income and money came up as a discussion point when talking about the gang. Gang membership thus appears to provide some economic benefits to its members. It becomes a way of having a job that is a bit more exciting than the usual teenage part-time work.

d) Formal (organized/biker) versus Less Formal (youth/street) Gangs

All respondents were acutely aware of the difference between their loose

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[34] The economic benefits derived from gang activity have also been discussed by Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Fleisher, 1998; Hazlehurst and Hazlehurst, 1998; Huff, 1996; Sheley, 1995; The Canadian Street Project, 1993; Dukes, et al., 1997; Chesney-Lind and Karen, 1995; Lasley, 1992; Moore, et al., 1983.

association of friends and the adult biker or organized gangs, particularly the French-Canadian and Haitian respondents. Most respondents differentiated between their associations with the street versus biker gang. The definition of street gang is more "open" in the sense that the associations are not always described along deviant lines. As we have seen, for many of these youths, their own gang is an entity that provides companionship and peer-acceptance, whereas a biker gang is depicted in more deviant terms – the youths refer to it as a criminal organization – but is also acknowledged as being more organized. A 19-year-old French-Canadian states:

> *A gang organizes hits, it organizes how and where to commit thefts, in gangs you sell drugs and they take the control of the neighborhood (21).*

What is particularly important is that there is a well-established, well-defined leader who determines the criminal activities of gang members, as described by a 20-year-old French gang member who discusses the structure of the organized biker gang:

> *There is a big boss somewhere that is for sure. I never saw him. Then there are the older members that are in charge of certain things, and they pass down the orders to the other members that are not yet advanced in the rankings of the gang. The older you are the more power you have because you become a veteran. Me, I was higher than some people were. It can't be only that someone is older and because this person is older he is placed in charge automatically. The more you get older, it is for sure that you will have more advantages that is for sure. But, it depends like maybe there is a guy that could come in at 21. And start being at the top at 21. He would be giving orders even if he was 17 years old. There are a lot of people like that (15).*

In addition to this, a 15-year-old gang member explains how young people are recruited and are initiated within the biker gang:

> *It depends there are what is referred to as a gang of friends or criminal gangs. A criminal gang is the motorcycle gangs. They take young people and they make them sell dope for them. They will give a young person fifty bucks for example and tell them to go cut someone's throat. The gang of friends just go and hang out in*

> *the parks to chill but don't necessarily do crimes. I was in both types of gangs (10).*

Based on the literature, one can conclude that those youths who move from the street to the biker/formal gang have evolved from the scavenger level to the corporate hierarchy of gang organization.[35] This provides them with more status because of the higher risks involved (Taylor, 1990); thus, and as evidenced by the interviewees' responses, differences between street and biker gang are often defined along aspects of risk taking. As well, the formal gang is much more wide-ranging in its membership based on age, as noted by a 15-year-old French-Canadian:

> *There are some that are as old as 70 years old. They hide the drugs at their house and who would ever suspect a 70-old man... think about it. There are even some that sell drugs on the outside. If the cops were watching the gang members and they see one of them talking to this old man that could be his neighbor, what are they going to do... nothing. Because they would not suspect that this old man is part of the gang and who is still selling. Heck, some of these older 70-year-old guys are still smoking pot. It just makes me laugh. These are just examples of how they could even recruit old people if they wanted to; if an old guy is willing why not? (10).*

For Haitians, there is also a difference between street and organized gangs; this difference is again defined along risky behaviors and activities understood by all to be criminal. While there is greater risk associated with the organized gang, there is also greater prestige (at least in this worldview) and more protection. However, on the negative side, those who rejected the organized gang were considered to be 'wimping out'. In many ways, this type of gang requires demonstration of "guts". This is explained by a 17-year-old Haitian immigrant:

> *I was part of a street gang and organized gang. My gang was a little of both. The street gang is a bunch of young people that hang out together. They usually hang*

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[35] Scavenger refers to street level gangs that move up to the corporate level gangs that are referred to as organized criminal hierarchical gangs (e.g. biker gangs or mafia).

out in the park. They meet there all the time. They don't move, they always remain within the same milieu. If there is a problem it is for that they will help you. But they still remain within the same corner of the street for example.

The organized gang is a gang that moves around a lot. It is like I started being in the gang. I was introduced to all kinds of people while in the organized gang. They started showing me how to commit crimes and I learned from them. I started learning quickly. I was doing transactions. Let's say someone wants to sell their car, I know who to call. I was part of the CDP gang. The Crack Down Possé gang. But I hung around with them because I knew with them I felt strong. I felt strong being with them. They were older than me and they knew more than I did so in a sense I admired them. They were my idols. I started hanging out with them more often. They were committing crimes and I was obliged to participate. Or else they would treat me like I was scared and I would be made fun of. They would treat me like I was some pussy. I wanted to show them that I was not a pussy so I committed crimes along side of them. I committed the crimes without thinking about the consequences. That was the problem.

I was also a member of the organized gang NP called Natural Pussy. This is a street gang. I went to school with them and I hung out with them as well. We would do some crimes, but they were not big crimes like someone would do in an organized gang (19).

The fundamental difference between street and organised gangs is in the leadership. Many (across all ethnic groups interviewed) indicated that the street gang lacks a defined leader and that its organisation is lax, if existing at all. Earnings (usually illegitimate gains) are divided equally among the members – or whoever participated and was present at the sharing out. While the language implies some kind of democratic sentiment, it is likely that there is the potential for arguing over who gets what in these episodes. A 15-year-old Haitian-Canadian comments:

Everyone has to agree when things have to get done, there is no real leader in a gang. For instance, I want to do something, like steal a car for example, I let the guys know what I intend to do and how they all have to give me the okay. Because if I intend to sell parts of the car I have to share the money with the members (9).

This is in clear contrast to the comments of an 18-year-old Polish-Canadian whose gang has a bit more structure. He notes that each gang members has his designated

criminal role:

> *But we were a division. It is like the marines are a part of the US navy. But the SEALs are part of the marines. We specialized in something. This gang every crew represented something. We are specializing for money. But the whole bunch of Blacks that were in this gang were pimps. That is how money came in for them. But we all made money. They made their money through pimping. Other gangs made their money by drugs. We made our money through firearms (25).*

Those who are aware of and participate in formal criminal organised gangs tend to see their own youth gangs as family or friendship groups – that is, a non-deviant group. This is clearly shown by interviews with the French and Haitian subjects. Both the French and Haitian adolescents claimed to have worked (or to work currently) for the organised criminal gangs controlled by adults who recruit younger members to deal their drugs. Haitians refer to these groups as organised street gangs and the French refer to them as biker gangs. For these two groups, relations within the street gang are less formal and less structured, whereas within organised gangs, membership relations are more structured and based on ranking and leadership.

Youths are an attractive prospective for adult organized biker/street gangs, particularly in the illicit drug trade. This is because they receive less harsh penalties; are more likely to receive warnings from police than be arrested (or at least, that is the perception); and are more likely to be referred to community-based service programs. It takes several arrests for a youth to be sentenced to detention in a youth center, and once the detention is complete, those records are sealed and destroyed after a set period of time (usually two years). In theory this provides these youths a second chance and new beginning. In contrast, adults are subject to more serious punishment – that is, serving a jail sentence and earning a life-long criminal record (unless the crime is pardoned) (Goff,

2001).

e) Ethnicity

Of all the subjects interviewed in the various categories of ethnicity, ethnicity itself only came to the fore in discussions with Latinos. Many of these respondents were in fact immigrants, and their first language was Spanish. For many, life in Montreal as an allophone could sometimes be difficult in terms of holding on to one's culture and fitting in with the community. Many observed that gang membership was predicated on a shared language (Spanish) and culture (not English, not French, but Latino, which embraced all South and Central American Spanish-speaking nationalities). While we have seen that French-Canadian gang members, the majority, share a language (French), this did not serve as the rallying or focal point of the gang. Haitians and Jamaicans focused more on the issue of race, and although not specifically seeking out Haitian or Jamaican gang members, these groups did coalesce based on shared perceptions of racism and of otherness from white French-Canadians. The importance of Latino-ness is described by a 17-year-old originally from the Dominican Republic:

> *They are all Latinos in the Punto Negros [*name of the gang*]. By being in the gang it allows us Latinos to get power and respect. Especially a Black Latino as myself where people still have a hard time seeing me as Latino because of my darker complexion. The gang sees beyond my skin color and see me for who I am which is one hundred percent Latino and being in the gang has helped me to somehow reconnect with my Latin roots. I don't have to remind them that I am Latin; they know I am because I am part of the gang (3).*

This particular youth believes that being recognised as Latino is very important. He feels that without the gang he would more likely be ostracised – because of his darker complexion because he is regularly mistaken as a Black person. He does not particularly want to be identified as Black, and for him, being in the gang allows others to see him as

he wants to be seen – one hundred percent Latin, which is important if he is to achieve the power and respect that he so desires. Thus ethnicity plays a role in the definition of gang for this sample of Latino youths. It appears that before one is recruited in the gang, the new recruit must clearly demonstrate himself to be of Latin origins and most importantly must speak Spanish. Other factors such as being able to carry out crimes, protection, respect and loyalty play secondary roles compared to the value of Latin ethnicity.

Gang definition then, focused primarily on the concept of friendship group/family group for almost all interviewees. Latinos, however, while acknowledging that gangs are family-like and provide a source of friendship, emphasized language and ethnic background as important components of gang definition and composition. Concepts of territory, power, respect and protection as well as employment were also discussed as aspects of gang definition.

2. Gang Initiation Rites

Many gang members had to endure or participate in an initiation rite in order to be eligible to join the street gang. From the interviews conducted with gang members, it appears that ethnicity was not particularly relevant in the process of recruitment and initiation (except for Latino gang members). What did play a much more pivotal role, however, was being able to prove oneself as fearless and able to withstand violence. Interestingly, initiation rites were generally reserved for those potential members who did not have a pre-existing familial relationship with gang members.

Generally, gangs that required recruits to go through an initiation process did so for individuals who were not relatives of existing gang members. It was assumed by all

gang members and interviewees that family connections provided some assurance of the trustworthiness of the recruit/potential gang member. And for the most part, family relationship was the item that best determined whether or not an individual would have to undergo some form of initiation. This was true for all ethnic groups under investigation. However, there was one exception, and that is for the Latinos. This is not to say that Latinos did not require initiation procedures (they did), but more to say that ethnic identity and culture were of fundamental importance in the selection of gang members and that the initiation procedures were discussed in terms of the characteristics or quality of being Latino.

In general, initiation processes involved the commission of a crime or some kind of violence – either the recruit was subjected to violence (inflicted by himself on himself or inflicted by others on himself) or he himself was required to perform a violent act.

Table 5.2 describes five features of initiation rites and the number of respondents within each ethnic category who identified one or more or these features as crucial to an individual being permitted to join the gang. Some subjects reported that no initiation rites were required when an individual's relations or friends were already members of a gang. In other cases, if the new recruit had no blood relatives in the gang he was required to undergo an initiation process. Still others reported that everyone had to undergo an initiation process regardless of whether blood relatives or friends were already gang members. Some reported that simply hanging out with individuals was enough and no specific initiation was required. Finally some respondents claimed that sharing a similar ethnic culture was necessary in order to become part of the gang.

Table 5.2. Participation in initiation rites by gang members

Category	*French (10)*	*Haitian (10)*	*Jamaican (10)*	*Latino (10)*	*Other (10)*
Family membership, no initiation	10	3			8
No family associates, initiation required	10	7	10	10	2
Initiation always required				10	
No family associates but can 'ease in'			10	10	5
Ethnicity is important				10	

Note: columns may sum to greater than 10 because respondents may cite more than one category. Some cells are empty because information was not available.

a) Family Membership is an Exemption from Initiation.

Prospective gang members whose relations or friends were already members of a gang were generally exempt from any kind of initiation process. In fact, family connections conferred an automatic 'safe' status upon these prospective members. It was assumed that these individuals already had some knowledge of the gang and of the behavior the gang deemed appropriate – discretion in particular. This is made clear by an Italian-Canadian who remarks:

> *I didn't need to be initiated in my case because I am part of the family. I didn't need to be initiated. There are three of my friends that I let them join, they had to speak to my cousins and my uncle, in other words my relatives had to get to know who these guys were. If they get the okay by my relatives, that is how they can get in and that is how they got in. You shouldn't bullshit or take them for a ride, don't even try that with these guys, you will pay the price. If you are good with them, they will be good with you, if you piss them off, they will find a way to get back at you (39).*

b) No Family Associations, Initiation Required

In a street gang to which a 20-year-old French-Canadian belonged, new recruits

with no blood relatives in the gang had to be initiated because the absence of family members meant no one could vouch for the prospect's trustworthiness. The initiation process in one particular case was referred to as PI,[36] and involved other gang members beating up the potential recruit who, if he withstood the beatings, would automatically be admitted into the gang. This process ensured that fully-fledged gang members could feel more assured in accepting the novice member. In this quote, one clearly sees the importance of family relations in negating the need to undergo initiation and the absence of those relationships in requiring the initiation. The youth explains:

> *Yes, you get the PI you have a group of gangs and the gang members beat you up and if you take it like a man and you are still standing then you are part of the gang. This rite of initiation only happens if the guy is a stranger, he doesn't have any brothers or cousins in the gang that can back him up and say he's alright* [this means that the person is trustworthy] *(6).*

Similarly, Haitian youth also underwent initiation rites: only individuals with no blood ties to the gang had to go through certain rites of initiation. In this instance, the initiation required them to carry out crimes successfully under the watchful eye of a veteran. Moreover, these youths had to adopt a certain "bad boy" attitude which allowed them to maintain their membership. The need for the right attitude and the ability to commit crimes while keeping one's cool are clearly evident in remarks from a 17-year-old Haitian immigrant:

> *There are guys that are going to be watching how you commit the crimes and if you succeed at committing these crimes. They also watch how you act when you around them, if you have the style and the coolness. There is a certain attitude that comes with being a member of the gang, and if you don't have the attitude then you are definitely not down with the gang. An example of the attitude is you have to act like a prick and not give a shit about anything you know, like you are not afraid of anything, and that you would jump hoops for the gang if you had to (14).*

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[36] Respondents were not willing to define the term.

Within the "other ethnic" category, two individuals reported having to undergo some form of initiation procedure, and in these cases, family and friendship did not appear to play a role in belonging or gaining access to a gang. Again, committing crimes was perhaps the most common initiation procedure, as described by an 18-year-old Cree-Canadian, who said:

> *Some of the guys came in and they had to prove their names. Then we would ask them rob this guy and rob that guy you know. Go in their houses and take whatever and pull off armed robberies and stuff like that (28).*

However, a 17-year-old immigrant from Germany explained that within his gang the members must drink to excess, and if they are still standing after the binge drinking, the aspiring novice is automatically admitted to his gang. This may not be excessively violent, but it certainly reflects the tendency to require potential members to prove themselves with a self-harming activity.

> *There was one rite of initiation that all members had to go through. You fill out a liquor bottle with this much beer and the rest is tequila and you have to drink that in one shot, you have to drink twenty-six ounces of tequila in one shot. Some of the guys did succeed. In BCG it is like you have to kick someone's ass by yourself. Like three people against you. Let's say they would be walking down the streets and they would pick like three old people, they say go fight with him. They have not beaten up like really old people, but old people like in their thirties (46).*

In addition to this, random violence was also part of the initiation process; that is, members had to participate in one random act of violence, and once the individual had done this, he became an accepted member of the gang.

Among Jamaicans interviewed, family relationships did not particularly come to the fore as determining whether or not an initiation procedure was required; rather, it was the perception of whether the potential recruit was "safe" or not. If most of the members had doubts about a certain individual then they demanded he undergo an initiation

process. Within this group of subjects, the most common initiation rite was the successful commission of a crime or to burn (perhaps a form of branding or permanent identification with the gang) himself with a cigarette, which was also felt to prove that the aspiring member was "safe." This specific initiation rite is best described by a 17-year-old Jamaican-Canadian:

> *In the first clique that we had, my friends they started some shit if you are down with the clique you have to burn yourself with the cigarette or some shit like that you know. At first I thought it was stupid you know. Why are you guys going to burn yourself you know, if you are part of the clique then you are part of the clique. You don't need to burn yourself. So, whatever, they are like, are you going to do it or not? So I was like anyways, sshhh, so I just burned myself. I know it was stupid because they wanted to do everything that was fucked up (45).*

All of the Latinos interviewed reported that regardless of who they were, everyone had to endure some process of initiation. Again, the infliction of violence on the potential gang member was reported as an initiation procedure; another common type of initiation required the prospective member to commit a crime. While in this case being a relative of someone already in the gang, was not strictly necessary, violence and ethnicity were factors in gaining entry to the gang for Latinos, which is explained by a 17-year-old El Salvadorian gang member:

> *I started hanging out with these guys who happened to be El Salvadorians. As well, we spoke the same language our parents came from the same country so I guess it was easier for them to accept me into their group. However, I did have to prove myself so in order for me to prove myself I had to allow them to beat me up. So that is what all the members did, each member took turns beating me up. I was still standing at the end and they automatically accepted me into the gang. Then I got in and they started telling me what I should do and how I should do it and where to go at what time and where the exact place was. They gave me the weapons to carry around in case something would or should come up and there you go I was on my way to be deeply involved in the gang (8).*

c) No Family Associations, No Initiation Procedure

In some street gangs, however, regardless of ethnic categorization, just "hanging out with the gang" and being open to taking and smoking drugs allowed the new recruit to appear "cool" or "hip" to the other members. This in turn provided an entrée to membership in the gang and the acceptance and respect of gang members. In fact, among all Jamaicans interviewed, the point was made that if gang members felt that the youth was trustworthy or "safe" as they termed it, then he was automatically admitted into the gang whether or not he had any blood relations in the gang, as illustrated by a 17-year-old Jamaican-Canadian:

> *The Deuce* [name of street gang], *there was no initiation with the Deuce. So if you wanted to be in Deuce you had to be down with them, you have to respect each other and stuff like that (32).*

An El Salvadorian respondent also commented that attitude towards the gang also went a long way to facilitating gaining entry to the gang; thus one eased in if one pulled off a cool attitude and maintained one's composure:

> *The way to approach the guys you wanted to associate with or become a member with is by approaching them slowly one step at a time, because if you look too anxious that might make the other guys a little nervous. So you approach them in a cool and calm manner, why is that important? Well... if you act like you are too anxious then that shows a sign of weakness right. What I mean by that is if you look like you have an anxious personality that means that if they ask you to do something or to take some kind of risk, you can be viewed as someone that gets nervous too easily and when you act like you are nervous or should I say you are too nervous by nature, well it could really work to your disadvantage. Because when something big* [called upon to commit some future crime] *does go down and you are all panicky and don't do the job right, this could definitely be viewed as a disadvantage to the gang. You have to take time in gaining the gang's trust (8)*

d) Ethnicity

Of all individuals interviewed, only Latinos raised the issue of ethnicity as a defining requirement of gang membership; in this case, gang membership was directly linked to

the qualities of being a Latino male. These qualities meant being fearless, because to show weakness meant to be fearful and this equated to not acting like a real man within that Latino gang culture. Being part of such a gang was not only an affirmation of Latin roots but also an assertion of masculinity. This is seen clearly in two quotes, the first from a 17-year-old El Salvadorian and the second by a 20-year-old from Ecuador.

> *So you have to act like a man – most of us Latinos have been brought up with the idea to be a man you have to show that you have the balls to take big risks and this is what it means to be a Latino man in the gang (47).*

> *You have to be Latino if you want to be part of my gang, if you are not Latino you are not welcome, it's La Raza man, you stick to your own kind. In order to become a member you have to get beaten up and I wanted to get beaten up in order to prove myself. I wanted this because I considered them my family. I felt good with them, and I always hung out with them so I wanted to prove to them that I could take it like a man (49).*

The author of the second quote points out that being Latino is very important for membership in his gang and that violence is also an integral part of such a subculture which also encourages machismo.

Latinos interviewed for this study share cultural aspects of language, country of origin, and a sense of alienation and isolation caused by an immigrant status. An underlying feature of Latino gangs, reflecting both the cultural and deviant aspects of gang membership, is territoriality (Spergel, 1995). Territoriality has a symbolic and cultural meaning in terms of the importance of language and ethnicity. Gang membership allows these youth to maintain their cultural identity, while at the same time allowing them to gain societal respect through fearlessness and machismo.

3. Recruitment into the Gang

As we see, youths define gangs along certain specified lines, and these lines are

echoed in the reasons youths offer for joining or being recruited into a gang. The distribution of these reasons across ethnic groups is presented in *Table 5.3*. The factors influencing why youths join or are recruited into gangs are: a) family and friends; b) school (including boredom at school and a desire to be popular); c) power and respect; d) neighborhood or territory; and e) ethnicity and/or language.[37] We will see that ethnicity and/or language play a predominant role in gang membership/recruitment for the Latino youths who were interviewed. It should be noted that some youths were actively recruited into gangs while others seemed to fall into gang membership – because the gang was in the neighborhood, they were bored, they wanted something to do with their time, they wanted to be looked up to. These factors will be discussed in more detail below.

Youths were recruited to or joined gangs at quite young ages. In fact, among French youths interviewed, the age of recruitment ranged between 12 and 16 years old. Haitian youths also joined gangs in the early teen years – and some even before. Six of ten respondents joined a gang between 14 and 15 years of age while the remaining four joined the gang between seven and 12 years of age. The Jamaican youths interviewed were recruited into gangs between the ages of 10 and 13. The Latino respondents entered gang life at a slightly older age: between 13 and 15 years of age. The remaining ten youths, who were grouped into the 'other ethnicity' category, joined a gang between the ages of 11 and 16.

Table 5.3 shows how many respondents within each ethnic group reported the five most common reasons for joining a gang. To emphasize, these are: they were influenced to join by their family and friends; they were bored at school; the gang offered

[37] Dukes, et al., (1997) cited the prompting of friends and/or relatives and the status associated with being a gang member as reasons for joining gangs.

power and respect; their neighborhood was heavily gang affiliated; and finally, they shared ethnic identity with the gang members.

Table 5.3. Distribution of reasons for joining a gang according to ethnic group

Factor	*French (10)*	*Haitians (10)*	*Jamaicans (10)*	*Latino (10)*	*Other (10)*
Family/friends	10	10	10	10	10
School	9	8	5	5	5
Power/respect	6	4	1	1	1
Neighborhood	5	10	10	3	6
Ethnicity/language	0	0	0	10	0

Note: columns may sum to greater than 10 because respondents may cite more than one factor.

a) The Influence of Family and Friends

Across all groups, family and friends proved strong influences in persuading, encouraging or actively recruiting youth to join a gang. For the French youth in particular, family members who were associated with biker gangs tended to actively recruit or encourage younger family members to join street gangs and even biker gangs. As has already been described, French youths often have an interesting relationship whereby they are members of a street gang that is affiliated with the organized biker gangs (Hells Angels, Rock Machine). Their relations are also members of these biker gangs and thus in a position to influence younger relations to join the biker gangs. Friends at school also influence someone's decision to be part of a gang, as explained by a 17-year-old French teen:

> *What happened in my case was that while I was in school, I had a friend who was part of the gang and he convinced me to get in. I started hanging out with his friends, they were always surrounded by girls and they were the popular kids they knew everybody there was to know and this is how I got into the gang (4).*

A 19-year old French-Canadian gang member reveals that family connections led to his involvement with the gang, but this nevertheless did not exempt him from having to undergo an initiation procedure:

> *I got into the biker gang through my uncle. I talked with my uncle and I knew he was in the gang and I asked him if I could also work for the gang. He let me hang out with him for a while, and in fact told me what to do and taught me the ropes. He showed me how to commit different crimes and how to do them without getting caught. Anyhow, it came the time that I had to prove to other members that I was capable of doing the job, so they asked me to go to steal a car to show that I was courageous and that I was able to do it. I showed them that I was able to work with them. When you join the gang you have to give them some kind of proof that you can do the job and do it right. You have to be ready to do anything. They will ask the guy to go shoot this person and if the guy does it, he becomes the member of the gang. Or they will ask you things like go to the depanneur to steal, they will ask you to do things like this (21).*

Clearly for some French youths, family members were influential in their decision to join either a street gang or a biker gang. Many family members who were in biker gangs acted as criminal role models, thus pointing to a criminal career as a legitimate, valid vocation. A youth who demonstrated his 'worth' to family members could be invited by those relations to join the biker gang. In addition, gang life is seen as normal and non-deviant because the individuals had been exposed to this lifestyle and criminal activity from a very young age. Two interviewees comment on the connection between family and the choice to join a gang; first, a 15-year-old French youth and then a 20-year-old French gang member.

> *In the corner of my neighborhood there were always guys hanging out and you see how tall I am and I passed for someone older. Each time there was a fight that broke out, these guys that were part of the gang would ask me to join in all their fights. It used to happen everywhere, at school, in the neighborhood and I would go and I would always be there. I would help them to regulate their problems. There were a couple of members from another gang that were getting real pissed off and they didn't like these fights, and I knew them. So, I talked to them and the problem was regulated right then and there with no fistfights or violence. Then I started buying their dope. Before you know it their gang joined my gang. I guess*

this really impressed my father and my brother because when I first wanted to get into the gang with them they kept telling me no, that I was too young, and that maybe I should think about going to school. So, once I proved that I could negotiate things like stopping fights between two gangs without resorting to violence, this impressed them. They said that I was a good negotiator the kind that would be worthy to work for the more high-ranking biker gangs (10).

The family of my mom, everyone is in the Biker gang. My mom is not in the gang, but her family members are. It started when I was sixteen years old, but I started before that. I was twelve years old; it started when I was living at my mom's place. I was twelve years old and I was hanging out with guys in the gang. I was always with them. We did a lot of things we had money, we had weed on the table, and lots of money and cocaine. We had girls, and we were eleven and twelve and we would see that the older members of the gang had all these things. So, in our minds we would think that is how we wanted our life to be and that we wanted to be like the older members of the gang and we wanted to be better than them and make more money than them. And that is how we got in and stuff. We started with small thefts and everything (15).

Unique among the different ethnic groups studied, the French youth are more likely to join or affiliate themselves with gangs as a result of cultural transmission. Their immediate family members, most often adults, encourage deviance by glamorizing their personal role as members of higher ranking biker gangs, thus becoming mentors for these youth by teaching them to adopt the lifestyles and career patterns of professional criminals. This affiliation provide the youths with the training and experience for them to be eligible to join the higher ranking organized biker gangs. These youth turn to crime not because they experience poverty or scant opportunities (most of the French youth come from middle-class backgrounds) but because of cultural transmission. This occurs even though economic and social opportunities are readily available to these youth, most of whom are born in Canada and are not displaced immigrant youth.

Among Haitian youths, friends more than family influenced an individual's decision to join a gang, and those who cited family members tended to refer to brothers

rather than uncles, mothers or fathers, as was seen with French respondents. This can be seen with the observation from a 16-year-old Haitian immigrant (respondent 1) while a 17-year-old Haitian immigrant (respondent 19) referred to his two friends, themselves brothers, who encouraged him to join the gang.

> *What got me into it is that my older brother was into it already. It is mostly him who influenced me to get into the gang. It began when I was in school and I saw that my older brother always had money. I asked him about it and he told me if you enter the gang you will always have money and this seemed to impress me quite a bit. He told me if I would get in I would have to sell drugs at school and I started doing it and this is how I got influenced. Then after that I started hanging out with guys who were in the gang doing things with them, hanging out with them, I got to know them better. Then I started developing my own gang with a group of friends who were in the gang, I did my gang, let's say I belong to a gang in St. Michel called CDP (Crack Down Posse). I am still part of the CDP but I have my own gang, there are sub-groups of gangs (1).*

> *I became a member of the CDP* [Crack Down Posse], *when I was fifteen years old. I was in the gang for two years. I had two childhood friends. They were brothers and one of the brothers is the godfather of the gang. He is big. He is the leader. It was really through him that I got into the gang. He began to introduce me to all kinds of different people. I started accumulating contacts. If there was something happening I would go with them. Sometimes, I would steal. It started like that. I started moving up in the gang. The more crimes I committed the higher I became. I was growing in their esteem. I became delinquent. In my case it was through associations, through my friends that made me join the gang (19).*

The theme of family and friends being powerful spurs to joining a gang comes through when speaking with Jamaican youths as well. But again, like Haitians, Jamaicans refer more to siblings than to parents or older adults being the driving force in their opting to join a gang. This is shown first by a 17-year-old Jamaican-Canadian (respondent 45) whose friend and friend's brother formed a gang, and then by a 16-year-old (respondent 31) whose brother was in a gang.

> *I was recruited into the gang by one of my closest friends. We have been neighbours since eleven, or twelve years old. But even before we were neighbours we used to play on the same football team. He has an older brother and I am just*

as close to him. We all started hanging out together and became the gang (45).

My brother was in it, I saw him make the money and he asked me to be part of it (31).

Among Latinos, ethnicity in particular played a role in the composition of the gang and the choice of members, but just as importantly was the persuasiveness of friends (for eight respondents) and family (for two respondents). As we see, a 17-year-old Chilean-Canadian (born in Montreal) was influenced by his very close friend to join a gang (respondent 29) and a 20-year-old immigrant from Ecuador (respondent 22) was recruited by his cousin.

One of my best friends got me into the gang. He didn't really get me into it but we were friends and we were hanging around since the age of six and seven. We started growing up and everybody that they knew was in a gang. So, it was considered to be classy to be in a gang (29).

My cousins got me in. I saw the way they were making lots of money and always had beautiful girls around them and I thought to myself, wow that's the type of life I want to live (22)

Among those of diverse ethnic backgrounds, family and friends again came to the fore as persuasive factors in an individual's decision to join a gang. Youths knew people (friends and relations) who hung out with gangs and this likely made the gang less threatening and more attractive. Furthermore, it is clear that for some, gang membership is a de facto requirement of being a member of a criminally active family, which can be seen from the report of a 17-year-old Italian-Canadian. This young man had been exposed to this lifestyle from a very young age (nine years) and was always faced with the temptation of gang membership and the perceived financial benefits it would bring.

How I got in the gang. When I went over to my uncle's place, there were always people there. I would see them sitting around this round table and discussing business, illegal business of course. I would see sacks with money in them on the

> *table. There were platters filled with white powder in them. I used to ask myself what this was and then I found that it was cocaine. I asked my uncle where all of this money and drugs came from and he told me this was all part of his business and all these people that came over to his house were his business associates. So basically he was part of an organized criminal family. Even if I didn't want to get into this type of business I am implicated in this because it is my family. During Christmas parties I always see these people and I would talk to them all of the time so it is my cousins and my uncle. The majority of people that are in this type of gang are Italian. They are all Italians and it is considered an organized gang. They call it the mafia (39).*

In a more low-key fashion, a 17-year-old Montreal-born Portuguese-Canadian revealed that the fact that his brother belonged to a gang influenced him to join as well.

> *I was at school and I was young and I had older friends and they always had loads of money in their pockets and my brother knew some of these guys and he introduced me to these guys and that is how it went (38).*

Clearly the influence of friends and family has a profound impact on the choices these youths made in joining a street gang or biker gang.

b) School: Boredom and Popularity

While friends and family were important factors in influencing whether an individual joined a gang or not, school also played a role. Those who were bored or felt overwhelmed by school and were doing poorly in class might join a gang to be successful at something, even something criminal; alternatively, others might see a gang as a way of becoming more popular.

As a 17-year-old French teen comments:

> *I liked hanging out with these guys, they made being in a gang interesting and I wanted to be part of it. Most of my friends were middle class kids where their parents had good jobs, I guess most of us wanted to be part of something great and being in school... well you have to wait to get a diploma and then when you get a diploma you are not even sure to have a job or get a job that gives you lots of money. So all of us are living for the here and now, you know what I mean? Why should we wait when we are older to make money when we could make lots of money now and money also*

attracts beautiful girls believe me. Look at television: why do you think some actors are more successful than others? Because some are making more money and they have so much popularity and some of them are not even that good looking (4).

Another 20-year-old French-Canadian respondent explained that he joined the gang because he was not doing well in school and being part of a gang provided an alternative to failing at school.

I had to prove something, I wasn't doing well in school and I started to steal, and then I started drinking and taking drugs, most of my friends were doing the same thing and that's how we formed the gang. I wanted to show the world that I was a somebody (6).

Finally, a 17-year-old from El Salvador explains that school friends, also from El Salvador, convinced him to join their gang; even though he was engaged by school, he was more attracted to the gang.

I liked school especially at the beginning. I studied really hard, I passed with good grades and then I started to slack off because of the friends that I hung out with. I was always polite to my professors. I was always respectful towards them and I even liked them that wasn't the problem. It was that I liked being with my friends better than hanging out in school. I still passed my courses but I wasn't getting the grades that I was getting at the beginning that is for sure. To top it off I passed my courses by fluke. This is all because of my friend(48).

c) Power and Respect

Few individuals offered power and respect as a reason for joining a gang, although these qualities did arise in discussions surrounding how a gang is defined. A 16-year-old French teen saw gang membership as a way out of his unpleasant school life and an opportunity to persuade others that he had power and should be respected. This teen felt isolated and was consistently teased and given a hard time by fellow students; once he joined the gang, however, the kids who had once been his antagonists now feared him.

I did not like school very much because I wasn't very good at it and the kids at

> *school picked on me quite a bit. I never felt like I really fit in. So I got in the gang so that people would stop picking on me which they did because they were afraid of me (11).*

d) The Neighbourhood

Several youths referred to their neighborhood as being home to gangs or under gang protection and that it was this that drew them to gangs, either because of general proximity or because joining a gang conferred some protection from attack by gang members. This seemed particularly common among Haitian and Jamaican respondents. As one 15-year-old Haitian immigrant observed:

> *I got in because of the neighborhood that I live in which is Montreal North. I would see some guys they looked cool, they always seemed happy and relaxed and sometimes I would see them at the nearby park rolling a joint and smoking it and passing it around so that everyone got a toke. The weed smelled sweet and, well, one day one of the guys saw me looking and as I was about to ride away on my bike he comes up to me and asks my name and asked if I was from the area cause he always seen me around and stuff. I say yeah, and he asks me to meet his friends and I was a little nervous. The guy who came up to me he was about 16 years old... His friends asked me if I wanted to sample some weed, I said yeah, it looked really cool. I was coughing of course and they told me to take small draws, and I felt a little light headed and happy so I liked it and I went to meet them at the park every week and without question they accepted me as one of them (7).*

A 16-year-old Jamaican immigrant made explicit the connection between a poor neighborhood, poverty itself and gang membership; joining the gang was simply part of life in an underprivileged community where few options are available to youth.

> *I got in the gang because I was born and raised in the ghetto you know. The ghetto is little Burgundy. I was born and raised like that. Some of my family members were in and stuff like that (23).*

For Haitian and Jamaican youth gangs, territoriality is a significant aspect of gang life, and banding together with other Haitians or other Jamaicans becomes an affirmation of that identity (Shaw and McKay 1969). These Haitian youth and Jamaican youth are

segregated in poverty-stricken neighborhoods and discriminated against because of their ethnic and racial identity (Pinderhughes, 1997). Most experience economic frustration because of their low-income status and thus turn to gangs to regain a sense of power and privilege.

Among those of other ethnic groups, few individuals remarked on neighbourhood and gang membership as being connected, except for an 18-year-old Montreal-born Polish youth who described his life in the ghetto as well as the influence of a Rastafarian on his recruitment to a gang. In this case, the Rastafarian was seen as someone who could be trusted and who in turn accepted this young boy, ignoring the fact of his being white. This particular youth lived in a predominantly black neighbourhood and perceived himself to be a subject of attack by other black youths; in order to circumvent this, he felt obliged to join the gang.

> *I lived under a crack house for three years. There was a big crack house on top of my apartment. So I knew one of the Rasta men. A Rastafari, it is a big Black guy with dreads. You don't have to be dreaded and a real Rastafarian is a righteous man that eats fish. That don't eat nothing that contains blood. It is a vegetarian and smokes weed when he prays. It is just a religious man. It is basically like a Christian religion, very righteous okay, except that they smoke weed. I am not part of this religion. Everyone that lived around me they were all Blacks. My neighbor was a nice man, an old man. He was a Rastafari and he smoked weed all the time. He didn't sell, he smoked weed all of the time. That is when I got in the weed around eleven. He didn't introduce me to the weed, I just took* [he laughs]. *He didn't let me smoke because I was too young you know. It was in his religion and he didn't think that I should smoke. The Rastaman are good people, some are just fake Rastas' and they can look like they are righteous, but they are just sick bastards. The Blacks on top of me were crack users right. Yes, they may claim that they are Rastafarians and they may even look righteous. But any cop will stop anybody dreads or not. It don't matter White boy or not. In that area, if you don't dress nice, you drive a fancy car, you may just be some big boss, this is how the cops may think and the cops will just stop you. That's how it was in my area. Down the streets there were the Latins. There were lots of problems between the Blacks and the Latins. So, I would just observe. I was the White boy. That is why I consider myself the White boy. I have been called this all of my life. Someone in my neighborhood would always scream out to me and say "White!"*

> *some people would call me "Cracker" and "Cracker is an insult. But they would say "Crazy Cracker" trying to give me respect cause' that is when I started...*[he pauses]*...he continues by saying: that is what I said I was picked on, and I let it go on for a certain amount of time. Then one day I snapped and I took out a lot of people and I hurt a lot of people, and they just left me alone after that. That is when I got some respect and then I went on a power trip for a while. The guys who used to pick at me are now members of my gang – and trust me they don't pick on me anymore (25).*

This particular youth explains how he lived under a crack house in a neighborhood where drugs were prevalent; he was also poor and needed money. Furthermore, he was the only "White Boy" in a predominantly Black and Latino neighborhood and was persistently picked on by non-Whites. His solution to the economic and social problems was to join the gang and thus obtain the respect he was lacking. Once he joined the gang, he was no longer teased and singled out by Blacks and Latinos.

e) *Ethnicity*

Clearly most youths belonged to gangs that if not ethnically consistent were certainly racially consistent. Nevertheless, most youths interviewed did not directly address the issue of ethnic identity and ethnic culture, except for Latino gang members, who pointed explicitly to shared cultural aspects of language, country of origin, and a sense of alienation and isolation caused by recent immigrant. In fact, among the Latino sample, eight of the ten individuals described a stressful immigration process, as characterized by a 17-year-old immigrant from El Salvador:

> *I went to special education because I immigrated from El Salvador and well I had to learn the language and I was behind most of the other students. Also at this school there was a lot of crime going on so I got influenced by all these things and that is why I really never took school so seriously. But at the same time I never felt accepted or like I really belonged, I felt that I immigrated to a place that was very cold and people didn't accept outsiders like me. There were Quebecois who picked on me for being Latino and kept telling me to go back to my country. Things only changed when I became friends with a group of El Salvadorians I met at school (48)*

He goes on to emphasize the point that he was spending time with friends of the same national and cultural background, saying,

> *When I was at school I hung out specifically with the El Salvadorian kids. At first I just hung out at school smoking weed, sometimes drinking beer with them and then one day out of the blue they asked me if I would like to be part of their gang (48).*

The educational experience of this teen on his arrival to Montreal was evidently not satisfactory – first being placed in a special education class (common procedure for most non-English/non-French speaking immigrants) and then falling behind most of the other students – contributed to his overall sense of alienation. The friendship of his compatriots offered an attractive option to school, and joining with their gang seemed like a good choice to him.

Obviously, a major component of ethnicity is shared language, and two other Latino gang members revealed that they joined the gang because it gave them an opportunity to speak Spanish, which in turn facilitated their initiation into the gang. However, it is interesting to note that these two youths looked more black than Latino and seemed to hold on to language as a means of proving their 'latino-ness', so to speak.

A 17-year-old Dominican born youth explains:

> *I was at the swimming pool as I remember and one guy he grabbed my pants and I thought maybe he was gay, but now I understand that he wasn't gay but, I was telling him what are you doing? He dragged me out of the water and said come on, let's get out of here, these guys are coming and there is going to be some kind of fight. I see all the Spanish people coming from all over the place and coming out of the pool, and they start talking Spanish. When they heard that I spoke Spanish as well, I got punched in the nose from all of the confusion and when these Spanish guys who punched me realized that I spoke Spanish, they said they were sorry and after a while they said why don't you come out into the park, it is all right. I went to the park and they hammered me and they said you are in PN* [Punto Negros]. *They beat me up about fifteen times, there were seven or eight guys. I didn't know it was coming and the next thing I know I was on the floor and I had a black eye and a few cuts and bruises. A couple of days later I was thinking*

> *about it, and then I said to myself, I am in. A lot of times I get mistaken for a Black person and before joining the gang the guys who hit me by mistake, thought that I was Black not Latino. So when I spoke to them in Spanish I was automatically in the gang (41).*

For the French respondents, gang membership or recruitment was strictly associated with family activities. In particular, individuals were more likely to join the street gang and/or biker gang if relations (parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, etc.) were already members of a biker gang. Haitians and Jamaicans generally pointed to friends who were gang members as well as neighborhood gang presence as routes of entry into gangs. Of all the interviewees, only Latinos specifically referred to the cultural components of nationality, ethnicity and language as important factors in their choice of friends and in their belonging to gangs. While the gangs may be divided on language and racial lines, this appears to be related to friendship circles and family relations rather than a conscious attempt to reflect a shared ethnicity – except, evidently, in the case of Latinos.

4. Maintenance of Gang Membership

Several factors come to the fore in a youth maintaining his membership in the gang (*Table 5.4*): loyalty, image/attitude, proof of economic viability. However, some youths were not required to do anything special to remain in the gang. While ethnicity, race and language might be cited as contributing factors in deciding to be in a gang and being invited to be in a gang, these elements played no role in maintenance of gang membership and across the ethnic groups, similar responses were heard.

Table 5.4. Elements that contribute to maintenance of gang membership according to ethnicity

Factor	*French (10)*	*Haitian (10)*	*Jamaicans (10)*	*Latinos (10)*	*Other (10)*
Loyalty	9	--------	10	10	5
Attitude	4	3	-------	6	------
Earnings	10	4	10	3	5
Nothing					3

Note: columns may sum to greater than 10 because respondents could offer more than one reason.

a) Loyalty and Respect

The most commonly cited factor that determined whether a youth was permitted to remain in the gang was that of loyalty and respect to the gang. And when referring to loyalty, respondents generally meant keeping the gang's activities from the police, not revealing to police that they were gang members, taking the blame for the gang's criminal activities to avoid having the gang implicated in criminal activity. Again and again, respondents mentioned being true to the gang, keeping their mouth shut, not ratting on the gang. Part of being loyal also involved maintaining respect towards the gang and its members. Loyalty included coming to the aid of fellow members who were having trouble with rivals. The importance of loyalty to the gang is highlighted by an 18-year-old French gang member, who explained that in order to maintain membership one must never inform to police on fellow gang members, must always be discreet, and, if caught by authorities, must take full responsibility for the crime without involving the other members of the gang:

> *If you ever get caught you tell the cops that it is you and only you involved in committing the crime. You are not going to rat on anyone and say this one gave me this and this one told me to do that. It is just not done, it is not right and if you*

> *do this and tell the police what you know then you are sure to get yourself killed, it is for certain (2).*

Again, we see the importance of the gang's code of silence to gang life, as described by a 20-year-old French gang member:

> *Let's say you get caught doing something stupid, you don't talk. You don't talk. Let's say you get caught with drugs. I never got caught with anything, it is the first time I got caught, and in a way I learned to keep my mouth shut. They would do nothing to me because it doesn't affect them. The guys on the outside, that is. Because I told the police that I did that and I did that also, except I told them that it had nothing to do with the gang, I have nothing to say. I did confess to the police and told them the various crimes I committed because I wanted to come out and be clean and have nothing on my back. I didn't want some former crime to be haunting me, so I told them about all the crimes I committed with no mention of the gang. I just wanted to be really clean and have nothing, and of course I didn't want to involve the gang for my own crimes. I said everything I did to the police...in that part that I got arrested I told them I did a hold up there, another hold up somewhere else. This happened there and this happened at this other place (15).*

This sentiment is not limited to French-Canadian gang members. A 17-year-old Jamaican immigrant reports on how membership is maintained:

> *I am saying stay true and no back stabbing, you know what I am saying. If you with us, then you with us, you know what I mean. You can't go to another gang. We won't hold you back if you want to go but you gotta be loyal to your family. Understand what I am saying? (44).*

All the Latino respondents emphasized the importance of loyalty and respect to maintaining membership, as reported first by a 20-year-old from Ecuador (respondent 22) and then a 17-year-old Montreal-born El Salvadorian (respondent 3).

> *Like I said, you prove yourself by being loyal. . . . You keep your mouth shut and you don't rat on your boys. For example, if we all get caught by the cops and the cops ask us questions we all deny everything. If we know which member did something illegal we don't tell the cops so and so did this. We keep our mouth shut and that is what is important man, if the gang members can't trust you then you are nobody (22).*

> *In my gang you have to respect the people that are in it and we have to respect one another and that's it. If you ever have a problem all you have to do is to call us and we will be there for the other member who is in trouble (3).*

The benefits of this loyalty esteemed by gang members are noted by a 17-year-old German immigrant (respondent 46), who points out that when under attack, he can merely call his gang friends and they will come to his aid. A 17-year-old Irish-Canadian (respondent 42) reports that respect and honesty towards fellow gang members (if not to the general public and for public security!) are vital assets for remaining in the gang.

> *It is important because if you walk on the street and you get jumped, you just make one phone call and your gang members are there to protect you (46).*

> *You have to be respectful to your gang members, honest, and don't try to back-stab them (42).*

While there are benefits to such loyalty and respect, there are also consequences to those who do not show loyalty and respect, and threaten the economic viability and social viability of the gang. This is clarified by a 17-year-old Polish-Canadian, who explains that a gang member who is caught stealing or lying to other members will be dealt with in specific:

> *You can lose it. Fuck anyone could lose it. You fuck me over with money, if you're skimming off my money. If you bullshit me, or you talk shit about me. But not just me, but about the other guys in my gang. We vote him, we will sit down and we will get pissed drunk and if we can make a decision when we are drunk, it is good or bad, it doesn't matter. We get drunk because we are loose when we are drunk, and anything goes alright. Someone can fuck us over for a G (one thousand dollars), but then he gives his reason, and you say you stay there and we put him in a bathroom or a closet, I don't give a fuck, I don't care if it is my right hand man. He is not going to screw anyone over again. So, we just sit there and we talk. We talk shit and let out what we really feel because we are drunk, so anything is going to come out, anything from your subconscious is coming out. Then if it makes sense we do it. We decide to keep him and if we decide to keep him, hey he stays and that's cool (25).*

b) Attitude

Remaining in the gang required gang members to display a certain attitude – one that showed that they were tough, resistant to violence, capable of violence and not frightened by anything. Two interviewees comment on the necessity to have this hard external shell, one that tells the world that he is bad. The first comment is from a 17-year-old French-Canadian, followed by an 18-year-old French-Canadian:

> *You have to keep up a tough image like you are not afraid of anything. I was never the leader in the gang, I was always considered the youngest member. I was always stuck with the dirty work though, for example going to ask the people who owned money to the gang to pay up and if they didn't pay up they would get a beating from me. The members of the gang called me the AGGRESSOR. It made me feel powerful and bad. I did all this for my friends in the gang but also for myself, I wanted to keep up this image of badness and at the same time I felt it was important to be respected and I needed this for my reputation (4).*

> *You have to prove yourself of course. You have to prove that you are not a dog. That means that you are not afraid of anything and you are not some kind of crybaby (2)*

Part of earning and keeping this tough attitude is through the commission of crimes. A 17-year-old immigrant from El Salvador explains being part of a gang required him to work his way up in the seriousness of crimes, and that even once admitted as a gang member, he had to keep up this activity – although he did have some control over what he could and could not do. This type of activity conferred a degree of bravado on gang members, gained them bragging rights, but also generated the perception by others that this person was tough and not to be contended with. However, at the end of the day, toughness proven, stripes won, the gang member had to step up for his fellow members when they were faced with problems.

> *You have to show that you are capable of stealing, to sell drugs, to go to the bank where an interact machine is, and use someone else's card, that is the one you stole while you stood in back of someone while they were withdrawing money or*

passing some kind of transaction. You observe the number they are putting in the machine and there you go you're in. That usually impresses the guys. When the members see that you are truly decided and that you want to be part of the gang they will say okay and they will ask you to do more things and if you succeed at doing everything they ask you to do like steal bank cards, sell cocaine, and things like that; they will stop giving you orders and then you can do more or less what you want. Well, it is not like you stop doing things for the gang it is just that you have more control in deciding how you are going to do it because you gained the gang's complete trust. You still have to be there for them that don't change. For example, if one of your friends is in trouble you are right there all the time helping them out if they need you. Once you are in you have an obligation towards the members that is definitely understood. Whether you like the guy or not if he is in your gang you have to be there for him and defend him (8).

c) Earning Potential

An individual's potential to bring money in to the gang is also considered a point in favour towards that individual remaining in the gang. Added to that, many street gangs aspire to a business world model management style. This is best articulated by a 16-year-old Jamaican-Canadian, who indicates that making more money is an advantage to being part of the gang, but also that it casts a favourable light on those who are able to bring money in.

People think it is easy, that you just sit on your ass and you have people come check you or something like that. It is not like that you know. There is a lot of shit you have to think about and a lot of shit you have to worry about, it is work because you still have to always make sure that your people are satisfied. It is like a real business you know, you've got customers too, they are just called IBM customers. They have to make sure that their company, that their people, their clients are satisfied. You have to do the same thing. It is a business, no matter what just because it is in an illegal sense of the way, it makes it look bad. But no matter what, you are still doing the hard work like any other business man. Just like Bill Gates is doing, he is making like a million dollars like every second on it. He came from hard work and he moved up to it. No matter what you do in this world, no matter if you are selling weed, crack, or heroine or whatever it is. It is still hard work no matter what. You still have to worry about a lot of things. A lot of people think it is not hard work and that it is just easy money. It may come easy after a certain amount of time because you got used to it afterwards and you know people start checking that you have the good shit or whatever. You are still working as hard as anyone else there and this is how you keep up with the gang

business and how you remain in it (24).

Put more simply by a 17-year-old from Germany:

Trafficking makes good money and it was difficult to get out of it. Be loyal and make lots of money for yourself and the gang – this is how you maintain membership (46).

d) No Specific Activity

Interestingly, some youths said they were not required to do anything specific to maintain their membership in the gang; indeed, half of the youths in the 'other ethnic' category said this was true for them. In some cases this was because the gang member had a relation who was also in the gang, and thus had some favored status, but others may not have been required to do anything because the gang itself was not as tightly organized as those gangs where specific activities were required to maintain membership. As a 17-year-old Portuguese-Canadian points out:

In my case, I didn't really have to prove myself, because the members knew who I was and it was because of my older cousin that I got into the gang (38).

Overall, we can see that loyalty and respect are prime factors that determine whether an individual is permitted to remain in the gang or not. This is followed by attitude, economic potential and for some, no particular effort at all. None of the respondents mentioned ethnicity, language or culture as factors that permitted individuals to remain in the gang.

5. Advantages of Gang Membership

Gang membership has obvious risks associated with it, arrest and violence being the obvious ones. However, there are evident advantages to remaining a member of a gang, some of which (economic, loyalty) are enumerated in the previous section.

However, respondents offered other advantages to gang membership, including the opportunity to define and protect that defined territory from incursions by other groups, and protection due to an association with a biker gang.

An explicit display of ethnic tension was provided by a 15-year-old Montreal-born Algerian youth, who saw a major advantage of gang membership as having access to an army of youths to fight against another ethnic group (specifically, Italian-Canadians in his neighborhood). Clearly here, ethnicity and race are compelling factors in the perceived advantages of remaining in a gang. For this particular youth, being in a gang with other Arab youths meant being better able to fight the Italian-Canadians. The two ethnic groups living in the same neighborhood apparently shared dislike for each other, and gang membership provided this individual with a way of acting on that feeling. As the youth says, the gang membership enabled him

> *To protect our territory and to get rid of the Italian Mafia (36).*

In an interesting reflection on the state of police action on biker gangs in Montreal, a Polish-Canadian reported that he believed that membership in a biker gang conferred some protection from arrest on him.

> *There are advantages like as in my city, the cops won't bug me, they will harass me but they never arrested me. I am affiliated with the biker gang and I worked for them (25).*

A noted benefit of gang membership was territoriality. If there were conflicts between two ethnic gangs, then being part of the gang allowed the members to fight against the group they were in conflict with or who seemed to pose a threat of some kind. Therefore, being part of the gang also justified and enforced the racism that was felt

towards a particular ethnic group. Another advantage was power and the feeling that one was protected from the scrutiny of the law.

6. Quitting the Gang

All respondents had considered the ramifications of quitting the gang – was it something they could do, something they wanted to do or something they would have to do? Would they ever in fact leave the gang? Indeed, the consensus among the interviewees was that leaving the gang was not a decision taken lightly, if it was a decision they were in a position to make at all. Decisions around leaving the gang can be centered around six broad categories (*Table 5.5*): a) quitting threatens the gang and is not permitted; b) quitting is not an option because it is the only way an individual can make a living; c) quitting is difficult because of family/friend relationships with the gang; d) quitting is determined by one's loyalty or betrayal of the gang; e) quitting is possible if one is not involved too deeply; f) quitting is possible in order to meet parenting obligations or if one wants to avoid future arrests. For several interviewees, more than one issue was raised when discussing quitting the gang.

Table 5.5. Quitting the gang: distribution according to ethnicity

Component	*French (10)*	*Haitians (10)*	*Jamaicans (10)*	*Latinos (10)*	*Other (10)*
Threat	6	10	-------	9	3
Financial	-------	10	2	-------	-------
Relationships	-------	4	8	-------	8
Loyalty/Betrayal	6	10	-------	10	10
Less involved	10	10	2	-------	-------
Parenting/arrest	4	-------	-------	10	2

Note: columns may sum to greater than 10 because respondents may have cited more than one reason.

a) Quitting is Dangerous

The dangers and risks of leaving a gang were generally emphasized by those individuals who belonged to a street gang affiliated with a formal criminal organization or who were themselves members of a biker gang. This applied predominantly to French gang members, whose family members were often associated with biker gangs and organized criminal groups. In this case, gang members are considered to know some, if not all, inside details and secrets of the street and biker gang organizations. Possession of this information by an outsider could threaten the security of the gang itself. Furthermore, deciding to leave the gang would be perceived as a breach of commitment and of confidentiality. For many, membership in the street and biker gang is for life, and the higher one rises in the gang's hierarchy the harder it is to quit. For instance, if an individual knows too much and decides one day that he wants to quit the gang, the other members may view this decision with suspicion or see it as a betrayal, and do everything in their power to keep the individual from abandoning the gang. A French 17-year-old reveals that:

> *You can stay in the gang for as long as you want or should I say for as long as you do what you have to do up until you don't get caught or, worse, die for doing it. The longer you stay, the higher you go in the gang and the more risks you take in getting hurt. I just want to completely get out of it. I feel that everyone is a hypocrite. They are only good or nice to you as long as you are part of the gang and if you want out they won't understand. They will try to persuade you to remain no matter what are your excuses (4).*

Even Haitians commented on the potential risks of gang membership; leaving was rarely an option and those who did leave might leave by virtue of their death, as explained by a 16-year-old Haitian immigrant:

> *There are some guys that are living and dying for the gang, I mean they literally*

> *die. Often it is live by the gun and dies by the gun that is the gang attitude and who said this line was Tupac. Most often guys get killed because they are members of the gang.*
>
> *So, most of them need their gang to continue and therefore it becomes important to recruit younger members. The older members take care of the money and the younger members get them the money (1)*

A 17-year-old Italian-Canadian reports most of his members remain in the gang for life because of the danger involved:

> *For life, unless someone shoots you or if you die during the time you are a member (39).*

Evidently for some individuals, the risks of leaving a gang are significant; but remaining in the gang carries risks, such as death, as well.

b) Financial Reasons

Financial reasons were cited by two Jamaicans; in their case, the gang provided a way to make a living, and quitting the gang would result in their losing their income. In a materially competitive youth culture, losing the opportunity to make money deprives one of the opportunity to have all the gear needed to carry off the right impression. A 17-year-old Jamaican-Canadian describes how since being requested to leave his mother's home, he now needed some form of income. Belonging to a gang provided a way of earning a living; quitting the gang meant he no longer had access to any money:

> *I used to sell and I took some of the drugs too. When I got into the gang I was fourteen years old. I didn't go into the gang just because of money, but there are other reasons as well. I would come in the house at six o'clock in the morning, I would do whatever the fuck I wanted because that was the age you know. Girls would come into my room, if I am going out up until three in the morning, if I was smoking weed or whatever. My mom would already be sleeping, but she would hear me come in so she would come see what I am doing. So, to avoid this, I would go downstairs close my door and how can I bring girls in my house at three in the morning without my mom finding out, I would sneak them in through my bedroom window, which was in the basement. My mom figured out what I was up to and so she started getting tired of it after a while and she knew what was going*

on and she ordered me to stop smoking weed and she would always tell me the same shit everyday and she kept telling me how I didn't listen to her. She told me that if I didn't follow her rules that I should go and get my own apartment. So, whatever, I got my own apartment and the apartment that I was living at was a base really and so after a while it was just getting harder and shit and I didn't like it. Three people coming at my door like twenty-four hours a fuckin' day. Sometimes I didn't give a fuck because they were offering me money. So, I was happy, after a while I don't feel comfortable sleeping in this place so whatever. I had people break into my own apartment and things just started getting harder. This shit just got hot. One day me and my boys were blasting the fuckin' music in my apartment and we never usually do that because we are careful. So, we were just blasting the music and we didn't hear anything, you know. Then like a few minutes into the CD, the door just flies open, that is why I am here – they found shit loads of weed on me and they arrested and charged me on this. Once I am outta here I have no other place to go but back in the gang (45).

c) Quitting and Relationships with Gang Members

Several individuals, particularly Jamaicans, Haitians and those in the 'other' ethnic group suggested that it could be quite difficult to leave the gang behind because the gang itself was composed of friends. Thus, if one was inclined to leave the gang, but still wanted to hang out with one's friends, one was by default still part of the gang. In fact, most of the Jamaicans interviewed raised this issue: it can be difficult to quit the friendship no matter how much one wants to quit the gang, a feeling voiced by a 17-year-old Jamaican:

It is kind of like a life thing in a sense. Anybody can separate or leave whenever they want. The sense is that it is a group of people that you grew up with and a group of people that stay strong with you, and they are your friends and no matter what they will be by your side. You could be free, you can leave and stop doing whatever you are doing. Like if you are selling drugs on the streets and stop doing whatever you are doing. You could be a legitimate person and still stay with the same people you know. You don't have to be selling drugs and or anything like that. That is another thing that people think too that some gangs you know that is all they are about. There are certain people that are a part of it and are very legal and they don't take part you know in any of those narcotics and anything like that you know. So, it is just a group of people, everybody evolves you know. From that person is ready to move on from something bigger and better you know. They can move on to that you know (44).

Again, among the 'other ethnic' category, many felt it would be difficult to quit the gang because it would involve leaving friends behind and also having to give an explanation to those friends, as noted by an 18-year-old Portuguese immigrant:

I guess you leave all of your friends. They would have a lot of questions (26)

For many individuals, who lived in poor neighborhoods, the gang was a source of friendship as much as a way of gaining power and respect, getting money, and having fun. Leaving the gang would mean leaving those friendships behind, and likely also suffering from being an outcast. Although not articulated by anyone, leaving the gang might also open individuals up to being picked on. Thus, relationships with the gang members could serve as a reason to stay in the gang because without those relationships, life in the neighborhood could be very lonely indeed.

d) Betrayal and Loyalty

Most of the French respondents expressed no desire to quit the gang. Although there were certain attractions to remaining in the gang, such as the chance to come into money without working, there were more persuasive negative reasons for remaining in the gang. One particular concern here was that youths clearly understood that quitting would be seen as a betrayal to family members and friends who are heavily affiliated with organized biker and street gangs. As has already been noted, French gang members generally are recruited by family members who in turn are often members of biker gangs such as the Hells Angels or Rock Machine. For these individuals quitting the gang would require severing family ties to siblings or even parents, more significant than losing friendships. More dire consequences to quitting the gang could include a threat of bodily

harm to the potential quitter by other gang members. However, retaining one's distance, 'not getting too deep into it', does provide a means of exit from the gang.

e) Minimizing Involvement with the Gang

It was possible to limit involvement with the gang; this provided a way of stepping away when things become too risky. One French-Quebecois (18 years old) explains that in order to be able to quit the gang one must ensure one remains at the same 'level'; that is, do some work for the gang but not get involved in more risky ventures (which, from a gang leader's point of view confer more status on the gang member). This then allows the gang member to gradually phase himself out of the gang:

> *I have been working for the biker gang six years. I have quit the gang because I was never deep into it (2).*

This idea of not being too involved was echoed by others; they believe they will be able to quit the gang as long as they are not too deeply indoctrinated within it, which is pointed out by a 17-year-old Jamaican-Canadian:

> *Me I just look at it as I did my time here. I am leaving next month and whatever like so, I am just trying to change my ways like I still have my homeboys before I came here and stuff. Me I am just getting into the rap business and that's it like you know. I am not really involved in the robberies and stuff like that (37).*

Clearly, some individuals feel that it is possible to leave the gang quite easily, but in order to do so, one must have some arm's length relationship with serious criminal activity. Hanging around on the fringes, doing some minor delinquent behaviour allows one to still be seen as all right, but keeps one from having to make intense commitments, with the associated return obligations, to the gang.

f) External Reasons: Families and Arrest

Finally, for many respondents, being arrested was an acceptable reason for leaving

the gang. Fellow gang members could recognise that this might pose too much of a risk, and it was not frowned upon if someone chose to bow out at this point in their gang career. A second major external reason involved parental obligations or other family obligations, particularly for Latino gang members.

Two of the French respondents did reflect on their desire to quit the gang, citing the fact that they had been arrested by police and had lost their freedom, as motivation to leave. Incarceration in a juvenile facility lessened the attraction and glamour of gang life and demonstrated that while incarcerated they did not benefit from the aegis of gang membership. Certainly, incarceration brought home the message that gang life was not an attractive lifestyle in the long term and carried with it risk of more serious repercussions in the future. Although the temptation to return to the gang after release from a juvenile detention center was great, a 17-year-old Portuguese-Canadian commented that he had been motivated to change this aspect of his life:

> *Listen, for me it is difficult to quit the gang, it is not an option that is really offered my way. But I have to find a way not to go back, it won't be easy but I just want to quit because the thing is, look at what has happened to me because of the gang. I am in here and my freedom and independence has been taken away from me(38).*

Other reasons that respondents believed provided a safe exit and as well a justification for themselves to leave the gang include parenting obligations and responsibilities, as noted by a 20-year-old Quebec-born respondent:

> *I stayed in the gang from 12 to 18* [years of age]. *I don't want to go back; I don't want to start again. But I don't know what is going to happen once I go on the outside again. I don't want to do stupid things again because I have a daughter. She is four, she is going to be four in October and I am getting out of here in October, she has not seen much of me. When I got in she was one years old. Now she is going to be four. I have to do something about it. When I go out on the weekends I still see her. I am no longer with her mother though. Since I came in here I called it quits with her because I didn't want her to wait for me and all that*

crap. So we left each other (15).

For most Latino youth, the gang was a lifelong commitment, remarked a 17-year-old immigrant from El Salvador:

> *Until I get older, I guess I won't want to be in a gang anymore because I will have my own family. If I would continue being in a gang I am not altogether sure of that. I am not that sure. It depends what happens or what will happen later on and how it is going to be in the gang. For instance, who is going to live and who is going to die. I have had some of my friends die because they were part of the gang, like through drive by shootings, or in some cases they started taking the drugs they were supposed to sell and overdosed (48).*

However, a 20-year-old immigrant from Ecuador explained that family, especially parental, obligations are a very acceptable excuse for quitting the gang:

> *It is hard to say. I have a son now, he is six months old. I have to get out. I want to believe I am finished with that I want to go legit. I mean I care for my members but at the same time I don't want my son growing up in that type of life. Being in a gang does have its risks and, well, it is a little unstable at times. What I mean by that is it can be a little dangerous. I got in because I did not know any better I thought it would always be the good life, the only good thing about it is that you know you have friends you can trust. But, look where I have ended up, I can't even see my son all the time and it just drives me crazy. The little guy is helpless and I have to provide him with a decent life (22).*

It appears that the aspect of family is very important for these Latino youth in the gang. What sets them apart from other ethnic groups under study is the fact that they would choose to quit the gang if it meant choosing between their immediate family members or their street family – and this is something that all members seem to accept – quitting would be an option because this particular culture of youth believe that family obligations would provide a legitimate excuse to quit the gang.

Leaving the gang after investing a great deal of oneself in it can be a traumatic and difficult decision. For many, such as Haitian youths, the loyalties developed within the gang are not easily severed. As well, friendships and locales can influence the choice

of one's friends. Leaving the gang might well limit access to friends to hang out with in a dull neighbourhood with few recreational or employment opportunities. All ethnic groups shared similar reasons for leaving or not leaving the gang; for many a major consideration is whether one is too deeply connected to criminal activities and leaving would threaten the security of the gang. For others, being able to keep a distance from criminal activities means one can more easily walk away from the gang at a later date. Interestingly, Jamaicans were more likely to comment that their friends were part of the gang, so even if they did withdraw from the gang, they would likely continue to hang out with their friends who remained in the gang.

7. Gangs and Ethnic Composition

Few of the research subjects, except for those in the Latino group, explicitly referred to ethnic identity, particularly with respect to components like language and culture, as crucial to gang membership. Nevertheless, it is clear that many of the subjects affiliated not just along racial lines, but also along broad ethnic groupings. The French youth gangs accepted white, French-speaking members; Haitians considered themselves separate from Jamaicans; and Latinos emphasized the importance of Spanish language skills for membership in their gangs. Other gang members tended to align themselves along racial lines: whites belonged to white gangs, blacks belonged to black gangs, an Algerian individual belonged to an Arabic gang, and an Italian-Canadian youth belonged to a gang that was strongly affiliated with other Italian-Canadians.

Several French-Canadian respondents pointed out that they themselves were not racists, but that members of the more formal biker/organized gangs with which they were affiliated were. And this affected the racial/ethnic composition of their own gangs. A 20-

year-old Quebec-born gang member affiliated with the Hells Angels points out that his particular gang was for the most part white and Quebecois, although it did include some English-speaking gang members:

> *In my gang there were only Quebecois people. Everyone knew each other. However, for me it doesn't matter and I don't think it is absolutely necessary that all the members be Quebecois. I don't consider myself racist or members of my gang racist. We try to let as much people as we can join the gang. Yes, there were a few English guys as well in our gang. The reason why there were more Quebecois in our gang was because in our neighborhood the majority of people are Quebecois (15).*

However, one of his peers (also a 20-year-old Quebec-born gang member affiliated with the Hells Angels) stated that he saw himself as much more welcoming to those of non-French cultural backgrounds, and that in fact, his gang was fairly diverse in membership. However, he noted that there is an element of racism in discussion about black gang members or black criminals associated with the gang.

> *Members of the biker gang are racist in a way. They are all White though; there are only a couple of Black guys down where I come from. These Black guys even work for us. Some are older than me and they have more power than I have. They are older than me, they are higher than me because they have been able to last longer and do more crimes for the gang. They are about the ages of 28 and 29. In my gang there are French, English, Italian, Portuguese, and they all speak French and English. The majority is White. I don't know for me this is not important. Some will make comments like "those Niggers". "Those Niggers". I will say things like, so what? Some are okay and some are not, it is just like the White people. Some are not okay and some are okay. I am like that. Some are like, no you can't trust those Niggers, we don't know sometimes they are like that and other times they could be different. We don't know them; they don't know how to solve their own problems. When they are alone they cannot solve their own problems and it is things like that they will say. In the past, we had a few Black guys work for us but it never lasted long and these guys were used for the more risky jobs (15).*

However, this individual's attitude is not shared by many, and there is a distinct awareness that blacks are not particularly welcome in white gangs. In fact, a 19-year-old

French gang member revealed that biker members are racist, advocate White power and look down on Blacks and anyone not born in Canada:

> *Yes, it is important because for them it works by having White Power. At the top for them it is White Power. They are racist. They will use anyone in order to make money.*
>
> *They are racist against the Blacks, everyone who is not Quebecois. They are racist against every ethnic group imaginable that is anyone who is not born in Canada. Like for example, they don't allow Pakis in the gang, because they don't really know our ways and they immigrated here from a different country. It is different when it is an Italian for example, that is born here and is part of the gang. Anyway, the bikers are not really crazy about the Blacks. What they say about Blacks is that they are freaken Niggers. They smell. Things like that. I am not that way because I have a lot of friends that come from different cultures. These things don't bother me. I was brought up with Blacks and with people that came from different ethnic cultures (18).*

Like the French gangs, Haitian gangs are also homogeneous in terms of race and ethnicity. Haitian gangs tend to be organized around territory, particularly areas that are poor, gang infiltrated and ethnically homogeneous (especially black areas or Haitian areas of Montreal). Like the French and Latino groups, language also plays a role here; Haitians speak Creole, a unique dialect of French. Although Haitians are black, they are less likely to have Jamaican members in their gang because they speak English (and Patois); and although they speak French, their use of Patois discourages French members because they speak Quebecois. A 17-year-old Haitian-Canadian reveals:

> *I am part of a Haitian gang. There are only Haitians in my gang. Yes, it is important that all the members be Haitian because it has been like this for a long time. Everyone likes to be with his or her own ethnic group. They feel more comfortable being with people that are from the same ethnic group. We speak the same language and we have a certain style that is not Jamaican and not Quebecois. Only another Haitian can understand where another Haitian comes from, you feel comfortable with your own kind. The name of my gang is Les Bo-gars. They are part of the Montreal North district and Rivieres des Prairies. Let's face it we don't have many Quebecois members in our gangs, they wouldn't let us join their gangs, so why should we let them in our gangs? (5).*

Thus, although they may share skin colour with the Jamaicans and language with the French, Haitian youths do not see themselves as belonging to either. In addition to these qualities of their own group, they also feel rejected by the Jamaicans and alienated by the French; this sense of rejection adds to the pull of exclusively Haitian gangs, especially since most of these youths tend to band with individuals experiencing similar experiences. For these youths, the gang provides them with a sense of acknowledgement, understanding and acceptance.

Again, Jamaican gangs share a common trait with the other ethnic gangs – they are determined on the basis of race and of ethnicity. And again, these gang members tend to live in the same neighbourhoods, themselves a microcosm of the ethnicity of the gang. Gang members are black and originate (either themselves or their parents) from Caribbean nations (Jamaica, Trinidad, etc.). A 17-year-old Jamaican gang member notes,

> *Everything was mixed. There were Jamaicans, some of them were from St. Vincent and there were some Trinadadians. No, there was not one main Jamaican guy like they have in the Jamaican Posse. Because in Lasalle the majority was not just Jamaican (24).*

Although one might expect that Jamaican and Haitians might share some fellow feeling, given they are both black gangs, in fact a 16-year-old Jamaican immigrant comments that Haitians and Jamaicans don't get along, and thus, one can conclude that in some gangs, Jamaicans are unlikely to be welcomed by Haitians and vice versa:

> *There were Jamaicans and everybody is English, that is the guys I hang around with. They are all Black but everyone is English. There are no French. It is just like that, you know because the Haitian and Jamaican don't get along. It is just a thing. I don't know, it is just the thing, we don't really get along. Some of them I get along with and some of them I don't get along with them. Some of them we don't like. I don't have anything against Haitians but it is just the way they act, they act a certain way. They walk like they rough and tough, and things like that*

you know (23).

A third Jamaican interviewee observed that although this particular gang did welcome Haitians, who were black and therefore considered part of the neighbourhood, Latinos and Whites were not particularly welcome.

> *We were all Black. There are Haitians that live in Little Burgundy. In our first clique we had one Haitian dude. Because he lived in Burgundy and he lived in the area and his older brothers like live there too. He is well known around the area, like you know. There was maybe five of us in the beginning and like four of us were Jamaican and there was one Haitian dude and we had one White guy. But he wasn't really in our clique but he would sometimes represent us. He was cool and he would make music with us and stuff and it was all cool. But later on it was just like all Black and there were no White boys and no Latinos and nothing like that. They are all Black but there are different groups like we are all Black but some are Jamaican and some are Trini and some are from Nova Scotia or whatever. We were all Black but we came from different backgrounds. There weren't too many Haitians in my group. Like Haitians we never really associated with because a lot of times we had problems with the Haitians like not the ones from Burgundy but from the ones from different areas like St. Michel and St. Henri and shit like that. Like whatever we would see them and they would be acting bad at the metro and they try to run things at the metro and we are like yo, don't try to run things because this is our area like you know. Like we would have problems with them and stuff and I don't know. I really never liked them. (27).*

Latino gang members were most explicit in defining the importance of language and ethnicity as factors in gang membership. This requirement ensures that gangs are Spanish-speaking and clearly Latino. A 17-year-old immigrant from El Salvador describes this homogeneity:

> *Yes, it is necessary that all the members in my gang be Latino, specifically from El Salvador. In our gang we don't really have people from different Latino origins. In other gangs they may have more of a mix of people coming from different parts of Latin America. For example, in St. Michel there is a gang called TL which stands for Toto Latino* [all Latino]. *There are guys that are El Salvadorians, there are Peruvians, Chileans, there is more of a mix. My gang is not like that; we are all El Salvadorians. We are approximately 30 members in our gang. We have young members and as well as older members (8).*

This sentiment is echoed by a 17-year-old Montreal-born El Salvadorian reveals

that the members of the gang are from Latin origins but not necessarily from the same country of origin, and importantly, that race can also be a deciding factor in whether an individual is invited into a Latino gang:

> *Of course it is necessary that all the members be Latino, it doesn't matter in the Punto Negro's* [Gang's Name] *whether you are Ecuadorian, Chilean, Cuban and or Puerto Rican as long as you have Chicano blood in you that is all that counts to be a member.*
>
> *Yes it is necessary. It is all about blood SPS is the name of my gang and it means "Sangre pur Sangre"* [translated... blood for blood] *it is Latino. It is because of the blood we have, it is like we are all brothers it doesn't matter from what part of Latin America they come from as long as they are Latino in blood and in name.*
>
> *We don't like outsiders especially Black people. They are fuckin' full of themselves. We hate the way they dress with the pants at their asses and the gold chains they wear around their necks. They pretend to be something they are not. You can't trust them because at one time we had this black guy who was doing business for my gang; we thought we could trust him. He spoke Spanish and listened to our music, he was one of the boys. I thought he was cool. The back stabber betrayed us, he was stealing money from us, he would profit from our drug sales. We showed him, we beat him up and told him to leave the neighborhood. Since then, we don't allow outsiders whether they are black or white to join our gang. We stick with our own kind (3).*

This individual explains that outsiders are not allowed in the gang, members must come from Latin America. It appeared, although the sample is small, that individuals born in Latin America preferred to join a gang with individuals exclusively from that continent, while individuals born in Canada were more tolerant of a wider – although still Spanish-speaking – ethnic diversity in their gangs.

Ethnic homogeneity was a recurrent theme in the interviews with individuals of various ethnic backgrounds. In fact, five of the ten youths interviewed here belonged to gangs that were ethnically homogeneous (e.g., all Italian). In fact, a 17-year-old Italian-Canadian noted:

> *It is necessary that all the members are Italian and most even speak Italian. In my*

> *case, I don't speak Italian but because I am in the family that means that I am a blood relative, these are my relatives and my uncle is in the highest rankings of the organized criminal family. The majority of the members speak Italian and some even speak French to me. They have a difficult time speaking French* [he is laughing], *they have a very strong Italian accent, and they speak quickly. There are a lot of people that speak French very well but there are some that can't speak for the life of them. It is not that easy for them they will say one word in French and then they will tell you six words in Italian. Even the French word is mixed up with Italian, it can be a little funny, but at least they try to speak or they force themselves to speak the French language and you have to respect them for that. There are people that speak English as well, in other words we have people that speak French, English, and Italian but their origins are Italian. You have to have some Italian blood in you or have an Italian last name this is one of the criteria to be part of this organization. I am very Italian you can say (39).*

However, the other five youths stated that their gangs were fairly ethnically heterogeneous. An 18-year-old Cree-Canadian reports:

> *In my gang there were Spanish, there was some Indian, there was Romanian, there was Black. There were obviously Italian. We had a lot of Greeks. There was beef between the English and the French and because there were two different schools. There is Cavalier and there is La Salle Catholic so they used to be rivals in the two schools. In our school we had at least four to five gangs, from the same big gang, these four five gangs were sub-divisions of gangs. It was just the French school had problems with our school. They didn't really have any big, big, gang or anything (28).*

It should be noted though, that even though membership in the gang is heterogeneous, the members all communicate in the same language – English – and that speaking a language other than English while hanging out with the gang could lead to conflict. Thus, although there was ethnic diversity, it was expected that gang members would communicate in a shared language (English).

Overall it is clear that many individuals considered themselves tolerant of ethnicities other than their own; however, when it came to gang membership, there was an almost uniform ethnic homogeneity among and across the ethnic groups interviewed. In particular, it can be seen that French gangs were predominantly French and all white,

Haitian gangs were for the most part strictly Haitian, Jamaican gangs considered themselves different from Haitians, and Latino gangs were solely Spanish-speaking.

In examining whether membership in the French youth gang is homogeneous or heterogeneous one must examine how ethnic identity is "really portrayed" within the street and biker gang. For instance, these youths are part of street gangs in which the majority speak French, and there is very little ethnic variation within them. They are also part of biker gangs where there may be ethnic and language variation, but everyone is white. Therefore, the youths share a dual identity that changes slightly once they are around members of the street and biker gang. Their identity or values modulate in order to accommodate or adhere to the group's values and norms. That is, all members must think the same way and everyone adheres to similar double standards. For instance, once in the biker gang, aspects of language and ethnicity is no longer relevant because the older members do not think it is important, but what is significant is that most members are White.

French kids who hang around the street gang are around other French kids who don't speak English and who are White; this neighbourhood milieu in part defines the acceptable criteria for street gang composition. Another way to look at this is that although most youths may not necessarily start off being racist, in order to be accepted they must pretend or convince themselves that they too should go along with the racist views of the group – so as to be perceived as team-players. Therefore, the group's ideas about race and language become their ideas, regardless of whether they agree with all of the group's racist ideologies. What becomes important, then, is that they follow the group, albeit only in the street gang or biker gang setting.

Furthermore, many of these young men look up to the older members of the gangs, in particular members of the biker gang and may perceive them as heroes because it is they who make money and have power. They also understand that within such gangs not everyone speaks French or is from Quebec but the majority of the members are White, which then becomes an acceptable criterion for membership. Their "identity" adapts in order to accommodate the group's norms and standards of membership. So, for these kids the older members act as role models and pass their beliefs on to the younger members. Most of these adolescents are following in the paths of their parent(s) and older sibling(s) and grow up with the idea that being White and identifying themselves as Quebecois provides them with the opportunity to become full-fledged members of the organized biker gang and to rise in the gang's hierarchy. To explicitly reject the group's beliefs, behaviors and attitudes would limit the chance of these youths advancing in the gang hierarchy and thus advancing their economic self-interest (attaining more money and power). The group's ideology, then, becomes part of the youths' identity whether or not they agree with the group's views.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed six major elements related to gang life: defining a gang, initiation rites, recruitment, maintenance of gang membership, advantages of gang membership and quitting the gang, and within those elements, have isolated other aspects that are components of these major elements. We can certainly see repeated components across the major categories and across ethnic groups, which allows one to conclude that though youths have different ethnicities, their reasons for associating with gangs are generally similar.

Latinos make the strongest case for gangs being organized along ethnic lines. Latino gang members were more likely than gang members of other ethnic groups to specifically cite language, nation of origin, and culture as important factors in their gang lives. For French gang members, family affiliations with biker gangs were important factors in their openness and willingness to joining a gang.

The French youths were significantly different from youths of all other ethnic groups because of their links to formal criminal gangs, often through family ties. They are members of street gangs who also work for organized criminal biker gangs. In fact, most of these French youths who were gang members seemed more likely to accept criminal activity as non-deviant because of their different family traditions. There is, then, the cultural (familial) transmission of gang lifestyles within the French sample. These youths in particular are guided by traditions that encourage deviance and law-breaking; that is, the way in which their family and friends view the law affects the degree to which they will be delinquent or law-abiding (Sutherland and Cressey, 1970).

Haitian youths differed from French gang members in that they lived in predominantly poor black neighborhoods. However, unlike other ethnic groups, Haitian youths like the French were frequently affiliated with more formal criminal organizations.

The youths in the Jamaican sample differ from those of the French and Haitian samples in that they provided an alternative or what they referred to as a more positive definition of the gang. Most defined the gang as "My Niggers" or as " My Family." By redefining the term gang, the Jamaican youth are rebelling against its marginalization and recasting it in a more positive light. Like the French, the Jamaicans are able to quit the

gang as long as they are not too deeply involved in its criminal subculture. What would be more difficult to sever are the friendships that are developed within such affiliations.

Jamaicans and Haitians were more likely to reference their friends and low-income neighborhoods as motivations for participating in more loosely organized gangs. Being part of a gang allowed these youth an opportunity to make money and gain status, factors that have been reviewed by others (Huff, 1990; Goldstein and Huff, 1993; Vigil and Yun, 1990; Chin, 1990a, 1990b; Joe and Robinson, 1980; Miller, 1975).

For the most part, youth classified as 'other ethnic' joined a gang to gain respect. This is something everyone wants and some gang members carried their desire for it to the extreme. Respect was sought not only for the individual, but also for one's gang, territory, and various other things (i.e. feeling discriminated against or "dissed" gang slang for being disrespected by rival gang members, or society etc.) real or perceived in the mind of the gang banger.

Finally, although youths (except for Latinos) claimed ethnic identity was not a motivating factor in any aspect of gang membership, gangs did form along ethnic, racial and linguistic lines. That said, characteristics of gang membership (gang definition, initiation, recruitment, maintenance of gang membership, advantages of gang membership and quitting the gang) were similar across responses from subjects of all ethnic groups, including Latinos, who additionally explicitly emphasized the importance of Latino ethnic identity as valuable gang characteristic.

CHAPTER 4: IDENTITY and the GANG

Before I begin this chapter, it is important to note that I provide an assessment of youth from different ethnic cultures who participate in the illegal gang subculture. I am not attempting to generalize upon an entire culture or pathologize specific ethnic groups as deviant and/or criminal. The root of the argument is that ethnic cultures infuse different attitudes (positive or negative) towards crime and the justice system which differ sharply with the ideals and standards upon which non-deviant ethnic culture is based, regardless whether that culture is Quebecois, Haitian, Jamaican and/or Latino (Menjívar and Bejarano, 2004).

This chapter examines the concept of ethnicity, including the idea of majority and minority group membership. I will explore why these youths identify themselves as French Canadian, Quebecois, Haitian, Jamaican, or Latino (or other) and how such identification may be linked to the gang. The youths' perceptions of identity will be presented in interview excerpts. I will describe whether these youths are first, second or third generation Canadians or immigrants and the role immigration plays in their identity. As well, I will provide information about the degree of their involvement in youth gang life (as being core or peripheral gang members). I will also investigate how they perceive themselves in terms of identity: do they perceive themselves to be Canadian, members of an ethnic group, a "hyphenated" Canadian, or in some other way. And why is it important that they are perceived this way? Finally, I will explore who they are rebelling against, whether it be mainstream, majority Canadian society, their own ethnic group, or other ethnic groups.

The concept of ethnic population has often been used interchangeably with the concepts of race, immigrant, and culture which attempts to socially define and locate individuals. The section that follows explores how young men in gangs choose to identify themselves. It investigates how their sense of identity and belonging is based on their perceptions of being different and how they are recognized by others as being distinct (James, 2003).

For the purposes of this analysis, the majority group is defined as "French"; the other ethnic groups under study (Haitian, Jamaican, Latino, and other) are considered "minority" groups. In order to address the question of ethnicity and identity, each of the respondents was asked, "How do you really think of yourself, as an (ethnic group)-Canadian, or Canadian, or Quebecois or what?"

French Majority

All of the youths who fell within the majority category (French) are core members of street gangs. Two of the ten are leaders (2 out of 10)[38] and the others work for the gang (8 out of 10). All of these youths are also affiliated with organized criminal biker gangs such as the Hells Angels or Rock Machine; these youths acted as peripheral members of such gangs. French youth appear to join gangs for the more obvious reasons: gang membership provides them with money, power, and status. Moreover, most of these youth have defined "gang" in dualistic terms, distinguishing between the street gang, in which membership is homogeneous in terms of race and ethnicity, and the organized biker gang, in which race plays an important factor in membership, but which is more ethnically diverse. The sample of French youths was composed of eight youths who were born in Montreal and two youths who were born in Quebec city but live in Montreal.

[38] The ones that started up the gangs.

Among the French youths interviewed there was a diversity of opinion on their perception and definition of "French" versus "Quebecois." Certain individuals referred to themselves as French-Canadian, while the majority (N = 8) felt that it was important to be identified as Quebecois and to be able to maintain a Quebecois culture. Evidently some of these adolescents recognized that to be identified as Quebecois means to be superior to other ethnic groups. Some, though, acknowledged that others express this sense of superiority overtly and in an ethnocentric manner. For instance, a 17-year-old youth reveals that to call oneself Quebecois, is to believe in one's superiority in terms of culture and identity (although he denies this is his attitude):[39]

> *I believe that there are some individuals that you meet that are living a harder life than you and that are obliged to leave their country and come to live here in Montreal. I am a guy who is pretty open-minded and I try not to really argue with anyone. Especially if that person is "yellow or orange or green," the color of the person's skin doesn't bother me in the least. I have never said to another guy you are a fuckin' Nigger, or I never told a guy you are a fuckin' WOP just sit down and shut up... or say to someone you are a fuckin' Chink. I have never said that before. I believe that people don't have the right to judge where I come from so why should I judge other people. I wouldn't like it if someone would discriminate against me because of the country I come from and I wouldn't like it if someone would insult me because of it... I wouldn't like it nor appreciate it. So why should I do that to someone else if I wouldn't like it if someone else would do it to me. There are people out there that talk for nothing. I call these people the White Becs[40] that are stupid because everything revolves around the Quebecois culture and anything different from them are considered lesser or no good. It embarrasses me sometimes to be associated with such a narrow-minded culture or mentality. For example, I have heard some Quebecois people say things like: immigrants contaminate our country and steal our women. People that talk in this way are really ignorant. I am not like that, I consider myself really open towards people that are not necessarily from the same culture as myself (4).*

This particular French-Canadian youth believes that to be associated with the Quebecois culture means to be racist and narrow-minded, an ideology which he believes he does not share. In fact, some even recognize themselves as being privileged because they share a

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[39] I have provided an English translation in this text of interviews conducted in French.
[40] Les Blancs Becs; Blancs meaning White, and Becs meaning Quebecois.

majority group status and have discussed the implications of such a position. For instance, a 15-year-old comments:

> *Well, I think I probably am more privileged than someone who is an ethnic minority. I was born here, I speak French and I am Quebecois. This is my country and I didn't immigrate from some foreign country. I probably won't run into the problems that most other minorities encounter in their everyday living. Look it's this simple: If the police have stopped me in the past, I have been able to talk my way out of trouble or in some cases talk with them and joke with them and admittedly they have from time to time looked the other way. Giving me quite a bit of chances, unfortunately this time I wasn't so lucky. The point is that if I was Black the police would probably be harsher on me and would definitely not talk to me, or joke with me. I would probably be automatically treated as a criminal (10).*

The French speaking gang members believed that a White youth would face less discrimination, have more opportunities, and get away with committing more crimes. These adolescents also recognize that they are privileged as a result of their majority group status. Indeed, most of them are aware that they do not face the discrimination experienced as those who are recognized as a member of a "minority group," and provided examples of how some Black youths are at times discriminated against by the police.[41] Hence, for these reasons these youths felt it was important to be identified in the majority group, some as French and some specifically as Quebecois. The French-Canadian and French-Quebecois youths' "majority status" is challenged when confronted by the English youth, another group that is perceived as having a majority group status. The conflicts between these two distinct groups are symbolic of the power struggle between the French and English-Canadians and the divisiveness that has existed between them around language and cultural identity.

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[41] This aspect of discrimination will be further examined when we get to the topic of the youth's reactions to agents of social control.

Gang Members and Rebellion

We now turn our attention to the target of these youths' rebellion: mainstream society, their own ethnic group, or other ethnic groups. The results of the interviews show that French gang members are acting against the English and the other ethnic groups. For instance, a 19-year-old explains why he dislikes the English:

> *My country is important. Living here in Quebec is important, but maybe some people may consider this type of sentiment as racist. My country is very important. I have a certain way of thinking that might be viewed as racist. Like for example, in Quebec the whole language situation is important for me. I don't want someone telling me to speak English. It is not a secret that English people have tried to assimilate us French people in the past. That is why now there are a lot of immigrants. They wanted to take out French and make everyone speak English. It is sure that when you see more people, especially more people coming into the country, your own people like the Quebecois become more and more outnumbered by immigrants and people that speak different languages. It is for sure you defend your country a little more, defend your culture a little more, because it is important to retain your culture, you don't want it to be lost to the English or the immigrants.*

This particular youth reveals that for centuries the English have imposed their culture and values on the French and that this is why French gang members and English gang members do not get along:

> *I have to say that I really don't like the English. I don't like the English Canadians that come from England, especially the British. I don't like them because they have tried to assimilate us Quebecois people and tried to force us to speak English. They wanted to assimilate us because they were snobs and there were always fights between the English and the French.*

He also goes on to describe a negative incident that occurred with some English youths:

> *I used to see this being a problem while I was in school. There were always fights between the French and the English. They came from another school and they would come to bug us sometimes. We were always about six guys. That is, me and my friends [from the gang]. We would go out to smoke or drink a beer. These*

> *guys [English] would just show up at our school or sometimes at the park we hung out and they would start causing problems and begin beating us up or demand that we give them our beers and our joints. Sometimes they would start these fights for no reason. There were always fights between us and it has always been this way (18).*

This quote best exemplifies the sentiments of the French sample. Most of these youth felt that retaining the Quebecois language and culture was very important and a right that needed to be maintained. They believed that it was therefore necessary for them to protect themselves against the "English" and the "immigrants" because these two groups posed a threat to their cultural identity. In another example of this belief, a 15-year-old French youth describes how some English youths instigated the conflicts that had occurred between the two groups.

> *At school, there were also conflicts between the Quebecois guys and the English guys. Some of the English kids would come to our school and taunt us Quebecois kids. They would call us "Esti de Pepsi" or they would call us "Jean Guy La Patate" and this would really annoy us Quebecois guys, so it caused a lot of fights that got to be quite physical. They were trying to invade our school, our territory, and sometimes they would always purposely pick a fight. Not only with the name calling, they would provoke a physical fight as well. I will give you an example. Once one of my guys [member of his gang] was at a bus stop waiting for the bus when a bunch of English guys decided to "accidentally" bump into my friend who of course happens to be Quebecois. These English guys elbowed him while he was waiting for the bus. Then from elbowing my friend they started to shove him really hard and before you know it you have one guy laying on the floor, which in this case would be my friend, and there were 3 or 4 English kids on top of him, each taking turns beating him up. Of course this did not go well with the rest of us Quebecois kids. So one day we waited for the English guys to come back to our school. These English guys had the guts to come back to our school and wanted to prove to the rest of us Quebecois guys that they were not afraid of anything. They simply came back to our school to brag about how much they had fun hurting my friend. This really pissed us Quebecois guys off, not only did they outnumber my friend, now they had the guts to brag about it! So you can imagine what happened next... we waited for the right opportunity to jump these guys and we did, we got back at them, but this time the fight was more fair. We didn't fight with one guy, we fought all four English guys and they never came back to bother us again. Why does this happen you ask me? The answer is simple really: the English don't like the French and vice versa. It has always been that*

> *way. But let me tell you something. Let's say me and my friends see a couple of English guys come into our neighborhood, we have no problem with this, as long as they mind their own business. If they didn't bother us, we wouldn't bother them. But sometimes we are forced to fight with these guys (10).*

This quote reveals that French youth who are members of gangs have been victims and targets of racism. The English-Canadian youth (who are gang members as well)[42] have poked fun at their culture and attempted to control these youth through violence. Consequently, such actions generated feelings of hostility on the part of French youth toward the English; the French, then, reacted out of anger and resentment towards those youth who initially discriminated against them.

The French reacted as they did because they felt threatened and that their cultural pride was demeaned by the English Canadian youth. Being part of a gang, then, may have served as a protective device against the English youth.

Nevertheless, we clearly see that many of the French youth did not mind hanging out with or befriending individuals who came from different ethnic cultures as long as those individuals who became their friends communicated with them in French. For most of these youths, speaking French served as a major criterion for membership. For instance, a 15-year-old youth observed:

> *I prefer to hang out with Quebecois, yes this is true. I don't mind hanging out with English guys or Italians too as long as they speak French that is all that counts for me (10).*

Another 17-year-old French youth reports that it is important to associate with individuals of the same ethnic background as himself because they speak the same language:

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[42] I asked the youth if these "English guys" he was talking about were part of a gang, and he said yes.

> *Yes, it is important to maintain relations with other Quebecois as well. I can talk to them, they understand me. If I was Black, then I would talk to the Black people, if I was Latino then I would talk to and hung around with the Latino. So, I guess it comes down to the fact that this is my culture (13).*

This quote shows that most of these French youth feel more comfortable interacting with their own "kind" because they speak the same language, follow the same customs, and a sort of "in-group" relationship occurs. The French youth are somewhat open to having relations with non-Quebecois youths, so long as they are able to communicate with them in French. Nonetheless, their language requirement did not seem to apply to all ethnic groups. That is, even though Haitian youth spoke the language, the French group still appeared to dislike and distrust them. For instance, a 17-year-old French youth explains why he dislikes the Haitians:

> *I have more White friends. I know some Blacks, I don't know them by their real names but by their nicknames in particular. I have more Quebecois friends that is for sure. The reason why I have more Quebecois friends is because they are like me and they are not like the other people. It is the same color. The reason why I don't like Blacks [he refers to Haitians and Jamaicans] is because they are sons of bitches. I hate them so much because they have done so many things to me that got me really angry. From the time they did this to me, I just can't stand them. There are some that I will still talk to them but the majority of them I don't really like. I have done some business with the Spanish, with the Blacks, and the Quebecois as well. But the majority is mostly Quebecois (13).*

This particular youth felt that it was better to do business with the Quebecois because he believed they are like him and therefore must think the same way, which makes it easier for him to trust them. In contrast, he believed that anyone who is not White and Quebecois is different, less trustworthy and therefore more likely to be deceitful. It appears, then, that youths who have had bad experiences with Blacks and/or English youth categorize them all as negative relations and undesirable acquaintances/friends. In

fact, it is not that these French youth were initially ethnocentric towards the English and Blacks in particular but that ethnocentrism developed from the negative experiences they encountered while in the presence of these two groups. Perhaps if these youths had more positive experiences with Blacks and/or English Canadians they would be less inclined to hold ethnocentric views. Thus, the French youth may be reacting against anyone who has discriminated against them and anyone who does not speak French.

Some French youth (4 out of 10) had positive encounters with non-French individuals, and, as a result, did not have negative attitudes and beliefs towards these groups. A 20-year-old explains:

> *Man, us French guys we know we have the power. We are of the majority plus most of us are born here in Canada. I think minorities have a difficult time adapting because they speak with an accent and most people don't like that, they are a different color and some people have a problem with that. You know what I say it is a question of ignorance. In my family everyone is married to someone that comes from a different culture, so all my life I have been brought up in this type of environment. I have aunts that are Chinese and uncles that are Black because my mother has lots of brothers and sisters. I have cousins that come from a mixed culture and they look really good. So come around Christmas time where all of us get together, you see a mix of everything or of different nationalities and everyone gets along and talks with one another. So I would say it is really cool. But unfortunately, in a society where people are racist and really dumb because they never really got a chance to be with people that come from different backgrounds, they may judge them according to what they hear from their friends or what their parents tell them about other cultures and because they were never exposed to other nationalities. They will automatically believe what they hear. So I would say in that respect I am lucky because I fall in the category of the majority, but if I were a minority I could see why they would have a harder time with being accepted (6).*

This youth is more accepting of ethnic minorities because he is exposed to different cultures within his own family. This reinforces the idea that the majority of French youths' views of other ethnic groups and their own developed because they frequently

encountered conflicts and misunderstandings with individuals whom they considered to be non-Quebecois.

Demographic factors

It is generally accepted that individuals with lower levels of education tend to be more ethnocentric than those with higher levels of education. However, in this group of youths, who had low levels of education, there were differences in perceived ethnocentric attitudes. Those individuals who identified themselves as French Canadian (N=2) and those who identified themselves as Quebecois (N=2) but were born in Quebec City believed themselves not to be racist. In contrast, those youths who identified themselves as Quebecois but were born in Montreal (N=6) seem to demonstrate more ethnocentric attitudes, particularly toward the English and immigrants. All of these youths had below average education; some had never made it to high school or were high school dropouts. The intolerance of these youths (whether they were 14 or 20 years of age) towards Black and English youth was most likely affected by their negative experiences with these two groups. Being in the gang justified and reinforced their attitudes because they hung out with others who shared similar experiences and beliefs. However, those who did not wholly agree with such attitudes just went along with the group, because that is what was required of them; they did not speak out against racism or ethnocentrism while in the presence of group members in order to remain accepted as one of the gang.

Summary: French/Quebecois Identity

All of the youths, whether they were Quebec/Canadian, Quebecois, or French Canadian, believed that White youth face less discrimination, have more opportunities, and get away with more crimes. These youths also recognize that they are indeed

privileged because of their majority group status. In fact, most of them are aware that they do not face the same discrimination as those who are recognized as members of a minority group and even provided examples of how some Black youths are at times discriminated against by the police.

Youths who considered themselves French Canadian and youths who were born in Quebec tended to be less ethnocentric towards Blacks and/or English Canadians, while youth who considered themselves Quebecois and were born in Montreal tended to be more ethnocentric towards Blacks and English Canadian youth.

The French Canadian and Quebec City born youth may be less ethnocentric because they are more likely to be encouraged to speak English at home. Moreover, these youths had family members who were of ethnicities other than Quebecois or French Canadian. This was not the case with the Montreal born youth who referred to themselves as Quebecois (Quebec/Canadian). These youth in particular did not speak English, nor understand it, and were more likely to be rejected by English youth or have had conflicting encounters with Black youth. These negative encounters explain why they tended to be more narrow-minded in comparison to youths of other ethnicities. However, one thing is clear: the Quebec/Canadian youth are willing to interact with individuals from different cultures as long as they spoke French.

Haitian Identity

Ten Haitians were interviewed; six youths had been born in Haiti and four in Montreal. Only two of the youths referred to themselves as gang leaders, but they all referred to themselves as **core members** of street gangs. All of the youths within this category had below average level of education; some dropped out of school completely,

and others were one to two years behind in their education. This particular sample of youth shared similar perceptions regardless of age or level of education.

Each respondent was asked whether they perceived themselves as Canadian, Haitian-Canadian, or Haitian. All respondents, regardless of whether they were born in Canada or not, referred to themselves as Haitian-Canadian. A 17-year-old Haitian immigrant observes:

> *I see myself as a Haitian Canadian. I was born in Haiti. I see myself as a Canadian cause I live here. I don't really have much of a choice. You see the society here it discourages me to be Haitian, to act Haitian and to speak Haitian. Another bad thing in this society is that people are racist towards us Haitians. For example, I walk in a place to buy CDs I go up to the salesperson and ask if they have a particular CD. They will automatically say no to me cause I am Black. How I know is because they won't even bother looking for it. So then I am there looking for the CD and guess what? I find it. Let's say some White kid would go up to them and ask for a CD the salesperson will be friendly, will help this White guy and find the CD for him. You see the difference. Sometimes I hate the person and sometimes I will diss this person. To be Haitian and in a gang is harder for us (14).*

This young man wants to be considered Canadian while holding onto his Haitian roots. However, he notices that most Canadians seem to see his skin color first.

A 17-year-old Montreal-born Haitian comments:

> *I am proud to be Haitian but it is also misery and poverty. It makes me mad and it is unfair (5).*

These youths reveal that to be identified as Haitian is important because they are proud of their cultural heritage; however being Haitian also means that they have experienced misery and poverty. Moreover, most of them have been brought up with the idea that they have to work harder at being accepted in a society that admires Whites and

discriminates against Blacks. A 16-year-old Montreal-born Haitian best illustrates this point:

> *To be Haitian, it means that I am not African. To be Haitian is I guess how a Haitian person would feel as well which is to be able to represent my race. To represent my race is important because I am Haitian and not Quebecois and I want to show that a Haitian is just as capable to do things as any Quebecois. Sometime, it can be a little difficult to be Haitian. For example, when I am with other Black people, I can basically be myself. There are no pretenses, and what they see is what they get. While, when I am around White people I admit, I am not always completely myself. I always feel that I have to talk more, or try harder to be liked. I think it has to do with the fact that ever since I can remember I was told that White people will always be suspicious of us Black people, they expect us to be failures, to be ignorant, etc. So, I was brought up with the idea that I had to always try harder, prove myself more, because I am Black (20).*

As we saw with the French youths, who identified most closely with their own ethnic group, so too do Haitians identify closely with other Haitians. Haitian youths prefer to "hang out" with other adolescents from the same ethnic background because they speak the same language and have experienced similar problems. A 16-year-old Haitian immigrant explains why he feels more comfortable around other Haitians:

> *Yes, of course I prefer to associate with the same people like me. I think that is normal, I am used to it. When I am with another Haitian it feels right, we speak the same language. We like doing the same things we understand one another. You feel more comfortable with your own kind (1).*

Some Haitian youths felt that in order to be accepted by White youths they were forced to resort to violence. In fact, one 18-year-old Canadian-born Haitian reports that he was victimized racially at school by other students. He felt his best recourse was to respond with violence:

> *I have been a victim of racism when I was in school. When I was in elementary school, like I said I was the only Black guy in school. The kids would tease me and say things like go back from where you are from. Hey chocolate boy, you don't see that there is no one here like you. Get away. I felt destroyed when they*

> *said these things to me. They broke my spirit, my heart. It is like when I went home, my mother always told me that I was handsome. I was like a good guy and that everybody loved me. And then when I went to school the kids were dissing me. So, it was like breaking something in my heart. I fought one guy and I fought the biggest guy in the school and I beat the shit out of him. So, he stopped after that. Since then no one bothered me in school because it got around school that I was a tough guy and not to mess with me. I started getting girlfriends and I became popular. All this because I stood up for myself and beat up a guy, because he was racist towards me, when I think about it I find it real stupid. I don't like fighting. I hate fighting. I don't like violence. I am afraid to hurt someone. If the guy falls down and never gets up again, then he may stay down for good and I wouldn't be able to bear it. I don't like that shit (12).*

Although most of these youths prefer to hang out with their own kind, nevertheless, they have no problems hanging around with the youths who are not Black. A 15-year old Haitian immigrant explains that his experience at school demonstrates that although he and other Blacks may have been willing to interact with other ethnic groups, these sentiments were not reciprocated by White students. In fact, he experienced significant racism. His mother had influenced his views on the relative position of Blacks and Whites in society, believing that Blacks have to work harder to gain equality with Whites. His experience at reform school reflected his experience at regular school. Again he was in the minority, subject to racism by other White inmates, regardless of his own openness to other ethnicities. This all contributed to his sense of marginalization:

> *I used to skip school a lot because I hated it. It was like a reform school and there were only White people going to this school and they were always calling me nigger and shit. I used to attract a lot of fights. They would tell me to get the fuck out of school. They used to call me nigger to my face or they would have a kind of game going where they would come up to me and say nigger tie my shoes, just like that. I used to feel fuckin' angry but I couldn't do nothing because my mama said be good in that school because they write everything in your report. It is going to be a bad report, so at the beginning I didn't do nothing and I listened to my mama's advice. After it got to me and I couldn't take it anymore. We were like five Black people in the school. It was not that big a school. It was like the unit here. It was like seventy-five people in the school. There were only White people and we were like I said five Black people. There was only one Black girl and she*

> *was the only one, she was the only Black girl. Then us Black guys we started hanging out together and we started smoking weed because we didn't give a fuck about all of them. Only the Black kids we were hanging out together, because what it came down to was us against them. We were together, always together we would be playing ball, chilling, and we were always together. Then some of them White kids wanted to hang out with us. We didn't give a fuck, and we said to these White kids, come man if you want to come and hang with us, it is not a problem. We were okay with hanging out with the White kids but the White kids were not okay with us hanging with them. We didn't give a fuck who you were as long as you were cool with us. I don't give a fuck about the color of someone's skin. If you are chill with me, then I am chill with you (7).*

All of the Haitian youth expressed that they felt it was important to understand and learn about different ethnic cultures. Most believed that staying within their own culture all of the time would only allow them to develop a narrow view of people. Thus, most of the Haitian youth were open to the idea of connecting/communicating with individuals from different cultures. Regardless of their desire to interact with individuals outside their culture, some still felt particularly shunned and alienated by White dominant culture. Some explained that the reason they were not accepted was that they or their parents had immigrated from another country and would always therefore be perceived as outsiders. This is the reason most were attracted to gangs – gang membership made them feel as though they belonged. A 17-year-old Montreal-born youth observed:

> *It is easier for a White guy to be Canadian and harder for a Black guy like me to be seen and respected as a Canadian because it is like that... The White guy got more privilege if he live here. No one will deport him but if you not from here it is easier to be deported (5).*

Some of these youths are insecure because they may feel that they are constantly being watched for their committing the slightest infraction, allowing those individuals with authority or power to target them with society's approval.

In fact, most Haitian youth appear to be rebelling against White dominant culture. They have been socialized to believe that they will never be truly accepted within a society that is predominantly White. Such sentiments have been justified time and time again as they have encountered various racist acts and attitudes. This racism was devastating at first for some; their feelings of frustration later deteriorated into anger. These Haitian youth believe that in order to be accepted they must stand up for themselves through violence; that is, if society fears them, than at least they will gain the respect they feel they deserve.

The Haitians interviewed identify with their ethnicity quite (all ten interviewed) and seem to feel gang membership affords protection from racism; they share a difficulty with Whites and with racism.

Jamaican Identity

Ten Jamaican youths were interviewed; all ten were **core** members of street gangs, but none was a gang leader. All had below average level of education. Seven were born in Canada, and three had immigrated from Jamaica.

All of the Jamaicans interviewed referred to themselves as Jamaican, but unlike the Haitian youth, they wanted to completely dissociate themselves from any Canadian identity. Allegiance to being Jamaican reflected political, economic and social ideologies faced by the youth (see James, 2003). A 17-year-old immigrant from Jamaica observes:

> *I see myself as a Jamaican and I never represent Canada. I don't like Canada. It is just bogus. In Jamaica they talk about the Babylon system. Babylon is basically White people in power trying to take over the government and stuff like that. Jamaica they had their problems with that and stuff like that. Like here, we are living in a Babylon system where we are all Black and everything like back in the days we were slaves and shit like that. Right now it is still the same thing like you don't see a Black person as a Prime Minister or this and that. You don't see no Black presidents up in Canada or the United States or shit like that. Like there is*

> *that crooked cop so there are like White cops they see Black people and they just see bad. They see a Black person in a brand new Benz or something and the first thing they think about is how did he get that and everything. And the first thing is how did he get that Benz he must be a drug dealer or he must be this or that...like you know (44).*

Like Haitians, Jamaican youth believe that they will never be accepted by the White dominant culture because they will always be perceived as criminals or inferior to Whites.

Another 17-year-old Jamaican youth born in Canada explains why he prefers to hang out with other Blacks:

> *I prefer people that come from the ghetto, because they understand where I come from. I prefer to associate with Black people mostly. White people they are too damn judgmental and most of them don't understand what it feels like to come from the ghetto (27).*

Some Jamaican youth, however, disliked Haitians regardless of whether these Haitian youths came from the ghetto or not. A 16-year-old Jamaican immigrant reports:

> *The guys I hang around with, they are all Black but everyone is English. There are no French. It is just like that, you know because the Haitian and Jamaican don't get along. It is just a thing. I don't know, it is just the thing we don't really get along. Some of them I get along with and some of them I don't get along with them. Some of them we don't like. I don't have anything against Haitians but it is just the way they act, they act a certain way. They walk like they rough and tough, and things like that you know (23).*

It appears that the youths who immigrated from Jamaica disliked the Haitians more than the youths who were born here, because they did not speak French and could not communicate well with Haitians. This was not the case with the Canadian-born Jamaicans who spoke some French and therefore had no problems communicating and interacting with Haitians. For instance, a 17-year-old Jamaican-Canadian describes how on occasion he hangs out with Haitians:

> *I have hung around with certain Haitian people you know. But those people they are not my friends like you know. They are just people that I have been introduced to or whatever. I have nothing to do on one day, I will call them up and say Yo you want to go smoke a joint. Go buy a beer or something like that you know. We would just chill out like you know. It doesn't matter if he is from a different clique. Unless his clique has beef against my clique than I won't jam with him (32).*

Thus, some of the Jamaican youths interviewed had no difficulty spending time with Haitians; however, they did not befriend the Haitians because they preferred to remain distinct from that culture. A 17-year-old immigrant from Jamaica commented:

> *What it means for me to be Jamaican is I just like my country that's it. I like my country and my family is Jamaican like you know. Like a lot of my friends are Jamaican. I just like my country like you know. It is like anybody else, everybody represents their country. Whatever their family is from, that is wherever their country is from as well. So, I don't want to be seen as Haitian or African, I am a Jamaican (17).*

Another 17-year-old Montreal-born youth explains that Jamaicans speak English and Patois, and this is different from the Haitian youth who speak Creole and French:

> *I speak English or slang. Well, some people I talk to them Patois. I know there are some dreadlocks like Rastafarians or whatever. They talk to me that way and so I talk to them that way as well. Like just a better way to communicate. An example of Patois, like say me and a next man are having beef like you know. The next man don't want to fight and I don't know you hear somebody say " eh, el poso, why you run for" or whatever. It means basically you are a pussy and why are you running for. So, if you say this to a Haitian he won't understand what the fuck I am saying. Also, some of these Haitians they make me laugh, they speak French and Creole, which I am cool with, the only problem I have is when they add a few English words here and there, they will say things like C'est cool man, C'est cool. They funny that way, either you speak English all the way or you speak French when you start mixing the two, it just ain't cool, it sounds stupid. But Haitians are like that (33).*

In short, most Jamaican youths felt that being Black contributed to their difficulties with Whites and authorities and that mainstream society would judge them because of the colour of their skin. By remaining loyal to their culture they are rebelling

against White supremacy. Jamaican youth face similar types of discrimination as Haitian youth; however, the Jamaican youth were more adamant about remaining distinct from the Haitians and rejecting the Canadian identity altogether. Regardless of age or level of education, all identified themselves as Jamaican and felt that it was very important to be viewed this way. Jamaican youth, it appears, are joining gangs because this affirms their ethnic identity as defined by language and race.

Latino Identity

I interviewed ten youths of Latin American origins; eight had immigrated from countries such as Ecuador, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic, while the rest were born in Canada (2 Chilean-Canadian). Two of the youths were leaders of a gang, while the others were **core** members. All had below average levels of education, and, regardless of age, all shared similar sentiments about their ethnic background.

This sample of youths, native-born Canadians and immigrants, all preferred to be identified as Latino. As one 20-year-old immigrant from Ecuador reveals:

> *When I think of it I see myself as a Latino first, I have Latino friends, I speak the language, if I need something I go to my friends. I think it is cool living here in Canada where I can still be true to my culture, to my people (22).*

A 17-year-old Chilean born in Canada observes:

> *To be Latino means having pride for my ethnic background (29).*

Most of these youths preferred to interact with other Latinos because they understand each other, speak the same language and share similar expressions. A 17-year-old immigrant from El Salvador reveals why it is important to remain distinct from other cultures:

> *For me it is very important to speak to my gang members in Spanish because*

> *there are a lot of expressions that we know and understand and you can only know this if you speak Spanish. An example of this would be the word pédé, which means Faggot in our Spanish slang. Mayaté which means nigger, there is also Moréné which stands for nigger. We have a lot of expressions that make fun of Black people and only if you are Spanish, specifically El Salvadorians, can truly understand these expressions. We also have expressions for the Chinese people as well; we call them Caméo which means Camels. Why we have these expressions, I guess it is a way to separate ourselves from other people, especially people that aren't Spanish. These expressions are sort of an insider thing and in a sense it makes us laugh and at the same time it allows us to bond with one another, through these expressions what we are really saying is, no one is like us, in other words it means that we stick together us El Salvadorians, it gives us a sense of communitas [community] (8).*

Latino youth preferred to hang out with other individuals of similar ethnic origins because they felt discriminated against by mainstream society and felt like outsiders. The 17-year old El Salvadorian youth goes on to explain:

> *I guess it is a little bit difficult to be accepted as a Latin Canadian because for other people like the Quebecois I will also be looked at as the emmigrantes (immigrant). In the past, I had one Quebecois kid call me a refugee and told me that I should go back to my country. I remember that when I first came to Montreal. I felt really hurt by that because my parents told me that in Canada we would have a better a life, and in a way we did have a better life, my father made a lot of money here (of course illegally). But still, my family and I were not exactly on the street. At the same time, we never truly belonged. What I mean by that people in general, I am talking about the Quebecois, I guess the English people too... never really saw us as full-fledged Canadians. Because of my dark skin and the way me and my family looked, we didn't look French or English; these people always treated us like we were the outsiders. I guess this is why I started hanging out with the El Salvadorians at least with them I felt like I belonged. And suddenly it became important for me to be around people that were El Salvadorian as well because in a big city like Montreal we seemed to be of the minority (47).*

A 17-year-old immigrant from the Dominican Republic explains that although he perceives himself as one hundred percent Latino, people still refer to him as Black and discriminate against him because of his darker skin:

> *I consider myself as Dominican Republic, although I have Black blood in me I don't see that, I see myself as Dominican. When I tell people that I am Dominican, they look at me and say things like you can't be because you look Black. I always try to prove my point; I start cursing in Spanish. I was locked up once before at another facility and during that time they were having Black History month so the guys that were locked up like me kept taunting me and saying things like "you are Black and why don't you go celebrate with those guys." [. . .]There are different reasons as to why I don't like being identified as a Black person. At the beginning it was because I knew I wasn't Black and at the end it was because I started to hate Black people. For example, well all my life I have been chilling with Black people and then I was getting into negative stages with them you know. So, I left them and I tried to be with my people (other Spaniards) and I started hanging out with my people. I felt better and I identified with them and I found that they treated me better than the Blacks (41).*

It seems that the Latino youth who have darker skin and look more "Black" face greater discrimination and are therefore more likely to perceive themselves as ethnic minorities compared to those Latinos who are less dark-skinned.

The interviews revealed that Latino youth believe that living in a country like Canada has allowed them to be true to their cultural roots without necessarily having to conform to the Canadian identity. Latinos, like Haitians and Jamaicans, have encountered discrimination from mainstream society. Most of these youths have been treated like outsiders on more than one occasion. As a result of this, the Latino youth feel more comfortable around individuals who speak the same language and also share similar experiences (such as being perceived as foreigners by mainstream society). As one 20-year-old immigrant from Ecuador notes:

> *We live in a country that allows us to practice our culture and to speak our Spanish language, but it is also a country that is not that accepting of immigrants (22).*

However, this has not stopped some of these youths from interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. For instance, a 17-year-old immigrant from the Dominican Republic reports:

> *I don't mind hanging out with people that are not Latino; it really depends on how they treat me (34).*

One concludes, then, that perhaps these Latino youth are rebelling against mainstream (white) society and that perhaps being part of the gang is an affirmation of such defiance. The interviews also clearly show strong affiliation with their ethnicity.

Other Groups

I also included a group of respondents who were from several other cultures than those previously discussed. I included this sample because it provided cultural variety within my study and offers a broader perspective on how ethnic youth perceive the relevance of ethnic culture – whether similarly or differently from youths considered visible minorities. I interviewed ten juveniles from these ethnic backgrounds: Polish, Jewish, Portuguese (N = 2), Cree, Algerian, Italian, Irish (N=2), and German. Three of these youths were immigrants; the rest were second generation Canadians. All of these youths were **core** members of street gangs, and a majority (8 out of 10) acted as **peripheral** members of organised criminal gangs. Only two youths claimed to be leaders of street gangs. In this sample of youth, the average level of education was below that of mainstream society. Regardless of their age and level of education, most shared similar attitudes about their ethnic identity and Canadian status.

Most of the youths perceived themselves as a hyphenated Canadian, regardless of whether they or their parents were immigrants. An 18-year-old youth explains that he perceives himself as Polish-Canadian:

> *I was born in Montreal. I consider myself fluent in both French and English. [. . .] I am Polack. Both my parents are Polacks. The name doesn't sound Polish because it became Americanized once they moved here to Canada. My parents were both born in Poland. My mother speaks Polish and my dad as well. Both my parents are Trilingual; I understand and speak Polish as well (25).*

A 17-year-old youth born in Portugal explains why he perceives himself as Canadian but appreciates his Portuguese origins:

> *I was born in Portugal and my parents are from Portugal as well. I was two years old when I came here; of course I don't really remember it. I have been living here in Montreal for fifteen years, so I consider myself Canadian. I speak Portuguese, English, and French. My parents speak three languages as well. The reason I consider myself a Canadian is because I don't live in Portugal so I should speak the language of the country that I live in. Don't get me wrong, I acknowledge my Portuguese roots, but I also think it is important to be able to speak both French and English. I see myself as Portuguese and Canadian. It is important that people know that I am Portuguese because I am still very proud of my roots (26).*

Even though the youths interviewed are diverse in their ethnic origins, they still feel it is important to identify with their cultural roots – that is, the place they or their parents emigrated from. Moreover, these adolescents were open to the idea of interacting with individuals from different ethnic backgrounds. Unlike the youths in the Quebecois, Haitian, Jamaican, and Latino samples, these young men were more likely to have friends outside their own ethnic group. For instance an 18-year-old Cree reveals that most of his friends were non-Native:

> *During school, I hung out with White guys, Black guys, Latinos, Italians, and Romanians. I hung out with just about anyone. I had no friends that were Cree probably because there were no Crees that went to this school. My school was an all-English school (28).*

Although most of these adolescents were open-minded about interacting with individuals who were of various ethnic backgrounds, some were still targets or perpetrators of discrimination. The 18-year-old Cree describes how he had been judged negatively by some kids from his school:

> *I went to this high school that had a lot of prejudice because of me being Indian and everybody there is like Italian. It was tough for me; the kids would say things like "dumb Indian" go to your Squaws or whatever. So, I know that I don't look Indian but I used to tell them that I was Indian. I wasn't ashamed of it. They didn't let me live it down (28).*

Another example of discrimination is given by the 18-year-old Polish-Canadian, who reports that he was the only White guy at his school who listened to rap music. The Black kids resented him for this and gave him a hard time. As a result, he was a loner at school. He also perceived himself as a poor ghetto kid, without the advantages of the middle-class, contributing to his sense of difference when he attended a semi-private school:

> *I was a dangerous loner and that is why I got kicked out in one of the schools. I used to instigate fights for the fun of it. I couldn't handle it at school. It was during the Kurt Cobain[43] era there, and I was the only Rapper in the whole school. I was the only one that listened to rap, except for a few Black guys and there were only a few Black guys in the school. They were not even my friends because I was White so that they didn't like me. Rappers didn't like me because I listened to Rap. They didn't care for me and some of them I told them off, while others tried to push me around and then I would come and beat on them and then back and forth and back and forth. I got kicked out. In my old school I used to get picked on sometimes. Rich kids used to pick on me and I am a ghetto youth. I was in a semi-private elementary school cause I had the grades for it and these were rich kids. Anywhere I go in society there is always problems with me, anywhere I go. Because I ain't the same as most people. It is crazy. Now, it is different because now you have more White boys listening to Rap singing Rap and going to Reggae bashes. I like the culture, I like the food, but I am also a Polish Catholic,*

[43] He was the lead singer of the Seattle-based grunge rock group Nirvana who overdosed on drugs (in 1994) and died as a result. This was extensively covered by the media.

> *there's no problem there. It is just that White people will call you a Wigger. Black people will call you a wannabe. People just want to make fun. Then there are other people that just don't mind as long as you are cool (25).*

In essence, whenever an individual is a minority within any given situation, he will be more likely to become the target of discrimination because he is noticeably different, or may be acting different from the norm. This means White kids are not supposed to listen to Black music, and a non-white in a school where the majority of the students are predominantly White may be the trigger for racial/ethnic conflict. It is questionable, therefore, whether these youths joined gangs because they were rebelling against the norm.

Other youths expressed dislike for specific ethnic groups and offered justifications for their hatred. A 17-year-old immigrant from Germany explains why he does not particularly like Arabs:

> *I don't like Arabs because they are greedy and they are selfish. They have big mouths and that is true. They just don't know when to shut up and they are always causing trouble for no reason. Me and my crew we got in some major fights with these fuckin' Arabs. Once a few of them came in our neighborhood and they were giving us dirty looks. I was just chilling with some of my friends, we were talking and smoking a joint and they just kept starring at us. I got so pissed off and I asked them "Hey you hara, haras" I call them Hara Haras because when they speak they sound so harsh and they sound like they are gargling or something. Anyway, back to my story while me and my friends were chilling, they kept starring us down and talking in their language and while they were looking at us they were laughing at the same time. I asked them what the fuck you looking at. One of the Arab guys spit on the floor that pissed me and my friends off! Before you know it we all got in one huge fight. We beat the living shit out of the four guys and we were five in my gang. Anyhow, every time I see any of these Arabs I just want to punch their fuckin' faces; they piss me and all my friends, none of us like them. These Arabs should go back to their countries, what the fuck they doing here, all they are good to do is cause problems for nothing and they only like to stick with their own kind, they are all full of shit (46).*

A 17-year-old immigrant from Portugal explains why he dislikes individuals who only speak French – that is, Quebecois and Haitians:

> *I never had a problem with being a Portuguese-Canadian. I admit I prefer to speak English, even though I speak French, I just don't like the French language. I don't like these little Frenchie's attitude, they all just think they are wicked and shit you know. Wicked means tough, whatever. They just... I don't know while we are playing basketball they get a good shot, or a wicked shot somehow. They cut you off and say yeah man c'est beau man. They are talking their fuckin' shit and I say what the fuck man shut the fuck up. At one time I almost got into a fight. I came back to my room and there were all of these Haitian guys and I was having problems with them, and the Quebecois they ain't any better, they are always in your face about speaking French. I say go to hell to both the Haitian and the Quebecois, they should learn to speak some English and maybe people would respect them a little more (26).*

One can speculate that gang membership for these individuals in the 'other' category (i.e., non-French, non-Haitian, non-Jamaican and non-Latino) is based on their shared experiences and values that may cause some individuals to behave in a racist or ethnocentric manner. Also within the "other" category there appears to be a sub-group whose members are more likely to be victims of racism.

Summary

All of these ethnic gangs are organized along ethnic lines. Therefore, all these youths share an affinity for their ethnic origins; we might say that gang membership for the homogeneously-composed gangs is predicated on ethnic origin. The analyses of the interviews indicate an affinity with ethnic identity for most of these individuals, especially where language (Spanish, French, Creole) is shared. For the most part, those who are ethnic-Canadian see themselves as ethnic-Canadian and see themselves in a position of relative powerlessness.

What is particularly interesting about the French youths is the identification of some individuals with Quebec nationalism (N = 6), especially with respect to negative feelings about English speaking Canadians. In contrast, others (N = 4) see themselves as French without the nationalistic overtones. Those who identify as Quebecois could be said to be rebelling against English-Canadians and non-white immigrants who are believed to threaten their language and cultural identity. Gang membership for the self-identified Quebecois group may permit an affirmation of their cultural and nationalistic beliefs. Those French youth who did not identify with Quebec in fact rejected the Quebecois culture, which they perceived as racist. Paradoxically, most French-Canadians who identify as Quebecois seek to control their community in the face of outsiders; for these individuals, language and cultural retention is very important (Louder and Waddell, 1983). Most of these youths interviewed expressed a desire to learn other languages and are open to having relationships with individuals from non-French cultures. These youths may be more aware of racism and be acting against it in some way; rejecting Quebecois culture may be a way of distancing themselves from perceived Quebecois racism.

The Haitian sample of youth refer to themselves as Haitian-Canadian; "Canadian" because they have a desire to merge into the mainstream of Canadian society, and "Haitian" because they want to retain their cultural roots. The Haitians interviewed strongly identified with their ethnicity, and all were gang members. Interview analysis suggests that Haitians are more accepting of Whites but feel that White dominant culture consistently discriminates against them and that they will always be perceived as immigrants. In fact, most have been brought up with the idea that they have to work harder and prove themselves more in order to be able succeed in society. We can

conclude that these youths are rebelling against White dominant culture because they feel rejected by it. In fact, they prefer to hang out with other Haitians because they speak the same language and have experienced similar problems. Gang membership may act as a protection device against racism for this group of individuals.

The Jamaicans perceive themselves as Jamaican solely and totally reject the Canadian identity. Jamaicans distance themselves from Canadian identity because for them it is synonymous with the Babylon system, the White power structure in Jamaica that has oppressed Jamaicans for centuries. Jamaicans' rebellion against the White power structure has also been discussed by other researchers (Troyna, 1977). One may argue that Jamaicans differentiate themselves from Haitians, viewing Haitians in a negative light because of differences of language and cultural repertoire between the two groups (as will be discussed in the following chapter). These data reveal that Jamaicans dislike Haitians because they do not speak the same language; Haitians are also perceived as betraying Black culture because of their desire to merge into mainstream society. This desire to assimilate is perceived as allying with the Babylon system, which most Jamaicans have rebelled against. These Jamaican youth prefer to separate themselves from such an oppressive system. Perhaps being members of a gang allows them to remain distinct from Haitians and prevents them from assimilating into White dominant culture. Nonetheless, what is similar about the Haitian and Jamaican sample is that they understand what it means to part of the minority group and both groups believe they are more likely to be judged on the basis of their race.

The literature reports that Latinos do not fit any traditional category of "race". They can be as White as Caucasians from mainstream America and Europe, as Black as

native Africans and African Americans (Trueba, 1999). Interview data show that the youths who are darker or look more Black are more likely to be discriminated against compared paler-skinned Latinos. However, what all of these youths have in common is the fact that they neither reject, nor accept, the Canadian identity. They express gratitude about living in a country that allows them to maintain their customs and language. Although they wish to be perceived as one hundred percent Latino, most believe that they too are victims of mainstream society's intolerance. Thus, remaining distinct means honoring their Latin roots, which perhaps serves as a criteria for gang membership (N=10); both these qualities come with a discriminatory price.

The final sample of youths who fall in the category of "other" refer to themselves as hyphenated Canadians. They do not fall within the category of majority or minority. They could just as easily identify themselves with one group or the other. What is different about this sample of youth is that they can be targets or perpetrators of discrimination. Gang membership for these individuals may not be solely based on a specific race and/or ethnicity because of their diverse backgrounds.

In this chapter I have explored ethnic identity in reference to how these young men in gangs see themselves, how others perceive them, how they bargain and find ways to survive the challenges of living in a society ruled by power imbalances across ethnic groups, and how their identity is constructed by the various social group members (James, 2003).

Throughout the rest of the dissertation the essence of identity will be examined to see whether it plays a significant role in the lives of such gang members.

CHAPTER 5: CULTURAL REPERTOIRE and the GANG

In Chapter Three I looked at components of gang lives and evaluated whether they were influenced or shaped by gang members' ethnic identity and in Chapter Four, I examined the perception of the importance of ethnic identity to gang members. In this chapter I will continue the investigation of the connections between ethnicity and gang life by examining the cultural repertoire of these youths, specifically, the variables and attributes associated with ethnicity as well as particular symbolic aspects of gang culture. This chapter, then, will examine the importance and/or retention of ethnic cultural identity in gang membership. I will also consider my findings about youth gang ethnic and cultural identity in light of the Symbolic Ethnicity theoretical paradigm which identifies the role of ethnic identity and its relevance in gang life (focusing on symbolic, collective, and external aspects of ethnic identity) in this chapter. The Birmingham School of analysis will focus on the symbolism of the gang life and gang styles, whether it signifies belonging or rebellion, and the degree to which such styles reflect these young men's ethnic identity.

Essentially, the discussion here will focus on two interrelated elements: gang culture and ethnic culture. The first of these (gang culture) can be assessed by examining a more abstract symbolisation of the gang – what does it mean to the gang member? This analysis will closely follow elements of gang definition from chapter three. In addition, it is possible to focus on external symbols of gang membership. These would be clothing, the presence/absence of tattoos, specific colours associated with specific gangs, other external decorations (e.g., jewelry), nicknames and graffiti. The second, ethnic culture,

will examine the usual variables associated with ethnicity: language, religion and neighbourhood residence can be considered to reflect degrees of assimilation/segregation within the ethnic group. Food, music, sports, religion, politics, heroes, gender and family relations will also be used to assess involvement in or connection to ethnic origins and participation in or involvement with particular ethnic communities.

Symbolism of the Gang

Common themes arose among respondents when they were asked about the symbolism of the gang. Many emphasised that to them the gang symbolised a family and often stood in lieu of their blood relations who, they often felt, did not value them. Thus, the gang provided a sense of family, a place where individuals were accepted, and a response to the lack of value placed on them by their 'real' families. This is seen in quotes from gang members across several different ethnicities:

> *Look, most of us come from families that are always in our face, telling us what to do; or it could be the complete opposite – some of us are ignored by our families. The gang gives us someone to talk to, someone that protects you and most importantly, someone that doesn't judge you but appreciates you for who you are (respondent 4, a 17-year-old French-Canadian).*

> *It symbolises love, I felt good around them, and they understood me. They talked about things that a guy my age could understand and truly relate to. They always encouraged me to continue in the gang and they never put me down. Doing crimes and acting bad was considered a good thing for the gang, while for my parents, it was considered really bad. I guess that was the difference, why my friends influenced me more than my parents. For example, at home, my parents were always telling me off. My friends used to tell me that doing crimes was good and if given the choice, I would have rather listened and believed my friends than have to listen and believe in what my parents had to say (respondent 6, a 20-year-old French-Canadian).*

> *The gang or clique, it is the same shit to me, like we call it a family nowadays, like it is family. A gang to me, is like you are with a group of people that you know, people that you trust, people that is going to have your back. People that are going to take care of you whatever, when times are rough and shit like that, you know. You just stick together and you are like a family, that's it (respondent*

27, a 17-year-old Jamaican-Canadian).

It is my street family. My street family gives me protection and there is less restrictions. If I do something that my mother doesn't like, she will nag me to death and make me feel bad, while my friends will praise that same behaviour as being good – and that is the difference (respondent 5, a 17-year-old Haitian-Canadian).

Like I said, it is like a family to me. Like for me, at home, my parents don't want me to return home, especially given the fact that the crime I have committed is really bad (respondent 19, a 17-year-old Haitian-Canadian).

It symbolises friendship and friends, that is how it started out. We were just very close friends (respondent 29, a 17-year-old Chilean-Canadian)

The gang is like my family. You feel proud to be in the gang, you feel strong, you have power because you have money in your pockets all the time (respondent 3, a 17-year-old El Salvadorian immigrant).

A family, man. It is a street family. I can't ask my mom go beat the fuck out of this guy because he just broke my arm. I can't. I can't ask my uncle that. (respondent 25, an 18-year-old Polish-Canadian).

Across the board, then (except for the Jamaican youths), most gang members agreed that the gang symbolized family: all 10 of the French respondents; eight of the 10 Haitian respondents; all 10 of the Latino interviewees; and six of the 10 interviewees of 'other' ethnicity. In contrast, just four of the 10 Jamaican interviewees felt that the gang symbolized family to them.

A second major symbolic value of the gang was that it symbolized money, power and respect, qualities we have already described in chapter three. In fact, all 10 French-Canadian interviewees, all 10 Haitian interviewees, all 10 Jamaican interviewees, all 10 Latino interviewees and all 10 interviewees of the 'other' ethnic groups referred to the gang as being important in symbolizing these qualities to themselves, their friends and even their enemies. These views are again well-expressed by quotes from various

interviewees.

> *Well, you are somebody. You get to be somebody that they know, a bad somebody if you were nothing in life, and then you go from being somebody that is BAD. Suddenly you are given orders to do this and that, to go beat people up or to get people that money or else. You have the power to do what you want. You just sit down and wait until that money comes in. That is one of the things that is cool, because I understand a lot of things since I am here. When I was on the outside and part of a gang and doing all these criminal things, I thought that is how life was supposed to be. Being in a gang, that is what life is all about. But I guess what attracts a lot of guys and what also attracted me about the gang life is that you get the respect and you get the respect of a lot of people around you and can get a lot of things. You can own a motorcycle. There are so many connections in that gang that you pay twenty bucks and you get your pager for a year. You have your own number and there is no monthly payments to do. It is the same thing, let's say you go inside and you have a wife and a kid, you have your apartment. Sometimes they give you money for your wife and they give you money to pay your rent. The first 10 months I was here I was continuing my shit on the outside (interviewee 15, a 20-year-old French Quebecois).*

> *Money, cars and respect. It is like my family, you know. It would be like my brothers and sisters. But other people – I am talking about outsiders – must show respect to my family (interviewee 5, a 17-year-old Haitian-Canadian).*

> *I liked it because there was a lot of money involved. Nobody to tell you nothing when you are on the street (interviewee 23, a 16- year-old Jamaican born)*

> *The gang is like my family. You feel proud to be in the gang. You feel strong, you have power, because you have money in your pockets all the time (interviewee 3, a 17-year-old El Salvadorian immigrant).*

One final and interesting observation about the symbolism of the gang, not gone into in any detail by the respondent, is that the gang symbolizes oneself. It is unclear whether the 17-year-old Portuguese immigrant who offered this comment meant it in a personal or a larger sense, but in any event, the gang was said to

> *. . . .represent where you're from and what you do and stuff like that (interviewee 26).*

As a general overview statement, one can clearly see, based on the data presented in Chapter three, that for all fifty respondents, the gang provides a badge of honor and

identity, which is reinforced through the unruliness of such subcultures and their illegality. Thus, the external representation of these symbols represents pride in deviance. Symbolic in-group boundaries (a concept developed in Birmingham sub-cultural theory) are expressed through specific clothing, styles, graffiti, tattoos, and music preferences that "attack the roles, boundaries and categories of conventional society" (Martin, 1981, p. 134). Such symbolic displays may express what is taboo or despised by gang members. Thus, one can describe gang subcultures as both 'deviant' and 'symbolic', emphasizing social boundaries which may be linked to members' ethnoracial identity.

To make clear the connections between the ideas of deviance, gang culture, ethnicity and the subjects of this study, I will focus on the concepts and variables of gang membership, external displays (graffiti, tattoos, nicknames), language, residential segregation, religiosity, food, music, sport, politics, heroes and, finally, gender and family relations.

The Elements of Cultural Repertoire

When most of us think of gangs, we think of the external elements of gang membership – the tattoos, the gang colours or clothes that people wear, and the use of graffiti to delineate and mark out gang territory. Here I will examine these symbols of gang culture, again, pointing out the similarities and differences among the various ethnic groups under study.

Clothing

Clothing styles are an important aspect of youth culture deviant or otherwise. Clothing expresses meaning and communicates an image. For instance, "clothing allows individuals to view themselves as social objects. "By extricating the self from a setting or

situation, the individual can scrutinize the image he or she presents in view of the social response that is desired" (Rubinstein, 2001, p. 4). The implication is that adolescents have long recognized the significance of clothing as accruing social significance. The adolescent's clothing style also identifies who he is and provides him with some social value vis-à-vis the group. The gang in this case becomes the adolescent's audience, and the clothing he displays somehow reflects his character or how he would like his group members to perceive him; while at the same time it signals connectedness to the group because they all dress alike. Youth in gangs adopt distinctive clothing styles that express a distinct identity that and demonstrate "their awareness that a style or mode of appearance has meaning" (Rubinstein, 2001, p. 5). The clothing and accessories they wear embody images that give shape to the group's orientation of who they are and the social realities they face. Their collective life is embodied in images that reflect their common ideas, beliefs, and values, and their chosen dress and ornaments act as elements in a communication system (Rubenstein, 2001). Their clothing style may reflect racial and ethnic pride or an overt refusal to accept the ideas and values of mainstream culture. Whatever such styles are meant to convey they become "a form of societal discourse...or public speak" (Rubinstein, 2001,p. 14). When a fair number of adolescents choose a particular clothing image, specifically if their clothing style is not the norm, this may indicate deviation from society's standards of appropriate dress. The styles gangs adopt may gain public attention and may be labelled deviant but they are also symbolic of the sentiments of similar and dissimilar gangs. Such public reaction may incite the youth in the gang to feel, think, and act differently from mainstream culture and may be personified as stigma symbols or symbols of maintaining the individual's bond to the

group. One thing that is clear is that the meaning of the dress and the reason someone elects to wear it are specific to the individual and the group he belongs to. Some youth in gangs choose to wear specific clothing because it allows them to achieve social goals such as a sense of belonging (i.e., loyal friends, the gang they represent allows them to make x amount of money, etc.), while some choose to wear specific styles because they like the colors or the specific image they convey (the meaning of such symbols can be ambiguous) (Rubinstein, 2001). In other cases they consciously choose a particular style because it reflects ethnic pride and ethnic allegiance, which may be important to the gang. Thus, different clothing styles generate understandings and meanings among youth [in the gang] and, consequently, reflect a specific identity and lifestyle (Wilson and Sparks, 1996).

Clothing was an important element of gang membership for many individuals, although not necessarily in the expected way. In general, all respondents across all ethnic groups (except for five subjects of the 'other' ethnic group) remarked on some clothing requirements – even if it was only to point out that they were not to wear particular things. All 10 of the French-Canadian respondents said that in their street gangs there was no 'uniform'. This was clearly connected to the fact that French-Canadian youth gangs are often associated with organised gangs and biker gangs (as previously discussed in Chapter three), which are involved in adult criminal activities. The adults do not want attention drawn to them, and this feeling filters down to the affiliated youth gangs. Thus, most French-Canadian youth gang members try to maintain a low profile by wearing jeans, t-shirts, baseball caps – most even pass as non-deviants. Indeed, all of the French sample (N = 10) claim that within their street gangs, members did not have a specific

style of dress, but were made distinctive by their way of thinking. An 18-year-old explains that:

> *We don't have a specific dress code if that is what you are talking about. With organised gangs like my gang we try to keep it low profile. You are only allowed to carry the gang's name and colours after you have become somewhat of a veteran. In other words, if you survived all kinds of shit and did what you were supposed to without getting caught then you get your gang symbols and stripes.*
>
> *We are not like the Haitian crew, like when they go out they walk around with their colours so that everyone can see who they are. Some wear red bandannas while others wear blue. They want to show people that they are into gangs but me and the guys in my gang we are not into that sort of thing. Us white guys we are not like that. Some of us wear the tattoos from the gang and not everyone could wear it. In order to be able to wear the gang's symbols you usually would have to be highly ranked and be considered a veteran.*
>
> *Yeah we wear a tattoo and the colours but you have to be really high in the rankings and not everyone is privileged to wear the tattoos that represent the gang. With that comes the leather vest and leather jacket. If someone would decide for the hell of it to walk around with the gang's name on a jacket or vest, it wouldn't go too well with the members. They don't like impostors representing their gang. It is like a wannabe, this person go do things (criminal activities) and carry them out in the name of the gang.*
>
> *Having the gang's name on a jacket or a vest, sure you see these things, but like I said, you have to be high in the rankings (interviewee 2).*

It is only the very senior members of the organised biker gangs, then, who are permitted to show their colours – that is, are allowed to wear the biker's vests, jackets, and tattoos bearing the gang's name, also pointed out by a 15-year-old self-identified Quebecois:

> *The ones that are higher in ranking do wear the tattoos. The higher they are placed the more they can wear, like the gang's crest, expensive jewelry or a particular vest or jacket that has the gang's name on it. Just like their Harley Davidson's. When you are ranked high in the gang, you can wear these things. Apart from that there are guys that wear tattoos that are more personalised but do not have the gang's name on it. They have the tattoo because they like it and they want it because it looks good. Not just anyone can wear the gang's jacket, no way. If a guy would be dumb enough to do that, especially if he is not in the gang,*

> *then let me tell you it does spell trouble for this guy, he wouldn't make it to live another day. Not everyone can do this (interviewee 10).*

Although clothing may not be the most important display or symbol of French-Canadian gang membership, certainly members of the motorcycle gangs like to display their wealth by buying expensive jewelry and expensive gadgets.

> *The motorcycle gangs like to wear or show off their expensive jewelry. Like, big gold chokers or gold chains and stuff like that. They wear it so that people know that they have money. They have cell phones. Put it this way, they have everything money can buy. (interviewee 10, 15-year-old French youth)*

Although clothing per se may be unimportant, the meaning of such clothing to others and oneself was considered important, as noted by a 17-year-old French-Canadian:

> *They have their distinctive way of thinking and they wear a head-band. It is the type of guy who brags about himself especially about how bad he is. Yes and No, it is not really required some of the guys do it as a way to show people that this is their gang and that they are bad and they are proud to be in a gang and this is important because it makes them feel powerful, like they are someone important (interviewee 4).*

All of the French Canadian respondents claimed that in their street gangs there was no 'uniform,' and that what makes members distinctive is their way of thinking, which encourages action, toughness, aggressive masculinity; members must know how to live by their wits (Brake, 1985). According to the Birmingham School paradigm a subculture is "made up of expression, gait and posture" (Brake, 1985, p. 12). The so-called "tough" and "aggressive" demeanor adopted by the French youth becomes a distinctive factor in their gang subculture that in a "dramaturgical sense provides statements about their self-image" (Brake, 1985, p. 12). These youth are adamant about remaining distinct from Black gangs and say they achieve this by not dressing like Blacks and by refusing to wear "specific colors" (which have been adopted by Haitian gang members).

However, once these youths graduate into the biker gangs, costume and jewelry become important symbolic features that define this subculture. The biker uniform becomes the personification of power and status. That is, wearing the "uniform" becomes an affirmation of successful entry within the subculture and can be used to show promotion within the gang's hierarchy. Furthermore, from a subcultural perspective, style acts as a form of expression (Brake, 1985). Thus, the costume of the biker gang member (tattoos, leather vests, leather jackets imprinted with the gang's logo) and their motorcycles signify the lifestyle of a rebel, a risk-taker who challenges death as he rides his motorcycle at a high speed consistently trying to evade the law (Brake, 1985). The sense of freedom, power, and status is the reward. What the street and biker gang have in common is that they exclude outsiders (i.e., Blacks and those who are neither French nor English). Their adopted "image" and "lifestyle" symbolically challenge cultural norms and values and encourage aberrant and discriminatory behavior.

However, French-Canadian youths' street gang membership may still be linked to ethnicity in that all their gang connections for the most part are with other French individuals. The biker gang affiliations they aspire to explicitly exclude those who are not White and who speak neither French nor English. The lack of a "uniform" symbolizes a desire to remain distinct from other ethnic gangs (particularly Haitian gangs). Their choice of clothing, geared to maintain a low-profile, reflects what it means to be White, French Canadian or French Quebecois; it allows them easier entry and acceptance into the higher status biker gang subculture and confirms their majority ethnic status. The youths' ethnicity becomes a status symbol of privilege, allowing them access to a subculture that is notorious for its criminal activities and whose membership is exclusive

with regards to race and ethnic culture.

Haitian youths are more likely to possess gang colours, even if they do not wear these colours all the time. One 16-year-old Haitian gang member pointed out that his gang once used to have a dress code, which incorporated a particular style of pants (low-waisted baggy pants) and even the colour of the bandanna worn; this facilitated recognition of other gang members. However, over time, this style was picked up by non-gang youth and thus lost some of its identifying characteristics, leaving it to an individual's expertise or knowledge of the milieu or quartier to identify gang members:

> *If you do not recognise the milieu then you cannot know just like that who is a member of the gang and who is not. I am in the milieu and it is easier for me to know who is a member of the gang and who is not a member of the gang. I am able to recognise the guy's face, the way he talks and his way of walking and the way he dresses I could tell who is in a gang and who is not in the gang.*

> *During that time I was in the gang you could distinguish what type of gang the person came from by the bandanna he was wearing. The way the guy walks with attitude and a sort of swing. The way you dress, baggy pants that are low-waisted and they look like they are falling at your butt. But there are some guys who dress like that too and are not in gangs. But it is the guys in gangs that started this type of dress trend. You just know who is in the gang you can always tell the wannabes from the real thing. I can't really describe it to you, just from the way the guy talks, his walk is just different from regular guys, and you just know that this guy is in the gang. I guess I could tell because I am in the gang. It is for an insider to really know who is in the gang. All the kids are dressing like us. Unless you are in it, that is the only way to know (interviewee 1).*

In fact, Haitian youths identified two distinct gangs, defined by neighbourhoods, to which Haitian youth were likely to belong. These were the Bo-gars (a bastardisation of beaux garcons), whose area was Montreal North (five of the interviewees) and the Crackdown Posse of the Pie IX area (the other five interviewees). Although our first respondent felt that there was no longer a gang uniform, a second respondent, a 17-year-old Haitian, disagreed:

> *Red is Montreal Nord and blue is Pie IX. It is the same idea as the Bloods and the Crips. It is not as dangerous or bad as it is in LA because it is crazy out there. Here it is relaxed it is beginning to be less and less. (interviewee 5).*

Thus, the two gangs tend to wear red (Bo-Gars) or blue (Crackdown Posse). In fact, these two Haitian gangs were identified by all respondents as having this distinctive style of dress. That particular style of dress is described by the following three subjects:

> *We have a vagabond style [gang Bo-Gars] we wear low-waisted paints. We wear headbands. For instance, the guys of Montreal North, which is my gang, wear red bandannas. This symbolises the Bloods, we are a sub-group of such a gang. The name of our gang is called the Bo-gars. (respondent 9, 15-year-old Haitian-Canadian).*

> *The clothes* [Bo-Gars gang] *we wear symbolises that we are with it, the colour is red for death, for power, and we consider ourselves the sub-group of the Bloods (interviewee 17, a 17-year-old Haitian-Canadian).*

> *We all wear blue shirts, blue pants* [CDP gang]. *You will never see red. It is rare that you will see the members wearing a red shirt. The members don't like that. I used to wear all the colours except for red. I used to wear baggy pants and loose fitting shirts. I didn't wear headbands. Because I live in Rivières des Prairies, I live in the Bloods territory. The problem is for me it has been a long time that I have been in Pie IX in the Crips. I cannot wear red or blue in my neighbourhood that would cause problems. The gang members who are rivals to my gang wear red. I have tried the best that I can to hide the fact that I am a member of the Crips. I hate seeing someone wear red, it hurts me, it bothers me. Blue symbolises royalty to be a king, it also symbolises death. You see when you are alive you have your blood pumping, and when you die you turn blue (interviewee 19, a 17-year-old Haitian Immigrant).*

As with Los Angeles gangs, the Bloods and the Crips, the Bo-gars (who align themselves with the "Bloods") and the CDP (Crackdown Posses, who see themselves as the "Crips") are rivals, wear different colours and live in different neighbourhoods.

Thus, among the Haitian interviewees, a colour of clothing (red versus blue) distinguishes between the two primary gangs of that ethnic group. Furthermore, gang youths were quite aware that wearing their gang colours could act as a signal to the police that they were gang members. As a result, gang members often carried red or blue

bandannas (representing the gang to which they belonged), but kept them in a pocket, removing and displaying them only when necessary and for particular events, e.g., when they are in the presence of rival gang members or to impress girls or friends

Haitian gang members also tended to wear cornrows (a hair style in which the hair is braided tightly to the scalp), although some wore Afros.

Clothing is an important element of gang membership for these Haitian youths. Most adopted rapper style clothing (baggy, low-waisted pants, red or blue clothing and bandannas), symbolic of attacking "the roles, boundaries, and categories of conventional society" (Martin, 1981, p. 134). Such a clothing style also reflects the 'hood, the territory; it is a reflection of a world where Blacks are discriminated against and are discouraged from the more "desirable suburban residences" (Brake, 1985, p.117). Such outward display of clothing and personal decoration distinguishes inside and outside group members (e.g., Blacks vs. Whites), while at the same time expressing internal differentiation within their own ethnic group (Haitians vs. Haitians) (Douglas, 1970). What separates these Haitian youth from one another is the neighborhood they come from and the specific colors they wear (i.e., red or blue) which denotes belonging to a particular gang. The gang styles, such as baggy pants, the use of the colors red and blue, and distinctive hair-styles (e.g., cornrows or afros), distinguishes them from White youth and Jamaican youth. Haitian youth in gangs have developed their own clothing styles and identities that are signs and symbols of the Haitian culture. Their specific styles reinforce values that appear to be oppositional to dominant mainstream culture. The baggy pants, bandannas, and specific colors are recognized by mainstream culture as symbolic of street gang membership, and makes the youths both feared by mainstream culture and

respected by fellow gang members. Haitian youths' adoption of distinctive styles permits them to distinguish themselves from other ethnic gangs such as the French and Jamaican. Haitian youth gang styles (dress and hair) demonstrate not only their difference and separation from other ethnic gangs in Montreal, but also their difference from mainstream white society and their perceived affiliation with or inspiration by U.S. gangs.

While Jamaicans do not wear specific colours or have a gang 'uniform', most interviewees (nine of the 10) agreed it was possible to identify a gang member by his hair style (often one shared by Haitian gang members) and also by the expensive clothes, jewelry, cars, and other items he possessed. Like the Rastafarians, Jamaican youth had long shoulder length hair and wore "dreadlocks" – hair that is loosely braided. A 16-year-old Jamaican-Canadian went on to say:

> *The main plan was making money, at least be respected by a certain number of people. When you have the money you want to flash, your sports car, your leather jacket, the Pelle Pelle* [name brand]. *You have your big gold chain, and big gold bracelet. Some prefer wearing Platinum jewelry. Some people sport their rentals. It is kind of hard to get a car basically when you are making illegal money. You are sporting big luxury rental cars. Parties, girls, and everything and that is how basically we used to work. We wore bandannas that matched what we were wearing and if I was dressed all in grey than we would be wearing a grey bandanna. It wasn't this gang thing but it was more about co-ordination of colours. If for example I am dressed all in blue of course I am not going to wear a red bandanna, but I am going to wear a blue bandanna (interviewee 24).*

Thus, demonstration of wealth as a result of gang membership was more important than wearing a uniform or colours or specific items of clothing as signals of gang membership. However, one 17-year-old Canadian-born Jamaican reported that in his gang most members wore blue clothes and bandannas (he belonged to the downtown Crips):

> *But recently for the past two years, we picked blue like the Crips you know,*

> *because whatever, in downtown there are a bunch of Crips. My clique has a name. First we had Last World. Me I left that clique because it got all fucked up and it wasn't serious so I went with some other dudes in Burgundy* [Montreal neighbourhood]*and I went with another clique called Deuce* [name of another gang]. *We would wear our blue bandannas, like you know. After school or whatever we would go to Villa Maria metro and over there there's a lot of Crips they are there after school hours and stuff like that you know, they just hang also or whatever. You go there with your blue bandanna and they know it doesn't matter what area you are from, like you know. If you are from downtown it is downtown Crips, if you are from uptown then you are uptown Crips. Like, you know, it is like that and we are all together because it is like blue (interviewee 27).*

Thus, in line with the discussion presented in Chapter One, the culture and experiences of US gangs, such as the Bloods and the Crips of New York and Los Angeles, play a role in the definition of the gang experience here in Montreal for Haitian and Jamaican youth. These US gangs also seem, at least for some Montreal gangs and gang members, to provide a template of what a youth in a gang should wear and how he should carry himself.

The Jamaican youth in gangs are motivated by economics (Fleisher, 1998; Hazlehurst & Hazlehurst, 1998; Dukes et. al., 1997; Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Huff, 1996; Sheley, 1995; The Canadian Street Children Project, 1993; Chesney-Lind & Karen, 1995; Lasley, 1992; Moore et. al., 1983) and, like the French youths, the Jamaican youths identify the status associated with gang membership as important to them (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Moreover, like the Haitian youths, the Jamaican youths often identify themselves as gang members based on their dress and the neighborhoods to which they belong (Zatz, 1985, p. 27). One way youth can express this status is through what they wear, which fits nicely with the Birmingham School of Subcultural Theory: "the factors of prestige and stature are displayed in their choice of attire which is deliberately and

openly flaunted" (Brake, 1985, p.117). Jamaican youths identify themselves as gang members by the expensive name brand clothing and jewelry they wear and cars they own as symbolic of what it means to be Jamaican and in a gang. Their rebellion is against class structure and inequality and their brand name clothing and expensive jewelry dramatize such resistance. Their distinctive styles (the dread-locks, woolly hats, and so-called righteous attitude that they've adopted from claiming to be Rastafarians) demarcate specific ethnic boundaries that make clear that only Jamaican youth are welcome in their gangs.

Latino gang youths also shared characteristics with Haitian gang members, in that they too wear different coloured bandannas to demonstrate membership in a particular gang; like Haitian gang members, Latino youths also kept these bandannas out of sight in general, displaying them only when faced with rival gang members or to gain access to clubs and bars – thus trading on the respect or power represented by the gang to gain entry to somewhere that might otherwise be difficult to enter. In addition, although there was not a specific uniform, gang members tended to dress alike, in a "vagabond" style, some wearing some gang specific accessories (bandannas, designs on clothing):

> *There is no real specific colour that we wear. For instance, some of the members wear dark coloured pants, where others may wear more light colours such as beige. The bandannas we wear there are some that are blue while other members wear black. There are some that wear white bandannas. I used to dress like a vagabond. I didn't wear any specific coloured clothing but I did have a bandanna that I kept in my pocket. I used to wear the colour blue bandanna. Some wore specific designs like a character of some kind, most often it was the gang's initials or the name of the gang. The name of my gang was MS Mara, which stands for Moi Salvadorian. This is the El Salvadorian gang (interviewee 8, a 17-year-old El Salvadorian).*

Latino gang members tended to dress alike in a "vagabond" style, some wearing gang specific accessories such as bandannas, clothing designed with the initials of the

gang or designed to denote that the person was affiliated with a gang from a specific neighbourhood. Since Latino youths emphasized the importance of ethnic culture to their gang life, the clothing they wore reflected this pride and showed other ethnic gangs who they were. Latino identification was important to the Latin youth in gangs because although some were identified as Euro-Canadian, others were identified as Black. Consequently, some of these youths with darker skins were adamant about emphasizing their "Latino-ness": they wanted to avoid being mistaken for a Black Canadian and feared they would face greater discrimination as a result. Their Latino ethnicity is an important factor to Latino youth who participate in the gang subculture because they are labelled as outsiders from a different culture (Brake, 1985) and many feel stigmatized by other ethnic groups. Gang membership acts symbolically to encourage pride in cultural heritage and also serves as an outlet for rebellion against real or imagined discrimination.

Among the youths of the 'other' ethnic category, five did not wear specifically coloured clothing or bandannas; the others did not wear gang-specific clothing, but did carry bandannas of a colour that denoted a particular gang.

> *When I was in the gang, I wasn't into colours and didn't feel like wearing colours. I just symbolised myself because the cops already knew me (interviewee 42, a 17-year-old Irish-Canadian)*

> *Our bandannas were green. It symbolises the colour of American money, and we all know that American money is worth more than the Canadian dollar. We were in the area of St. Leonard (interviewee 36, a15-year-old Algerian immigrant)*

Those of the "other" category tended to align themselves along racial lines and to a certain degree along ethnic lines as well, a common presentation of group deviant behavior (Goldstein & Huff, 1993; Huff, 1990; Vigil & Yun, 1990; Chin, 1990a, 1990b, 1986; Joe & Robinson, 1980; Miller, 1975) and for many, this deviant alignment gave

rise to economic benefits through criminal activity (Fleisher; Hazlehurst and Hazlehurst, 1998; Dukes et. al., 1997; Decker & Van Winkle, Huff, 1996; Chesney-Lind & Karen, 1995; Sheley, 1995; The Canadian Street Children Project, 1993; Lasley, 1992; Moore et. al., 1983).

The gangster/rapper style these youths adopted projected a "bad-boy image" symbolic of their delinquent gang-affiliated activities. Unlike the Haitian youths, these "other" youths did not wear specific gang clothing but did carry bandannas, the color of which denoted a particular gang, therefore expressing a "degree of commitment to the subculture [...] by its very appearance disregards or attacks dominant values" (Brake, 1985, p.11). The presence of the bandanna, then, signifies – subtly – to which group these youths belong to, and at the same time is used to make a conscious attempt to set themselves apart from mainstream society and other ethnic gangs (Brake, 1985). As with the French, the Jamaicans, the Haitians and the Latinos, these "other" youths have created a world which excludes outsiders, generally aligning themselves on the basis of race or ethnicity (Brake, 1985). Gang membership and the bandanna personify the breaking of boundaries and the breaking of rules, which equate to danger and excitement. As well, these youths' rebellion against adult society becomes a badge of identity and admiration (Walker et. al., 1996; Martin, 1981). The clothing styles adopted by those in the category of diverse ethnic group did not necessarily reflect their ethnic culture but were more symbolic of their gang affiliation.

A commonality among all ethnic groups is that their distinct clothing styles are symbolic of expected role behavior. In other words, by wearing gang gear the individual is expected to adopt the criminal lifestyle of a gang participant; such behavior is

encouraged by the group he is affiliated with. Therefore, "by wearing the appropriate attire a person can convince others that he or she has the special qualities and skills the clothing signifies" (Rubinstein, 2001, p. 57). To simply wear the gang uniform is not enough: a youth has to have earned it by proving himself worthy of wearing a specific gang's style or colors. The youths' clothing styles, colors, and bandannas provide information about a social identity that has been earned but that also operates to sustain the individual's bond with the group. Furthermore, in most cases, whatever style these youth adopted clearly indicated to which gang they belonged and the ethno-cultural composition of their respective street gangs. Their clothing (i.e., gang wear) also reflects opposition to the dominant hierarchical structure that echoes a lifestyle that maintains and validates their distinct identity, but that also effectively keeps outsiders away (Rubinstein, 2001).

Graffiti

In Montreal in 2002, police arrested "100 people defacing metro stations and tunnels... Graffiti – sometimes the work of tough street gangs marking their territory – frightens the public" (The Montreal Gazette, Oct. 15, 2004, p. B2).

Graffiti... "is an important expressive device in the gang subculture...graffiti are a vehicle to communicate a message that is understood by the gangs" (Brown, 1978, p. 46). Graffiti occurs in subway cars, school walls, apartment buildings, trains and buses (Lachmann, 1988). Graffiti challenges the dominant culture's hegemony and is perceived as a criminal activity; its appeal to the gang subculture is that it encourages what is forbidden, which is a desire to deface property (Brown, 1978). Graffiti has also been described as an anti-language that is often antagonistic in its nature (Adams & Winter,

1997). A gang's graffiti may reveal an interactional discourse that is understood within the gang subculture but keeps outsiders (such as police or the average citizen) in the dark about its meanings; this has led to graffiti being described as both anti-society and dangerous (Adams & Winter, 1997). Graffiti may also be linked to ethnic culture in that it usually advertises a particular gang that lives in a particular neighbourhood that is affiliated with a particular ethnic group. Adams and Winter, 1997 studied graffiti writing and spray painting in the Phoenix (U.S.A.) area and discovered "Spanish slang expressions and cultural signifiers, numerical symbols standing for criminal codes and threats" (Adams & Winter, 1997, p. 340), and gang name abbreviations and nicknames were often spray painted on public property of gang-affiliated neighbourhoods. And given that "Phoenix has between 150 and 160 street gangs of which approximately 30-33 percent are African American and approximately 67-70 percent are Hispanic" (Adams & Winter, 1997, p. 338), it can be said that graffiti expresses both gang affiliation and cultural allegiance.

Urban gang graffiti is the most common way for gang members to communicate loyalty to a particular gang (Fleisher, 1998; Moore, 1991; Huff, 1990). Graffiti also marks the gang's territorial boundaries and serves as a warning to rival gangs not to trespass; moreover, it is an excellent way for police officers to track gang growth, affiliation, and sometimes even provides membership information (Fleisher, 1998; Moore, 1991; Huff, 1990). In this study, French, Haitian, and Latino youths as well as some youths in the "other" category have painted graffiti in parks, schools and metros and on police cars to demonstrate gang allegiance, strengthen gang participation, and challenge rival gangs.

Graffiti is used by many people to delineate or mark territory, along the lines of "I was here", or, "This belongs to us". Thus, it is clearly an important external symbolic expression of gang presence and membership. Indeed, all 10 French respondents reported that graffiti-ing is common among street gang members but is not done by biker/organised gang members. As a 15-year-old French youth reports:

> *It depends. The street gangs are into graffiti. The more organised, criminalized biker gangs are not into doing graffiti. You usually see graffiti at the park. For instance, in my corner of the neighbourhood at Ville Emard there are a couple of young kids that are a small time gang that love to do graffiti. When I was younger I was the leader of a gang, we used to hang out at the park, smoke up, drink, and do some graffiti. Why people get into graffiti is because they want to show that they are good in design, because people will walk by and say things like check that out, it is super nice. If the guys who have done the graffiti, are close by and hear the compliment I guess it makes them feel good (interviewee 10).*

Haitian gang members (N=10) explained that some but not all gang members paint graffiti to show gang allegiance; when they did, they generally painted the initials of the gang's name or gang members' nicknames on school buildings and even sometimes on police cars.

> *The gang does some graffiti that allows them to mark their territory. What happens is most of the time they will be smoking weed and then decide there and then to do some graffiti (Interviewee 5 17-year-old Haitian-Canadian.).*

> *We don't do any graffiti, we are not really into that (Interviewee 9, 15-year-old Haitian-Canadian)*

Jamaican youth pointed out that they did not do a lot of graffiti:

> *We weren't into that graffiti business.(Interviewee 24 16-year-old Jamaican-Canadian).*

Latino gang members (N=10) also painted graffiti in various places around their neighbourhood. This graffiti told people in the area who the gang was and that this, in fact, was a gang area. As well, it allowed members to mark their territory and served

notice to rival gang members to avoid the neighbourhood where gang members made a living soliciting drugs and spending their free time. Some gang members even marked rival territories, to flex muscle, and perhaps to trigger some altercations and thus provide a forum to demonstrate their superiority to their rivals.

> *Some of the members were good at designs and drawings, so they would do graffiti from time to time. They would do the graffiti on the streets, or in the places where we used to hang out at after school, places or corners where we would go to smoke up or where we would meet each other at night, and places like that. Or we would go in other neighbourhoods where there were rival gangs and we would mark their territory with our specific gang's name. We would do things like that just to bug the other guys and to piss them off (interviewee 8, a 17-year-old El Salvadorian).*

Latino gang members also marked the wider social territory – they graffitied Montreal metro stations (Fabre, Snowdon, Côte des Neiges and de Castelnau).

> *Yes, I have done some graffiti in my neighbourhood, which is in the Ahuntsic area. We did this to mark our territory, to show people who pass or to show people who come in our neighbourhood, especially rival gangs, that this is our turf, so no trespassing (interviewee 3, a 17-year-old El Salvadorian)*

Among the 'other' ethnic category, opinion was divided. Five respondents reported that some gang members did graffiti, while the balance said that graffiti was not part of their gang ethos:

> *We did a lot of graffiti on the streets, metro stations and old railroads because the first gang was CAD – Crazy Ass Delinquents is what CAD stands for (interviewee 28, an 18-year-old Cree)*

> *This organised family was not in graffiti or colours like regular street punk gangs. This is not a bullshit gang – this is the real thing (interviewee 39, a 17-year-old Italian-Canadian).*

Clearly, the implication is that organised gangs do not stoop to the level of graffiti, whereas street gangs, not associated with organised gangs, do. Street gang graffiti

did not always reflect ethnic and gang identity (sometimes youth painted pictures merely for the sake of defacing property). The French, Haitian, Latino and youth in the other ethnic category agree that when the name of the gang or initials of the gang were marked and painted on a particular spot it expressed both gang and ethnic allegiance. In contrast, though, the Jamaican youths claimed that their gang was not into doing graffiti. The ethnic gangs under study that indulge in some kind of graffiti either do so because it serves to provoke a reaction from mainstream society and/or police or because it allows them to advertise gang affiliation and ownership of territory so as to keep rival gangs away and because it also communicates cultural identity. For instance, graffiti is summed up as "look at me, it doesn't matter if you look at me in a negative or positive way, but look at me" (Macdonald, 2002, p. 94). Spray painting a gang's name, for instance "CDP", may reflect a particular ethnic allegiance (Haitian), gang affiliation (Crack Down Posse) and neighborhood (Pie IX). Drawing on the Birmingham perspective, it can be suggested that graffiti represents a group identity: a specific cultural heritage associated with a specific gang and thus imposes a confrontational hostility that expresses rebellion against hegemony. Additionally, it "interrupts the pleasant, efficient uniformity of "planned" urban space and predictable living...and is a form of aesthetic sabotage" (Ferrell, 1996. p. 176).

Tattoos

Tattoos are common among gang members and prison inmates (Phillips, 2001; Demello, 1993). For gang members, tattoos symbolize personal experience and social history alike (Phillips, 2001). For the inmate "tattoos operate as signifiers of ethnicity, class and convict status both within the prison environment, and the outside" (Demello,

1993, p. 10). Tattoos make a person's body culturally visible and reflect both individual (who s/he is) and group identity (which ethnic gang s/he belongs to), asserting cultural differences and maintaining specific social boundaries (Demello, 1993). In other words, tattoos serve as visual markers of identity because they distinguish gang members from larger society and identify them as separate from other gangs (Phillips, 2001). The tattoo "is particularly important among the visual media of gangs because it allows gang members to transport the idea of their neighbourhood to distant and unfamiliar locales such as prison" (Phillips, 2001, p. 363). For a prison inmate, wearing a specific tattoo on his neck may protect him from violence and rape while he is in jail (Phillips, 2001). For gang members on the outside, a specific tattoo may tell the outside world, as well as gang rivals, who "has their back" – i.e., identify which gang protects them (Phillips, 2001). Tattoos, then, may serve as symbolic practices that communicate protective affiliation for both those gang members on the streets and those who are imprisoned. Tattoos are worn with pride because their wearers will be hero-worshiped by those who look up to them (novice gang members) and feared by those who see them as a threat (members of rival gangs). Tattoos are a way of expressing gang solidarity and demonstrating gang membership. The permanent impression of a design or writing can perhaps be thought to signify a strong and permanent bond with the gang.

Interestingly, relatively few gang members interviewed for this study had tattoos, and those who did, did not always feel that the tattoo was directly related to the gang itself. Indeed, neither Haitian nor Jamaican gang members had tattoos, and only a small minority of French (four of 10) and Latino (four of 10) possessed tattoos; as well, among the 'other' ethnic category, those who had tattoos felt that the tattoos had no connection

to their gang membership. For the French youths, gang tattoos were more often associated with biker gang members. Those French youths who did get tattoos did so because they felt the tattoo was 'cool' and gave them a 'bad boy' image. Indeed, two interviewees explicitly stated that tattoos were associated with biker gang members:

> *Some of them had tattoos, the ones that were higher up. The higher up wore designs on their backs mostly, or on their shoulder that said the gang's name and its symbol. The design that you are allowed to wear allows others to know about all of the things that you did. And the symbol is of the Biker gangs of Montreal (interviewee 18, a 19-year-old French-Quebecois).*

> *The ones that are higher in ranking do wear the tattoos. The higher they are placed, the more they can wear – like the gang's crest, expensive jewelry or a particular vest or jacket that has the gang's name on it, just like their Harley Davidson's. When you are ranked high in the gang, you can wear these things. Apart from that, there are guys that wear tattoos that are more personalised but do not have the gang's name on it. They have the tattoo because they like it and they want it because it looks good (interviewee 10, a 15-year-old French-Quebecois).*

Of the Latino youths interviewed, four wore tattoos that represented the neighbourhood district they came from or the Spanish flag, which in turn symbolizes the connection between their ethnic origins and gang culture. In this case, it is obvious that the tattoo has some indirect association with gang membership, particularly given that, as we have already learned in Chapter Three, Latino youths tend to associate gang membership more strongly with their ethnicity than any other youths. Tattoos with numbers (worn by two Latino interviewees) showed outsiders or rival gang members that these youths belonged to a particular 'turf'; in a way, it provided the pedigree of the youth.

> *I am number 18. I wear a tattoo that says number 18, which represents the number of my neighbourhood (interviewee 3, a 17-year-old El Salvadorian).*

> *I have a tattoo with the Spanish flag on it. I chose this tattoo because I am proud of my Latin roots, and that's it (interviewee 41, a 17-year-old Dominican*

Republican)

Interestingly, the two youths with a tattoo of the Spanish flag, were darker-skinned Latinos who were consistently mistaken to be Black. Having such a tattoo allowed these youths to represent themselves and be recognized as Latino.

All the youths interviewed in the 'other ethnic' category said that several of their fellow gang members had tattoos but that these tattoos had nothing to do with the gang. Only three of the subjects themselves had tattoos (of a skull, a sword, and wings). These tattoos were said to reflect personal taste and not relate to gang membership. A 17-year-old Irish-Canadian pointed out:

> *Yeah, members of my gang have a tattoo on their arm as well. They don't have the name of the gang. Tattoos are supposed to symbolise something about you. It reflects something about your personality. The broken skull represents that I was a bad ass when I was young (interviewee 43).*

Like Jamaican youths, Haitians did not get tattoos, while the French and "other" youths did, although they considered these tattoos to be unrelated to gang membership but believed they generated a "tough" and "rebellious" image. Tattoos, then, unlike graffiti, reflect personal taste rather than gang loyalty and ethnic identification.

> *None of us have tattoos. All of us have nicknames so that no one will recognise who we are. We always give one another a nickname in the gang. An example would be all the guys call me Rocket. It symbolises that I am fast and I am furious. (Interviewee 9, 15-year-old Haitian-Canadian).*

Latinos, on the other hand, wore tattoos that represented their neighborhood or the Spanish flag referring to their South American origins (eight of these boys were immigrants). Latino youths tended to associate gang membership more strongly with their ethnicity compared to those of other groups, and the symbolism of their tattoos is best explained from a Birmingham perspective: these decorations lay claim to a particular

territory or ethnicity providing them with a distinctive identity. This was most important for the darker-skinned Latinos who were consistently mistaken as Black, an offensive idea to them. These youths insisted that for them, wearing a tattoo of the Spanish flag enabled them to avoid ethnic antagonism equal in form and degree to that suffered by African Americans (Howard, 1970). For Latino youth in particular, tattoos represent a positive affirmation of their cultural self within an environment that stigmatizes them because of their gang affiliations as well as their ethnic heritage.

What is common among the individuals who wear tattoos is that their body becomes culturally visible because tattoos are worn on extremely public areas of the body allowing others to see them. From a Birmingham perspective one would argue that through their visual imagery tattoos communicate an image or idea that the individual wearer wishes to advertise to others, which can range from advocating a personal bad boy image to gang affiliation to ethnic identification. Whatever the reasons for choosing tattoos, what is common among their wearers is that tattoos create a common culture among those who have similar tattoos. At the same time such body markings may advertise the wearers' criminal behaviour[1] and make them identifiable to their own and to other gangs (Phillips, 2001).

Attitude

A display of coolness is an attitude that all ethnic gangs under study have adopted, even though this trait was not directly discussed by most of the youth – except for the French, Haitian and Latino. A cool attitude "is firmly anchored in a symbology – a set of discernible bodily movements, postures, facial expressions, voice modulations, and

[1] Tattoos are often associated with some kind of illegal behavior because they are common among convicts and ex-convicts. (Phillips, 2001; Demello, 1993).

so on – that is acquired, and takes on strategic social value, within the peer context" (Danesi, 1994, p. 38). "Coolness" was displayed through the youths' dress codes, hairstyles, and even the way they walked. All youth gang members under study appeared to walk in slow deliberate movements – an unhurried stroll with some swagger thrown in (Danesi, 1994). All of the gang members adopted "slack coolness... that included a cautious, purposeful avoidance of emotional outbursts...and rough coolness...exemplifying aggressive behaviour and vulgar language" (Danesi, 1994, p. 39-40). Such slack and rough coolness characterized a social behaviour that was peer-acceptable within the gang subculture, and this specific social presentation continued to be acted out in the closed custody institutions that were the sites of the interviews because it allowed these youth to maintain a degree of social distance from the other youth who were sharing the same social space. This safe social distance was called for in interactions among individuals from rival gangs towards those youth that they disliked for various reasons (i.e., they came from a different ethnic group). All of the youth in the study conveyed a facial expression that exuded confidence and masculine bravado that was symbolic of their deviant lifestyle.

This physical presentation (way of walking, of self-presentation) can symbolise gang membership:

> *You can tell someone is in the gang by the way he talks. It's not just a tough guy talk, you know this guy is dangerous. How you know? That is a good question. You just do. You know who is for real and you know who is a fake. Once you are in that circle, you know who is who (interviewee 10, 15 year-old French youth)*

Physical presentation can also represent how someone should not behave, as noted by an 18-year-old French gang member, who suggested that biker gang members

(in many respects, the mentors of French gang members) do not want people associated with them to adopt what they label a Black "style", or what this youth refers to as "Black attitude."

> *What they don't like is that often there are some White guys who want to be like the Black guys, to act and be like them. A lot of us White guys in the gang don't like this when it happens; they are like wannabe blacks. The motorcycle members especially don't like when their own members act too black and are too showy because they are more likely to get spotted, especially given the fact the Black people are not exactly liked by the justice system because they do all kinds of things, while often us White guys don't want to associate with the Black guys because we want to remain clean. We don't want to be spotted. We want to do our affairs slick and clean; while Black guys are on the streets, they are loud and they want to be noticed (interviewee 2).*

This view of 'black attitude' may be connected to the views held by many biker gang members about blacks. As will be recalled, in Chapter Three, I discussed some of these attitudes: while the gang members often denied being racist, their descriptions of and representations of their attitudes towards blacks reflected what would be conventionally thought to be racist attitudes and beliefs.

The tough aggressive posturing was discussed and was also evident among the French, Haitian and Latino youth. The Haitian youth, whatever their gang membership (the Bo-Gars or the CDP), portray a "tough guy image" through the rituals of posturing and challenge (Pinderhughes, 1997). Following a Birmingham perspective, one quickly comes to understand that these youth have adopted a cool, confrontational pose that is used to intimidate rival gang members or indeed anyone perceived as an enemy. They gain respect through these cool guy poses, which can also be characteristic of their ethnic identification (Fernandes, 2003; Katz & Sully, 1999). Black youth adopted a cool confrontational pose to symbolically stand up to the poverty and discrimination that they

face in white society. Most found it necessary to maintain a tough guise because this allows them to face social hardships with determination and strength and proves that they have been able to survive such social and economic hardships. If society won't give them respect, they find it necessary to adopt an intimidating demeanour that provides them with the respect they feel that they deserve. Thus, adopting a cool confrontational pose becomes a way of life, which most poor black youth in gangs feel is an inescapable yet necessary survival mechanism (Fernandes, 2003; Katz & Sully, 1999).

Most of the French youth were placed in the same units as their gang rivals; as a result, they thought it necessary to maintain their tough aggressive posturing which served to keep a safe distance between them and their perceived enemies or youth who might pose a threat (e.g., Black youth) and also allowed them to remain true to their gang affiliations. Their tough guy attitude was more a reflection of their gang affiliation as opposed to a symbolic representation of ethnic identity.

The Latino youth style of dressing, talking, walking and overall demeanor were more likely to reflect a "tough male identity" symbolic of their social marginalization resulting from their immigrant and in-between status (Meintel, 1992).

It is important to note that although Jamaican youth and youth in the other ethnic category did not discuss the importance of attitude, while I observed their body language during interviews, I noticed that most adopted a slack and tough demeanor, showing they were not afraid of anything – a toughness symbolic of their gang lifestyle. The Jamaicans adopted more of a "slack coolness" that appeared to emphasize a ganja smoking, relaxed and pseudo-Rastafarian culture. Youth in the 'other ethnic' category projected an image

that was both "nonchalant and unflappable" (Danesi, 1994, p. 38) that was more likely linked to their gang membership.

For most of these youth in gangs, a display of attitude was necessary because it established social boundaries that allowed them to keep a safe distance from other ethnic gangs while at the same time reinforcing solidarity and social cognition within their respective gangs. Their goal was to generate a specific attitude and posturing that were "deemed to be acceptable and desirable by his...peers" (Danesi, 1994, p. 40).

Nicknames

Nicknames may be used to describe the unique characteristics of an individual and the attributes he possesses and brings to the gang with his participation. Nicknames have the power to emphasize social relationships and ranking within the gang. They establish an identity and image of the nicknamed individual and how others perceive him (Rymes, 1996). In a practice coming among the Latino gangs of Westside Barrio Diamond Street in Los Angeles (Rymes 1996), a novice gang member is jumped by other gang members (i.e., is beaten up); this forms his initiation to the gang, and it is then that he is given a nickname along with a gang name. The individual is then allowed to graffiti both names in the neighbourhood where he lives (Rymes, 1996). Within Los Angeles gangs, "personal approaches to members' behaviour often are reflected in nicknames: Names like loco, crazy, psycho are often given to the more volatile clique members" (Rymes, 1996, p. 245). These names are not simply labels but are symbolic of a street gang initiation by which the individual proves himself worthy to be in the gang. Part of this process requires that the new member is given a specific nickname that best describes his talents (criminal or otherwise) and temperament. Nicknames can denote both gang

and neighbourhood affiliation and ethnic identity. For instance, the nicknames 'loco', a Spanish term meaning someone who has a 'crazy, anything goes temperament' has been adopted as a nickname by Latino gang members within the Westside Barrio Diamond Street in Los Angeles (Rymes, 1996). However, in this study, of all the subjects interviewed, only Haitian youths (and all 10 of the Haitian youths interviewed mentioned this) identified nicknames as important to their gang membership. Gang members created their nicknames in order to demonstrate the qualities about themselves that they wanted others (including non-gang members) to know. Some nicknames mentioned by gang members included "Killer", "Mad Dog" and "Death Spy." A 17-year-old Haitian-Canadian commented that:

> *I also have a nickname that my members gave me. The name is Death Spy. The name Spy means that I can find out whatever needs to be found out. Death means, I bring death to people who want to hurt me and the members of the gang (interviewee 19).*

The nicknames personified images of fearlessness, strength, and violence, typifying a rebel who is accustomed to breaking taboos (Martin, 1981). In this case, nicknames did not describe ethnic allegiance but referenced a contextualized version of an entire lifestyle that expresses affinity to the gang and encourages one to take pride in its affiliation and deviant role prescriptions (Rymes, 1996).

Thus, of external gang symbols, all gang members offered observations around the importance of clothing: displaying gang colors; keeping gang colors hidden except for specific instances; not wearing gang colors at all. Graffiti was cited across all ethnic groups as something that some or even all gang members participated in. Many individuals (especially French-Canadian, Latino and those of the 'other' ethnic category)

were tattooed, although tattoos were only rarely linked directly to gang membership. Finally, only Haitian gang members referred to the importance of nicknames, and only French-Canadian gang members referred to the importance of not having a 'black' attitude/style as relevant to gang membership.

Gang subcultures "offer a symbolic critique of the social order through a symbolic representation of social contradictions," (Brake, 1985, p. 68) – that is, through their patterns of deviance, style, and demeanor. These youth gangs have adopted images that illustrate particular social boundaries that exclude specific social groups while at the same time opposing the normative order. The contradiction lies in the fact that the youth in this study complain of being discriminated against because of their language, race, and ethnicity but they themselves discriminate against other ethnic gangs by enforcing ethnically homogeneous gang membership and alienating other ethnic groups from their gangs. Hence, gang membership affirms a common ethnic and/or racial belonging, and their symbolic expressions (i.e., clothing styles, bandannas, the use of graffiti and nicknames) typify alternative manifestations of "anti-structure [...] taboo breaking [...] and entry into the realm of anomie" (Martin, 1981, p. 50-51).

A question that one may ask is whether such cultural symbols adopted by these young men in gangs are authentically ethnic, that is a real factor of their ethnic identity, or manufactured. Examples of authentic ethnic identity include the hijab worn by a Muslim woman, a Mexican's sombrero or a Sikh's turban.

I would argue that for the French/Quebecois youth the clothing they wore or the biker costume and jewelry they aspired to wear, their tattoos, their tough aggressive posturing and their various attitudes (claiming to be French and in a gang, meant not to

dress like blacks and not to adopt a black attitude, not to do graffiti or adopt nicknames) were appropriated and therefore manufactured as exemplars of their ethnic identity – they were clearly not authentic elements. Nevertheless, these are important factors that allowed them to maintain separateness from other ethnic gangs.

For the Haitian youth their hip-hop, rapper styles, choice of red or blue bandannas, graffit-ing, "tough guy attitudes," and adopted nicknames may be perceived as manufactured because they are drawn from the cultural styles of Black American gangs. One could also argue that their clothing styles and attitudes, however, also have their roots within their own cultures, developed in response to being black and facing economic hardships and stigmatization. Their hairstyles however, tended to be more authentic because like most Haitians (gang member or not) they wore their hair in afros, and/or cornrows, hence, allowing them to express their separateness with reference to ethnic identity.

The Jamaicans' dress and other ornamentation (jewelry, etc.) also were manufactured rather than authentic. Like the Haitians, though, their authentic ethnic identity was expressed in their hairstyles – the wearing of dreadlocks – or with their "slack coolness", a common visible cultural symbol of Jamaican Rastafarian identity that is not only limited to gang participants. Thus, allowing these particular youth to maintain a safe social distance from other ethnic gangs.

The dress and other cultural symbols of Latino gang participants also reflected more a manufactured than authentic ethnic identity – even though these were used to reflect gang affiliation in a specific neighborhood and ethnic pride. These symbols provided youths the opportunity to display their Latin American gang affiliation. One can

argue that such cultural symbols are manufactured to fit into their preconceptions of what it means to be Latino and in a gang rather than authentic ethnic identification.

Real ethnic identity comes into play for the Latino respondents, with reference to tattoos, some of which showed the Spanish flag (referring to their South American origins) or that identified a particular gang-affiliated neighborhood that housed a specific Latin American gang (e.g., the El Salvadorian gang), thus emphasizing authentic ethnicity.

Those in the category of "other" adopted gangster/rapper styles symbolizing their delinquent gang affiliated activities. Some, but not all, wore bandannas and no one in this group adopted nicknames. Graffiti, tattoos and nicknames were used by some youths in this group, but these did not always reflect gang or ethnic allegiance. Their masculine bravado reflected gang participation and established social boundaries that kept them at a distance from other ethnic gangs. The cultural symbols they adopted did not necessarily reflect authentic ethnic identification.

What was common among all ethnic groups was that the cultural symbols adopted within their respective gangs often ascribed ethnic importance, but did not always reflect authentic ethnic identity.

Ethnic Cultural Variables

The following section explores the role of ethnic culture and its importance in the lives of these young men in gangs. It examines the language spoken at home and with the gang; the neighbourhood they live in; their religious practices; food preference; music preference; gender and family relations. A summary of various ethnic variables according to ethnic group is presented in Table 5.1 below. These aspects are discussed in more

detail in the following sections.

Table 5.1. Ethnic cultural behaviours and attitudes

	French	Haitian	Jamaican	Latino	Other
Ancestral ethnic language spoken at home	6	10	10	10	10
Ethnic language spoken with gang	10	10	10	10	10
Ethnically homogeneous neighborhood	8	10	10	8	3
Attend religious services/religious feeling	6	7	7	8	7
Ethnic food enjoyed	10	10	10	10	10
Traditional ethnic music preferred	0	0	0	10	0
Dating only within culture	5	2	9	10	4
Ancestral ethnicity important in child-rearing	10	10	10	10	10

Language

Living in a city like Montreal "provides regular opportunities to observe first hand a variety of linguistic forms in subways, street corners, in parks, and night clubs etc." (Cutler, 1999, p. 433). In such a multi-lingual society it becomes inevitable that even those youth who belong to gangs will participate in discursive practices that demonstrate linguistic variation and allow them to express a voice, a dialect, a "heritage language" that communicates signals for social rules of interaction within a specific social and ethnic group (Sweetland, 2002). Language helps to shape cultural practices, individual

actions and attitudes (Sweetland, 2002). "Language and culture are the paths through which identity performance can be observed and interpreted" (Giampapa, 2001, p. 279). And in this portion of the dissertation, I will explore how youth express identity through the use of their mother tongue.

Language makes a statement about one's social position within a particular society: it is a social marker that allows individuals to speak of their immigrant past, family history, their representation and positioning not only within the Canadian world but also within their ethnic Canadian world or ethnic world (Giampapa, 2001). Some may want to be referred to and thought of as "Other": some individuals may want to be identified solely as Jamaican, Haitian, or Latino, and thus it becomes important to them to be seen as not selling out and joining the Franco- or Anglo-Canadian world (Giampapa, 2001). The ability to speak their language of origin may be perceived as vital in the formation of group boundaries. Furthermore, the use of similar language patterns reflects the shared experiences and background knowledge that underlie group affiliation and ethnic identity (Giampapa, 2001). Other individuals who identify themselves as-French Canadian or 'hyphenated' Canadian may wish to be regarded this way because this labeling communicates cultural power and privilege, and they are less likely to be identified as the foreigner (i.e., one who doesn't belong because of their immigrant status). Youth gang members' choice of language will be shaped by their environment – where they live, their families, the people they hang out with and their views about language and ethnicity (Hoffman, 2001).

I will attempt to show that language is an important variable in determining how strongly the youths interviewed here attach themselves to their particular ethnicity. Here I

examine the language preferences of the study subjects. I have differentiated three components of how gangs deal with language: language spoken at home, language spoken among gang members and preferred language for future use (see Appendix A for full interview schedule).

1) Language spoken at home

Language spoken at home is often a reflection of how attached individuals are to their ethnicity. However, it is interesting to note that Canada is a bilingual country and that in Quebec, French is the official language. Among the ethnic groups interviewed (except of course for the French youths and native English speakers), neither French nor English are maternal languages but are, rather, the languages of education and of business.

Six of the 10 French youth interviewed said that they spoke French at home. A 17- year-old youth said:

> *I speak French and Quebecois. I don't speak any English though. I would like to learn other languages like here there are Haitians and Spanish people and I am trying to learn from them. Like for example, the Spanish language is quite a popular language. I would love to learn the Spanish language (interviewee 4).*

All 10 Haitian youths interviewed said they are more likely to speak French and Creole at home with their families. A 16-year-old born in Haiti says:

> *I speak both French and Creole. With my mom I often speak Creole but with my brothers I speak either French or Creole (interviewee 1).*

Only two of the 10 Haitian youths said they spoke a third language (most often English) with their family members as well, as demonstrated by an 18-year-old Haitian-Canadian (interviewee 12) and a 17-year-old Haitian born youth (interviewee 19).

> *I speak to my dad in French and Creole that is whenever I see him which is very rare. I speak to my aunt and uncle the people I live with in French and Creole. Sometimes me and my uncle speak to one another in English. I speak English as*

well, my mom taught me to speak English (interviewee 12).

I speak Creole, I speak Swahili. I speak French and a little English with my family (interviewee 19).

All the Jamaican youth (N=10) reported that they are more likely to speak English and Patois with their family members and gang members. A 17-year-old Jamaican-Canadian comments:

*At home I speak English and Patois and with members of my gang. I speak English and Patois. Bomboraska, it means Holy Shit. I learned to speak Patois with my family and Jamaican friends (*interviewee *45).*

All of the Latino youth (N=10) report that they speak Spanish with family members, and connected this directly (perhaps because most (all N=8) are immigrants themselves) with the fact that Spanish is their native tongue, as observed by a 20-year-old Ecuadorian-born individual:

I love to speak Spanish; it is my maternal language (interviewee 22).

Among the 'other' ethnic category, two respondents, a 15-year-old Algerian born youth (interviewee 36) and an 18-year-old Canadian born Pole (interviewee 25), reported speaking only their maternal tongue at home.

I speak Arab (sic) with my parents (interviewee36).

I speak Polak (sic). I guess my mother since I was the first born, insisted that I speak Polak and carry on the culture so to speak (interviewee 25).

Eight of the 10 subjects said that although they do speak their mother tongue at home, they also speak one of Canada's official languages there. A 17-year-old Canadian-born Portuguese reports:

I speak French and Portuguese with both my parents (interviewee 38).

In addition, all of these youth (N=10) claim to understand and speak several

languages. The same youth reveals:

> *My parents are pretty much trilingual. They speak English, French, and Portuguese. I speak English, French, Portuguese and Spanish (interviewee 38).*

All the youth within the various ethnic categories prefer to speak their maternal languages at home because they grew up in an environment where, between home and within their community, these languages were spoken (Hoffman, 2001). Such language traditions appear to be carried on within their gang subcultures as well.

2) Language Choice with Gang

The majority of the French stipulated that they speak only French with their gang members; six say that this is the only language they know, and four that it is the only language known by their gang members even though they themselves speak another language (i.e., English).

All 10 Haitians interviewed agreed that they speak French and/or Creole with their gang members, as reported by a 17-year-old Haitian-born youth:

> *Sometimes I speak to them in French and other times I speak to them in Creole and sometimes we mix the two languages together. We speak a lot of slang (interviewee 14).*

As mentioned above, Jamaican gang members speak English and Patois with their fellow gang members.

Two of the Latino respondents said that they most often speak Spanish but sometimes do speak English with gang members; however, the rest (eight) said that they spoke only Spanish with gang members.

> *I speak to them [*gang members*] in Spanish all of the way. They don't want to hear English and they don't want to hear French (interviewee 41, a 17-year-old Dominican-Republican).*

All of the respondents in the "other" category said they spoke their maternal language as well as French or English with their fellow gang members, as described by a 17-year-old Portuguese-Canadian:

> *I used to speak Portuguese with the members of the gang. I prefer to speak Portuguese with them because we share certain expressions that only if you are Portuguese you would know what they mean. It is an insider thing, you feel comfortable, you share the same customs, you believe in the same things. Most of us guys want to get married and have a family one day, and we wouldn't even mind to go visit Portugal one day. This is where all of our parents were born and it would be cool to experience our roots first hand. We prefer to talk with one another in Portuguese, sometimes we switch to English. It depends on our moods (interviewee 38).*

3) Future Language Choices

Among French youth, five of the 10 professed to be open to learning new languages. A 17-year-old youth revealed:

> *Of course I would like to continue speaking French in the future. But I don't know how to speak any other language so I really don't have much of a choice. Like my mother she is perfectly bilingual and if I knew how to speak other languages like English I would be happy to speak the language but I am a little limited because all I know how to speak is French. Also if I knew how to speak Spanish and there was a pretty girl who spoke Spanish as well then I would love to speak Spanish too so I would be able to communicate with this pretty Spanish girl for example (interviewee 4).*

He went on to say that dating a girl from a different culture would be an incentive to learn a new language. However, five of the ten (the same five referred to above) French youths said that although they were open to learning different languages they would prefer to continue speaking French in the future. This is best exemplified by a 19-year-old individual:

> *I speak French. Yes. This is important because of values and loyalty to my heritage. I have learned to speak this language from before preschool. So of course, I am going to continue to speak the language. I want to learn to speak English too. I think it is alright to speak English, but I find that easy. I will not*

> *teach my kids to speak an easy language. I prefer that they learn to speak a language that is more complicated. For them it will be more easy if they want to speak English, and Spanish, if you speak French you can learn to speak Spanish easily. You can also learn to speak Italian because it resembles a little bit the French language. English too there are some forms of phrases that resemble the French language. I find to learn the English language it would be too easy. You don't have too many words (interviewee 18).*

This youth went on to say that if he had children, he would want them to speak any language but English, because he found it too simple a language. However, several youths were reluctant to speak English in part because they perceive discrimination by English-speaking individuals towards French-speaking individuals (see Chapter Four).

Most Haitians (seven of 10) also declared that they wanted to continue speaking French and/or Creole in the future. As a 17-year-old Haitian-born youth observed:

> *Yeah I do because it is the way things are and this is who I am and I want my future kids to be proud of their roots. I don't want them to be a sell-out, I mean be Black on the outside and act White on the inside. This is why I feel it is important to continue speaking Creole and French or else we lose our roots man (interviewee 5).*

However, some Haitians (N=3) claimed that although it is important to continue speaking French and Creole in the future, it would also be beneficial to be able to speak other languages as well, and again, this is influenced strongly by the ethnicity of girlfriends.

> *It depends if I have a girlfriend and she is not Haitian. I don't know, I am not really sure. 'Cause I really like Latino girls. I like Quebecois girls as well. But my favorite is Latino girls. One day I would like to learn to speak Spanish. Sometimes we have conflicts with the Latino gangs but I love their Latino girls (interviewee 1, a 16-year-old Haitian-born youth).*

In short, Haitians are more likely to speak French and Creole with their family members and gang members and wish to maintain this language tradition in the future.

Most of the Jamaican youth (N =9) claimed that they would prefer to continue

speaking English and Patois in the future; only one in this group (a 16-year-old Jamaican-Canadian) said he would learn another language were he to have a girlfriend who spoke a language other than English:

> *I won't just teach my kids to speak English. Say for example, if my girlfriend is Spanish, I would want my kids to learn Spanish too. It depends basically who I am with, since I know two languages – I speak both English and French. And if whoever I am with knows a different language then I will teach my kids to speak this language as well(interviewee 24).*

All of the Latinos interviewed said that they wanted to continue speaking Spanish and that they would be willing to maintain this practice in their own homes. A 17-year-old El Salvadorian explains why he feels it is important to speak Spanish with his future wife and future children:

> *Yes, of course I would continue speaking Spanish in my own home one day, with my wife and my children, and this is important for me because of the way Spanish people express themselves which is different from the way other people express themselves. We understand each other better... my son or daughter would know where I am coming from. When I speak to them in Spanish they will be able to answer me in Spanish and at the same time it will allow them to love the Spanish language and culture the way I do. Another example would be let's say there is someone in the family an aunt, an uncle, or my child's grandparents that don't understand any other language but Spanish, then it will allow my son or daughter to speak to them in the language that they understand. Most people understand or know how to speak other languages apart from my mother. But I would say most older Spanish people are alike that they have problems speaking or understanding French and English and the way to communicate with them is by speaking Spanish. The older people I think have a harder time adapting themselves to other people. My mother speaks a little English because we lived in the United States for a while, like, Los Angeles, but still she is not fluent in the English language, so when speaking to her someone has to speak to her very slowly and pronounce every word and it can be a bit of a drag (interviewee 48).*

Latinos, then, are more likely to speak Spanish to their families and gang members and to wish to maintain such a practice in the future.

The majority of the respondents from the 'other' ethnic category report that they

speak their ethnic language and one of the official languages with their families and gang members. All of the youth in the 'other' ethnic category expressed a desire to learn different languages or continue speaking several languages because they feel it allows them to better survive in a country like Canada. This view is best articulated by an 18-year-old Canadian-born Pole:

> *I want to continue speaking Polish and English. I can at least show something for it because it is always practical to have a language where not too many people speak. If more people could speak English and French it would be great as well. I encourage my boys to speak several languages. I tell them they should learn to speak French because it would be ideal to know this language especially if they want to continue living here in Canada. I would also like to continue speaking French in the future (interviewee 25).*

What the French, Haitian and Jamaican youths have in common is that they are open to learning a different language depending on the ethnicity of their girlfriend. For instance, if they happen to be dating a Spanish girl then they will make an effort to learn to speak Spanish and so forth. All of these youth prefer to speak their maternal language at home and with members of the gang and want to continue doing so in the future. In contrast, the Latinos expressed no desire to learn a different language. They were adamant about speaking Spanish at home with members of the gang and claimed it was important to maintain this practice in the future. Most of the individuals in the 'other' ethnic category spoke more than one language with their family members and gang members and were also open to maintaining such a practice in their own homes.

The results presented in this chapter show that French, Haitian, Jamaican, and Latino youths are more likely to speak their maternal language at home and with fellow gang members, and to wish to do so in the future. Youths in the "other" ethnic category, who are generally allophones, speak their maternal language (if shared by fellow gang

members) as well as French or English at home or with their gang members. They expressed a desire to learn or continue speaking several languages.

The French, Haitian, Jamaicans and Latino stress the importance of maintaining their language heritage, and one may theorize that this is because it represents a fundamental mode of collective social identity and cultural survival (Reitz, 1974; Sapir, 1933). Thus, the French believe speaking French helps to preserve their sense of nationality as well as (in most cases) to enforce a separatist political view. Speaking French also allows them to remain distinct from the English and Black gangs. Haitians prefer to speak French/Creole because they feel shut out by the French and Jamaican gangs; their shared language preference unites these Haitian youth and allows them to preserve a culture that differs from the Jamaican and French identity. Speaking Creole is relevant for Haitian youth in gangs because "the history of black oppression has led to lower class forms of black language being associated with toughness and survival... the use of Creole has exactly this reference for many young blacks, who associate the language with a distinctly oppositional street culture" (Cutler, 1999, p.435). It is important for Haitians to speak their heritage language because it allows them to be true to their historical past, which speaks of a people who must endure poverty, survive racism, and learn to live by their wits (Cutler, 1999).

Jamaicans, who feel superior to Haitians and discriminated against by White Quebec society, also wish to remain separate from these cultures and do so by insisting on speaking English and Patois. It is also important for the Jamaican youth to speak Jamaican Patois, a code language initially adopted by the Rastafarians of Jamaica which "evolved in response to the need of a closed group to find a means of expression that was

exclusive and that reflected the philosophical, religious, and political positions with which the group chose to identify" (Pollard, 1990, p. 81). Jamaican Patois was the language of the Jamaican poor and expressed "resistance to the mental and spiritual entrapment of the Black mind in search of peace and love" (Pollard, 1990, p. 81). Youth in the gang choose to speak Jamaican Patois because it reflects their belief that white people in society will never like them and expresses open resentment towards racism. It also conveys "the promise of redemption and a proud black identity" (Pollard, 1990, p. 89); this language, and their political and philosophical stance, allow Jamaican youth to remain distinct from Haitians.

The Latino youths (most of whom are immigrants from Central or South America) feel more comfortable speaking Spanish; however, this will make it difficult for them to integrate and gain entry to mainstream Canadian society and associated economic opportunities, especially if they are consistently alienated from mainstream society. These youths' preference for speaking Spanish is primarily based on their cultural background, which has been subjected to a stressful immigration process. Hence, speaking Spanish at home, in the gang, and in the future, helps to maintain their need for social acceptance (this is also true of the other ethnic gangs under study).

Youths from the "other" ethnic category are more likely to be second generation Canadians who have "linguistically assimilated" (Lamarand, 1977), and can speak either English or French, even though they have not adopted an "Anglo" or "Franco" culture (Lamarand, 1977). These youths can easily fit into either culture. In fact, youths in the other ethnic category have the choice to speak their maternal language or switch to

another language and therefore have banded with individuals who share similar cultural experiences, which allows them to remain connected to their cultural heritage.

All the ethnic gangs under study shared a specific gang language, or argot, a language system that is unique to the gang's members and forms part of their cultural identity (Sweetland, 2002; Hoffman, 2001). Again, for all, a distinctive language provides a diverse outlook of life representing personalized realities (Sweetland, 2002). Many of these youths use terms derived from argot, which may or may not be understood by mainstream society and are not usually used in formal written communication because they are uncommon terms or phrases that are not used in everyday language communication and one must be in the gang to know what some of these specific terms mean (Trump, 2002). For example, "chill" is used to mean relax; a "joint" and "spliff" are marijuana cigarettes; "snow" is cocaine; "beef" denotes antagonism towards a specific individual; "my niggers" and "my boys" are friendly terms for fellow gang members; "mi barrio" and "my hood" are "my neighborhood". Argot denotes a code language that establishes "cohesiveness and solidarity" among gang members and instills a sense of identity and pride associated with knowing the private language or unique verbal expressions; the language and shared knowledge of the language tie the group together (Fernandes, 2003). Clearly, the use of the special code language allows these youths to differentiate themselves from hegemonic culture and feel closer to their fellow gang members. Street language, or argot, is associated with toughness and survival and also expresses "...differences in the actual content of ways of life, of beliefs and values, and of ways of behaving..." (Heller, 1987, p.184). In effect, it separates social groups

from one another based on individuals' origins, thus encouraging ethnic pride among those who hang out together and share language and ethnicity.

Language has a significant impact on how gang members view and understand the world (Giampapa, 2001). It provides meanings to thoughts, emotions, and values, while its expressions bind members of a group by providing a shared identity, which is expressed through similar social and cultural experiences (Fleras, 1987a). Different languages may represent different social realities: different labels are attached to the language one speaks and these may serve to sustain and make public the group's social status (Cutler, 1999). In short, language may be seen as a form of empowerment (in the case of French, Jamaican, and other ethnic gangs) or a barrier (in the case of Haitian and Latino gangs); both qualities are used to justify gang membership.

Neighbourhood

Language is one of the primary indicators of attachment to ethnicity, and so is neighbourhood. Here I will present whether youths involved in gangs live in ethnically heterogeneous or homogeneous neighbourhoods of Montreal – that is, the degree of residential segregation of youths' neighbourhoods. One would assume (and indeed it has been mentioned by several respondents) that these gangs tend to form around or be built from the kids in the neighbourhood. Thus, those in an ethnically homogeneous gang are likely to live in an ethnically homogeneous neighbourhood (and vice versa).

Residential segregation is both ethnic and economic (Allen, 2002). "Immigrants generally have lower status in educational attainment, occupation, and income" (Allen, 2002, p. 702) and consequently are more likely to live in neighbourhoods that reflect such social and economic disparity, and which often reflect differences in race (e.g., more

affluent White versus poorer non-white immigrants). "Choice of residential neighbourhood reflects ability to pay for housing, the presence of family and friends, proximity to employment, and feelings of comfort or discomfort with the ethnic composition of a neighbourhood" (Allen, 2002, p. 706). Moreover, visible minorities will often end up living in low-economic status areas because intolerant whites often retreat from racially mixed neighbourhoods (Hou & Milan, 2003). This results in 'ethnically homogeneous neighbourhoods' – neighbourhoods that are dominated by a particular ethnic or racial group (e.g., blacks or whites). Ethnically heterogeneous neighbourhoods, on the other hand, are racially and/or ethnically diverse (Hou & Milan, 2003; Ellen, 2000).

What is common among most of the respondents is that there appears to be a trend towards "...homogeneity in residential settlement patterns. The concentration of one group in an area is expected to attract same-group members while deterring others...which results in ...homophily: the assumption that people are attracted to those like themselves and repelled by others who are racially different" (Hwang & Murdock, 1998, p. 541). Indeed, most ethnic gangs that share similar ethnic and racial backgrounds are more likely to live in the same neighbourhoods, which reinforces in-group attraction and out-group evasion (Hwang & Murdock, 1998). However, for ethnic gangs that live in ethnically and racially mixed (i.e., heterogeneous) neighbourhoods, other factors, such as language, religion, political preference etc., rather than shared neighbourhood may influence in-group attraction and out-group evasion.

1) Ethnically Homogeneous Neighbourhoods

Most (39) of the 50 respondents live in ethnically homogeneous neighbourhoods.

In fact, for all groups (except those in the 'other' ethnic category), the majority of individuals lived in ethnically homogeneous neighbourhoods and were also involved in ethnically homogeneous gangs.

Eight of the 10 French youth reported that they live in a neighbourhood that reflected their own ethnic background – white and French-Canadian.

> *Yeah, there are a lot of French Canadians, but there are also some Italians as well, and I have been living in this neighborhood all my life (interviewee 6, a 20-year-old French-Canadian)*

> *The majority are Quebecois. Yes, I know these people well. I have been living in this neighborhood all my life. I have been living there for fifteen years (interviewee 10, a 15-year-old, self-identified Quebecois).*

This observation is echoed by all the Haitian subjects, who note that most of their neighbors are of Haitian origin. In a few cases, there are some residents of non-Haitian ethnicity, but this was the case for only two youths; indeed, the neighborhoods would be considered predominantly Haitian.

> *I live in Montreal North and the majority of my neighbors are Haitian. There are a lot of gangs in this neighborhood. I know a lot of people that live in my neighborhood especially all the ones that are in the gang. I have been living here for five years (interviewee 9, a 15-year-old Canadian-born Haitian, living in Bo-Gars, aka "Blood" territory).*

> *Most of the people that come from my neighborhood are Haitian. I live in Pie IX. Yes, there are gangs in my neighborhood (interviewee 40, a 14-year-old Haitian-born youth, living in CDP, aka "Crips" territory).*

> *I live in Montreal North and there are a lot of gangs and Haitians that live in this neighborhood. There are Latino living in the neighborhood, and they are in gangs too (interviewee 7, a 15-year-old Haitian).*

All Jamaicans (N=10) also report that they live in districts in which the majority of the population is of Jamaican origin. A 17-year-old Canadian-born Jamaican observes:

> *I live in Little Burgundy and there are a lot of Jamaicans in this area of town. Most of my gang members come from the same neighborhood. I have been living*

in this area for the past five years (27)

Almost all of the Latino youths (N=8) reported that they live in ethnically homogeneous, predominantly Latino, neighbourhoods. Two Latinos (first a 17-year-old El Salvadorian immigrant and then a 20-year-old individual from Ecuador) describe the ethnic composition of their neighbourhoods:

> *The majority are El Salvadorians and they are nice. If you are on their good side they would do just about anything for you, they are very warm people. I have not been living in this neighbourhood for a long time. I live in the Ahuntsic area near Cartier (interviewee 8).*

> *Mostly Latinos live in my neighbourhood of Cartier Ville. I know most of my neighbours; I would say all of them. I have been living in the same neighbourhood for ten years now (interviewee 22).*

Only one individual of the 'other' ethnic category commented on the ethnically homogeneous composition of his neighborhood. This individual was a Canadian-born youth of Irish descent who observed that most of his neighbors were also of Irish extraction.

What appears to be common among the French, Latino, and youth in the other ethnic category is that their gang compatriots may or may not come from the same neighborhood even if they live in neighborhoods that are ethnically homogeneous. This is not the case for Haitians and Jamaicans, who report that fellow gang members do come from the same neighborhood. The formation of ethnically homogeneous gangs among black youths results from the youths' residential exclusion from predominantly more affluent and white neighborhoods. Black youth are more likely to labelled as culturally different and thus are more likely to be socially marginalized (compared to the other ethnic groups under study) (Bauder, 2002). Additionally, the communities that Haitians

and Jamaicans live in are gang infested because "...black households have lower incomes, dwell in inferior housing and live in structurally weaker communities than their white counterparts" (Ellen, 2000, p. 1517), and experience more serious and more negative socioeconomic conditions (Massey & Fischer, 2000).

2) Ethnically Heterogeneous Neighborhoods

As seen above, study subjects tended to live in neighborhoods that reflected their own ethnicity. However, most youths of 'other' ethnicity (seven of 10), lived in fairly ethnically diverse neighborhoods (seven of 10). Just two French youths said that they lived in ethnically diverse neighborhoods, as described by a 17-year-old French youth:

> *There are all kinds of French and Blacks in my neighborhood and there are also a lot of Spanish people as well, and there are a lot of WOPS* [thought to stand for without papers and referring to those of Italian background] *in Rivieres des Prairies. I have been living in this neighborhood for six years (interviewee 13).*

Again, just two Latino youths reported living in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods, although these neighbourhoods included other Latinos as well. A 17-year-old born in the Dominican Republic reveals:

> *I live in Côte Des Neiges, and what's cool about this neighbourhood is that you will see a mix of everyone, there are Whites, Blacks, Browns, whatever. Yeah, I know a lot of my neighbours, even if I didn't want to know them. When I walk to the metro they will wave at me. I know the whole neighbourhood and I have been living there forever (interviewee34)*

However, it is the youths who do not come from these four major ethnic groups (French, Haitian, Jamaican and Latino) who are more likely to live in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods (N = 7). A 17- year-old Canadian-born-Portuguese reports:

> *I live in Villeray. There are Quebecois, Spanish, and Arabs there. There are also Italians there. There are gangs in the neighborhood that I live in. I would say that I lived in this neighborhood for six years, [...]. I know a lot of my neighbors (interviewee 38).*

Some individuals (N=3) in the other ethnic category have revealed that they lived in a neighbourhood that was crime infested, where police officers were constantly patrolling their neighbourhood. This was described by an eighteen-year-old Canadian-born Pole:

> *I live in NDG. The cops there are fuckin' crazy. Yeah, there is a lot of crime and shit going on, but the cops they ain't no better. Let me give you an example, the neighborhood I grew up in* [NDG]. *The cops were real ball busters. The cops were busting someone every night for crack, for drugs. The cops were crazy. They were crazier than us* [gang members]. *The cops would just come in and put their hands over the people, boom, boom, open the door- the cops would be screaming. They would say it with a draw* [have gun in hand]. *They would rush in with the pistol in their hands* (he laughs) *and say don't move! (interviewee 25).*

In short we learn that the French, Haitian, Jamaican, and Latino respondents live in neighbourhoods that are ethnically homogeneous, whereas youths from the other ethnic category live in neighbourhoods that are more heterogeneous.

The majority of subjects in this study live in ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods; the significant exceptions are those in the "other" category. Clearly youths who live with their parents live in areas chosen by their parents, and for many (e.g., the Haitians, Jamaicans, Latino and French), this entailed an ethnically homogeneous neighborhood. Past research suggests that some individuals prefer living among members of their own ethnic group, which permits the formation of "distinct ethnic neighborhoods" (Walker et. al., 1996, p. 69) and has been described by others as "residential segregation" (Walker et. al., 1996, p. 69). Residential segregation may occur for several reasons, one of which is racial or ethnic discrimination preventing "different" (i.e., non-white, non-English or non-French) immigrants from inhabiting neighborhoods predominantly populated by the country's majority populations (French, English and white). That is, "real estate agents maintained segregation by steering minority buyers

away from white neighborhoods – a practice known as red-lining" (Walker et. al, 1996, p. 69). This segregation may also occur due to an immigrant's low income – new immigrants often live in the poor inner-city because this is all they can afford. In fact some of these youths appear in the main to be ghettoized in poor neighborhoods Given that for Haitian and Jamaicans their "neighborhood" is an important element in gang membership, there is a clear link between residential segregation and gang membership. As well, there are usually few local economic opportunities available to youths in these areas. This economic deprivation, together with racism, alienation, ghettoization and discrimination connected to living in bad neighborhoods, provide a stimulus for gang membership; ethnicity – being Black and Haitian or Jamaican – may also be part of this identity. There is another reason why the neighborhood is an important driver of gang membership for Haitians and Jamaicans: often in these communities, youths are pressured to join gangs and if they do not join, they risk becoming targets of victimization by gang members.

The link between neighborhood and gang membership is not relevant for all ethnic gangs under study. For instance, youths in the "other" ethnic category tended to live in more heterogeneous neighborhoods. These "other" youths differ from Haitians and Jamaicans in that gang members cite power and respect as initial criteria for membership and place less emphasis on neighborhood origins. This is not to say that "turf," "defending territory," and "ownership of neighborhood" are unimportant aspects across all ethnic gangs of this study.

In sum, "residential proximity" (Driedger, 1978) or segregation based on race and ethnicity are maintained by French, Latino, Haitian and Jamaican youth, allowing them to

establish an ethnocultural identity, an identity also established by the adults in the community who also choose to establish ethnic enclaves (Driedger, 1977b). The neighborhoods these youth live in allow ethnic and racial boundaries to be maintained by controlling for outsiders while preserving ethnic group unity (Driedger, 1978). On a negative note, some of these neighborhoods may be perceived by outsiders as poor, ghettoized, and heavily gang affiliated, allowing for further marginalization of the specific ethnic groups (e.g., Haitians and Jamaicans) occupying such communities. Those occupying heterogeneous (i.e., more racially and ethnically diverse) communities maintain ethnic identity through symbolic means. Gang membership among these youths may be undetected by police because they live in more affluent neighborhoods, which are less likely to be patrolled by police, thus making it easier for them to get away with committing crimes.

Religion

In this section, I will examine the religious practices of the study subjects to assess whether they are closely tied to the religion of their particular ethnic group. Religion is important because it shapes "the identity formation process of adolescence" (Markstrom, 1999, p. 205). "Religion....provides individuals with a sense of belonging to a community, a sense of identity as an integral part of a broader collectivity of individuals who share similar beliefs and who have, to some extent, a common history and a collective fate" (Thompson, 1995, p. 194 cited in Youniss et. al., 1999, p. 243). Religion can safeguard against estrangement from ethnic identity by promoting belongingness through prayer, rites and rituals, and common faith within a specific religious doctrine (Markstrom, 1999). Some ethnic groups tend to be more religious than others and

emphasize their difference through their religion (Raj, 2000). Blacks and Latinos tend to be more religious than Whites because they place a higher value on religion, are more likely to attend church and use religion as a stress reliever and coping resource (Cook, 2000; Brega & Coleman, 1999; Markstrom, 1999). It appears that the more religiously involved are more likely to have a stronger allegiance to their ethnic identity and have higher self-esteem (Markstrom, 1999). Youth that are religious are more likely to attend school, seek employment, and live healthier lives because they will tend to avoid deviant paths (Cook, 2000; Youniss et. al., 1999). "Religion positively affects individuals by providing them with a system of meaning through which the events of life can be interpreted and understood...This system of meaning may provide the individual with a powerful coping mechanism when faced with life stress" (Brega & Coleman, 1999, p. 224). In other words, if youth from specific ethnic backgrounds face discrimination or alienation, a religion may help them cope more effectively and less violently. Religiosity appears to reduce gang activity because religion offers a positive pattern for behaviour and serves as a guide to right and wrong: "Religion strengthens youths' self-worth and conviction that their lives have meaning. In addition, it provides a valuable alternative to a gang identity" (Cook, 2000, p. 727).

In this research I discovered that although most of the youth under study claimed some kind of religious identity it did not dissuade them from participating in their delinquent gangs, even those who proclaimed to be very religious. In general, one would assume that the Latino and French youths are likely to be Roman Catholic, Haitians to be interested in voodoo and Jamaicans to be protestants and pseudo-Rastafarians, with those in the mixed 'ethnic' category following other denominations (including Roman

Catholicism). Interestingly, these 'other' youths all identified themselves as Christian (except for the Jewish youth and the Muslim youth), and none identified themselves as atheist or agnostic.

Among the French, there was a relatively low rate of religiosity, perhaps reflecting contemporary trends in Quebec. Just six of the 10 French youths interviewed said they considered themselves Catholics who occasionally attended church on Sundays. This attendance was generally limited to special occasions, such as Christmas and Easter. These youths attended church, when they went, with immediate family and not with fellow gang members. The other four French youths said they did not follow any particular religious faith and nor did members of their gang. A 17-year-old French-Canadian explains:

> *I have to say that I don't go to church very often. The only time I went was for funerals. I used to go more often when I was younger like for Christmas, my first communion and things like that (*interviewee *4).*

What one also learns is that their religious identification as a Catholic is imposed from birth, by virtue of their parents' religious background. These Catholic French-Canadian youths had received specific Catholic rites such as baptism, confirmation and communion. Most of these youth consider themselves Catholic in name only, not necessarily practicing Catholics, an attitude often shared by family members and which reinforces their own attitudes. An 18-year-old French individual comments, reflecting on the fact that for him and his clique, religion is voluntary:

> *Nope, it is pretty voluntary. My parents do not impose the Catholic religion on me. My mother doesn't force me to go to church and things like that. She is not really religious herself. I have faith you can say. I went to church but it was very rare (interviewee 2).*

This lack of religious feeling on the part of the interviewees is shared by their fellow gang members. Just two observed that they occasionally went to church with their gang members on specific religious holidays, such as Christmas, but they went on to say that this occurred rarely because going to church regularly could be perceived as a sign of weakness.

Among the Haitians I found a diversity of religious affiliations although a low level of religiosity. Just seven of the 10 individuals interviewed professed a religious affiliation, and among the subjects were two who referred to themselves as Baptists, two who referred to themselves as Protestants, as well as a Catholic, an Evangelist, and a Seventh Day Adventist among the group. The remaining three did not consider themselves to have any religious affiliation. And even those who said they belonged to a religion did not consider themselves very religious at all and deemed religion a minor part of their life. That is, they frequented their churches for important religious holidays – but with family members not gang members because they considered their fellow gang members irreligious. Like the French-Canadian youths, and true for most people, the Haitian youths explained that their religious affiliation was one imposed on them from infancy; however, as they grew up, attending church became more voluntary and their families did not force them to be religious. A 16-year-old Haitian born explains that:

> *When I was younger my mom always brought me to church with her. My belief is voluntary. I believe in God. I come from the Protestant religion. I believe we were created from someone or something. I still go to church even if I am a member of the gang. I went with my mother to church for Christmas and for New Year's (interviewee 1).*

The congregations of the churches these youths attended tended to be mixed. Five youths said that the congregation of their churches was a mix of black and white while

just two reported that the congregations of their churches consisted of only Haitians, including those who speak Creole. As a 15-year-old Haitian-Canadian remarked:

> *Most of them were Haitians. We had White pastors* [Protestants] *in the past, but often there are a lot of Haitians. Most times you will find Haitian pastors. Most of the people that you see they only speak Creole (interviewee 9).*

A small subset of Haitians (one born in Haiti and two born in Canada) became completely turned off by mainstream religion and turned to voodoo, a practice common in Haitian culture. Voodoo is considered to be a form of black or white magic, and practising voodoo allows the youth to accomplish the unattainable through religious superstitious beliefs. A 15-year-old Haitian born individual explains why he turned away from Evangelism and turned to voodoo instead:

> *No, I am not really religious but my mom is an Evangelist and she always bugged me about going to church with her and she would often ramble on about how the Lord protects us... I always shot back at her things like if the Lord is so good then why are we still poor and why were all Haitians treated like slaves in the past ...what kind of good Lord would do such a thing. My mama would always get really upset at me when I would talk this way to her but I couldn't help it. Sometimes I think her head is in the clouds. Don't get me wrong I love her and all, and I would do just about anything for her but the facts speak for themselves. Like take me for example, I am in here doing my time. I bet you if I was White and I was rich I wouldn't spend not even a day in this place because I would get myself a real lawyer that would be able to get me out of here. So you tell me that the Lord is good. I don't think so. I think the Lord has his favourites and it ain't certainly the Haitian folk that is for sure. So why should I believe in a God that is unfair and unjust just like our stupid laws. I say this cause if I had money I would definitely would not be doing my time here, it is all bullshit if you ask me.*
>
> *You know, what I believe in is no Evangelist religion. I believe in Voodoo and this is powerful shit. I have seen some of the guys practice this and it actually works. It brings protection and power. Like for example, at one time one of the Leaders went to a Voodoo priestess which is his aunt, she can perform Voodoo because she was born in Haiti and her grandmother taught her everything she knows, this is what the Leader told us. So when a rival gang tried to shoot at the leader, nothing happened to him – the bullets never touched him. I saw it with my own eyes. All I have to say is that Voodoo is some really powerful shit (interviewee 7).*

These three respondents also report that some members of their gang also practice voodoo. And echoing the feelings of the respondent above, another Canadian-Haitian (18 years old) reports that his brother practices voodoo because he believes it protects him from danger or from being killed:

> *Some guys in the Haitian gang practice voodoo. They do it for protection, so that nothing bad happens to them. I had a friend that he made someone do a spell on him. The spell consisted of if someone would shoot at him, the bullets would never touch him. He was shot by someone and this person shot at him with a gun. This guy must have fired about fifty bullets. Because the type of powerful gun this guy had, when he shoots for sure fifty bullets are fired at once. Only two got my friend who did the spell of protection. The voodoo worked for my friend because he believed it would work on him. Voodoo is about controlling your mind and making your mind be able to create things. It is a form of religion and a form of mind control. It is important to have the power, that protection, that spell, it is a form of protecting the gang. It represents good luck. Voodoo brings good luck to those who believe. It brings money, it brings love. Let's say you have an eye on a particular girl and you really want her and she wants nothing to do with you. You can have a love spell done for you and make the girl fall in love with you (12).*

Voodoo, then, is believed to protect individuals and confer good luck on them as well as help in their love lives. This youth describes voodoo as a positive magical force that works to the benefit of the practitioner. The influence of voodoo on the gang can be seen through the comments of another respondent (a 17-year-old Canadian-Haitian) who stated that the leader of the gang usually has the power to practice voodoo, but that this individual must have been born in Haiti. In this case, then, ethnicity is directly related to a form of religious practice. It is only the Haitian-born gang members who may have powerful positions within the religion.

> *Yeah, some* [gang members] *believe in Voodoo and even practice it. My big brother practices it. How can I say that it...hum ... it gives them power. It is like a spirit that possesses you and it changes them and I have seen women talking like men. It is not that they are crazy these women. You literally see their whole face change somewhat but their voices change the most. Voodoo comes from Haiti, not everyone can do it. Kids often can't do it you know... I can't do it myself. I can't*

> *do it because I was born here... but my big brother can do it and he does that type of stuff because he was born in Haiti and it is kind of religious thing. Anybody in the gang can practice that, but the gang I think is the most who is into that because it is usually the leader of the gang that is believed to have the power of practising Voodoo (*interviewee *5).*

Most of the Jamaican youths, although they had begun life as practising Christians and their families (especially mothers and grandmothers) were church-goers, had turned away from church, like their peers of other ethnic groups. In fact, most of the Jamaican youth (N=7) physically resembled "Rastafarians" in their hairstyle (wearing dreadlocks) and attitude (especially regarding use of marijuana), and claimed to follow the Rastafarian religion along with members of their gang. This is best described by a 17-year-old Canadian-born Jamaican:

> *Recently I got into the Rastafarian [....] Basically Rastafarianism is like back in the sixties or some shit like that in Jamaica. When they were having all of the political movements and all this shit like you know, they wanted independence and shit like that you know. Back then, they started Rastafarian thing like dreads in their hair but it wasn't their idea though. Dreadlocks, I think it comes from India and or something like that. So, they just adopted the idea or something like that. Basically Rastafarians they eat no meat, they don't eat meat and they are strictly vegetarian. They eat fish though. Their God is Haile Selassie, the emperor Selassie, he is the emperor of Ethiopia and he is like trying to do things for the Black people and everything and they call him the Black Messiah. Look here, here is the picture. I carry his picture, he was like a real man, but he was like a prophet. That is him. I heard some stories like he could turn into a cat or some shit like that, or turn into a lamb. Yeah basically that is the whole focus, they focus on Jah, we call him Jah. They are vegetarian and they have their dreads and they smoke weed all of the time. They don't smoke weed because it is a cool thing like you know. They smoke weed because that's nature, like, you know. It is only because the White people they make it look like weed is bad and shit and I don't know. It is from the ground you know, it makes you relax. When I went to Jamaica they had like little sessions like you know, you are around all of the Rastafarians and they sit in a circle whatever. Then there is sort of like a boss, the older guy, you call him the wise man or whatever. He would sit there and he would make fun of Babylon and everybody would be passing around the chalice and everyone would be smoking from the Chalice and everything like it is basically what it is. You are calm and humble and everything and you believe in Jah. After you die everyone goes on Mount Sinai which is in Ethiopia. (interviewee 27).*

The Jamaican youth who claim to be Rastafarian do so mainly because members of their gang are into the Rastafarian religion. These youths do not appear to fully grasp the real meaning and nuances of the religion. Instead, it seems "cool" to follow the religion (perhaps because of the approval of smoking marijuana), and many of these youths got into Rastafarianism after they got into the gang. In fact, many of the youths who said they were Rastas were members of Christian families, and their family members (mothers and grandmother) tried in vain to encourage these youths to continue to attend church. This same 17-year-old explains:

> *I believe in Rastafari, it is only just recently like before when I was young I used to go to church and stuff. Me I was baptized and everything like. My mom she is not a Rastafarian or anything like that. I used to eat pork and shit like that you know. That is one thing when you become Rastafarian you are not supposed to eat no meat, no pork, or nothing like that, you know. So, whatever, I grew up Christian basically. I was going to church and my mom forced me to go to church. I never really liked church. My mom she is Christian, she is a Catholic or whatever and she made me go to church and stuff like that. I don't know when you go to church they tell you about God and Jesus and all of this bullshit and you go to school they teach you the same shit like you know and after a while I was thinking is there really a God? Like you never know what can happen. You hear different stories people say that they have seen Jesus and a whole bunch of shit. Me, I just got confused and I said I don't believe in nothing you know. If I die that's it like you know. I don't know but over the past years, maybe two years or whatever I met some Rastafarian guys like my friend's father are like Rastas and they come and whatever and they say that our God is Black re, re, re. Haile Selassie, that is our God and when we die we are going to go to Mount Sinai and every Black person goes back to Africa and re, re, re[slang for you know] (interviewee 27).*

Interestingly, although Rastafarianism is generally considered a black and African religion, the youths interviewed said that white Rastafarians were not unusual and quite acceptable to the culture as well:

> *There is White Rastafarians. Like I have in my family, there is two White people in my family, like by marriage and everything, and they are White Rastafarians (interviewee 44).*

A minority of the Jamaican youths (N=3) did not consider themselves religious at all and were not affiliated with any religion. These individuals seemed to imply (as is shown by the quote below from a 16-year-old Jamaican-born youth) that had their families reinforced religious attitudes more at home and encouraged church attendance more, they would have retained some sort of religiosity in their own lives.

> *I am not religious because for some reason my mom pushed me away from that. I was religious when I was growing up where my grandma used to take me go to church like twice a day like in the morning. It was right next to where I went to school. So, in the morning I would go to church and then I would go to school. I used to go to Catholic church in Jamaica and sometimes I used to go to church in the afternoon too. On Fridays my grandmother would take me to church at night. I am Roman Catholic. Then my grandma passed away and my mom was not really into church no more, so I assumed that it wasn't important anymore (interviewee 23).*

As has already been seen, the religion of Rastafarianism is closely associated with, at least in Jamaica with a particular battle against Babylon, the White dominant culture. However, within this sample of Jamaican youth, those who refer to themselves as "Rastafarians" do not seem to recognise these elements of the religion; that is, they claim to accept White folk into their religion. This reinforces the idea that these Jamaican youth may simply be following this particular religion because it is popular among members of their gang, it has become more a cultural fad and less a significant religious belief.

Given the strong association of Latinos with their culture, their "Spanish-ness", and their attachment to family, and given that Roman Catholicism is a strong force in Latin America, one would expect to see a higher percentage of Latinos reporting an affiliation with the Roman Catholic church. And indeed, this is so. Of the 10 Latinos interviewed, the majority (N=8) report that they are very religious, refer to themselves as

devout Catholics and claim that gang members too are Catholic and highly religious. A 17-year-old El Salvadorian-born youth explains:

> *Yes, I practice the same religion as my parents. I am not obligated because when my father was alive both my parents practiced the Catholic religion. Then my father passed away and my mother practiced the Protestant religion. But I have been able to continue being Catholic, and my mother never forced me to change my religion. I have remained Catholic like my dad was (interviewee 47).*

These youth also explain that their religiosity, church attendance and faith are voluntary; even though such a tradition was encouraged and practiced by their parents, most of the youths choose to continue following and believing in Catholicism. The youth from El Salvador goes on to say:

> *I would say that it is voluntary. But it wasn't always like that. Because at the beginning, especially when you are very young your parents bring you to church with them and most of the time you don't really have much say in this. And sometimes, they may drag you to go with them every Sunday. But for me, I liked going to church and it always made me feel good inside. For instance, when I go to church I like to pray and tell God all about my problems, or when I felt it was too much to bear I would confess my sins to the priest and I always felt better after this. You can say in a sense it freed me. Apart from going to the clubs, I would say church is a good place to go and to feel at peace with yourself and to be able to vent out all your frustrations, and say exactly what you have in your head and I always feel better after this, whether it is after I pray or speak to a priest in confessional (*interviewee *47).*

As one would expect, given that these Latino youths are generally members of all-Latino gangs, these youth explain that gang members are also Roman Catholic and go to church quite frequently as well. A 17-year-old Canadian-born Chilean remarks:

> *Yes, a lot of the members in my gang are very religious. They believe in God and they carry the cross of Jesus Christ around their necks. We would go to church together sometimes and/or I would meet them at church. We would go to the church on Cremazie and St. Denis (interviewee 29).*

A minority of Latinos (N=2) reported that they were not religious at all and did

not like going to church for various reasons – it was boring, they could not get into it, their parents never really forced the issue because they were not frequent church-goers themselves. Nevertheless, these two youths did observe that fellow gang members were often Catholics who wore religious relics (e.g., a cross around their necks) and often attended mass.

Among the youths of the 'other' ethnic category there is a tendency, except for a couple of individuals, to be non-religious, although they did acknowledge that their families had some form of religious affiliation. The majority of these youth (N =7) were from a Roman Catholic background; the remaining three included a Muslim, Jew and Native Canadian. The likelihood an individual would attend religious services was strongly associated with family involvement and practice. Those (N = 5) who defined themselves as somewhat religious claimed that religious observance (even if merely in the form of attending services) was imposed on them by their immediate family members when they were young. However, as they grew older, the choice to participate in the family's religion became voluntary. When these youths attended services, they did so only for important religious holidays. The places of worship these youths attended, when they did attend, tended to reflect the ethnicity of the youths themselves – for example, predominantly Irish, Portuguese, etc. A 17-year-old Canadian-born Portuguese individual explains that he goes to church on special occasions and the church he goes to is one that caters exclusively to the Portuguese community

> *Yes, I am somewhat religious, I go to church from time to time. I am Catholic. I would go to church for important occasions. It is voluntary. The majority of the people that went to the same church as me were Portuguese. It is not important that the people that go to the same church as me be Portuguese (interviewee 38).*

A small group of youths (N=4) from this category claimed not to be religious at all because their immediate family members were themselves not very religious and never made a big fuss about religion. The fact that their parents did not regularly attend services, did not encourage the youths to attend either. Two respondents explain that although raised in the Catholic church, they no longer believed its doctrines or followed its practices. A 17-year-old Irish-Canadian explains:

> *I went to church once and I found it real boring and I think it is all a bunch of lies. I think the priests are there to make money and I don't believe that the pope represents God. What makes him so special? It is not like I could go to the pope and ask him to get me out of here [...]* (interviewee *42).*

An 18-year-old Cree explains that he is an atheist because his mother did not follow the belief system of Crees or Native Canadians:

> *I consider myself an atheist. I don't believe in the spirit of the ancestors. I find it a little bit arbitrary. My grandfather was a very wise and religious old man, he practiced and believed in the religious beliefs of the Cree. My mother discouraged me from continuing in such a belief because she claimed that it was the religion of the devil. She changed religion several times, she went from a Catholic to a Jehovah's Witness, to becoming a Born Again Christian to practicing what she used to call the New Age philosophy. It became a little confusing growing up. I was stuck between two worlds -- the beliefs of my people the Cree, which my grandfather always talked about, and the different beliefs of my mother. She was always depressed. Growing up with this made me think that maybe religion, whether Native or non-Native, was just a way to keep people believing in something. My grandfather with all his wisdom and my mother with all her questions and confusion wasn't enough to keep her with me, in the end she committed suicide. So, now I don't believe in anything. My father never shoved religion down my throat and it is just as well (interviewee 28).*

An 18-year-old Jewish individual explains that he has no real religious beliefs:

> *My mom is Jewish and my dad (who is really Protestant) converted to Judaism in order to marry my mom. My grandmother, my dad's mom, had a hard time accepting this and gave my mom and dad a hard time about it. So, I don't know why but my mom tried to bring me up Jewish, but for some reason my dad wasn't really into it. They argued a lot and my mom even organized a Bar Mitzvah for me when I was about thirteen years old. Everyone came except my grandmother. So, in the end my dad refused to go to synagogue but agreed to the Bar mitzvah*

> *and my mom was always angry. So, for me I believe in God but I don't follow any specific religion. I saw how much problems it caused in my own family (interviewee 50).*

Only one respondent, a 15-year-old Canadian-Algerian claimed to be very religious:

> *Yes, I am Muslim. It is imposed. At seven years old we learn to do a specific prayer. If we don't do this prayer than you are punished. Everyone* [congregation] *has to be Muslim, it doesn't matter the color of the person's skin (interviewee 36).*

For this youth, religion was imposed. His immediate family members were committed to the Muslim religion, and the youth was socialized to follow such a tradition.

The majority of these youth (N=9) report that religion is not significant within the gang subculture. Whether they are religious or not is strictly an individual choice; it is neither valued nor discouraged by gang members. One 17 seventeen-year-old Canadian-Italian explains that he finds it comical that his uncle (who is affiliated with organized crime) goes to church only when he feels the need to be absolved of his crimes. However, he claims that his uncle does not impose such beliefs on his organized criminal family members:

> *My uncle, on the other hand, he is a real fanatic about religion. Every time he does something bad he goes to Catholic church and goes to the confessional and he confesses "his sins" to the priest and then he says a couple of Hail Mary's and he feels fine. He's funny that way. But he never tells people that they have to be religious or anything like that (interviewee 39).*

Among the 'other' ethnic youth, and indeed, across all ethnic groups with the possible exception of the Latinos, it appears that religion is not an important factor within the gang subculture, given that most gang members are not particularly religious.

Across the board, all respondents agreed that the ethnic composition of a congregation was not significant. It was not important to these youths that the people who

went to church with them (when they did go to church) were of the same ethnic background. None of the French-Canadian youths expressed any preference about the ethnicity of the congregation of the churches they attended, many making comments along the lines that God is for everyone regardless of one's ethnicity or race. This is best exemplified by the following respondents, a 17-year-old (interviewee 4) and a 20-year-old (interviewee 6):

> *A church is for everyone... religion is for everyone – it doesn't matter who you are. I don't understand people that say things like the blacks and whites have to separate from each other. I call this bullshit and I call it jealousy between people. I can never accept this kind of attitude. It is important that you accept people for who they are and people should stop being so egotistical and think only of themselves all the time. Why do you think there are people out there that get themselves killed and that there is war and vandalism? These things usually happen to people that think they are better than others. I believe a church is open to everyone regardless of who you are (4).*

> *The people that went to the church I went to came from different backgrounds. Not everyone was French Canadian. For me, people that go to church believe in something higher than themselves. I respect people like that. But whether they came from the same culture as me or came from a different culture it doesn't really make a difference. It doesn't matter, like I said, if you are red, black, blue or mauve, a human being is a human being. If I go to a church I will not go to a church that is Quebecois. I would not go to a Haitian church either and things like that (6).*

The Haitian subjects (N = 7) who regularly attended some kind of religious service also agreed that the specific ethnic make-up of their congregation was not important because religion is for everyone regardless of race or ethnicity. A 16-year-old Canadian born Haitian reveals:

> *No, not really it is not important the race of the people who come to a Baptist church. A human being is a human being, whether this person is Black or White. The religion that you practice is the same philosophy and the same base. Religion is for everyone, and God is for everyone it doesn't matter who you are (interviewee 20).*

Those of the 'other' ethnic category also claimed that the ethnic make-up of their congregation (when they attended services) was not relevant and that religion is for everyone.

The one group that offered an exception was the Latino group. These youths, who were the most likely of all respondents to attend church and profess religious beliefs, attended churches at which the congregation shared a Latino background. Several youths commented that it is important that congregational members share the same ethnic background. The importance of the congregation being of a shared ethnicity is given by others, including a 17-year-old El Salvadorian:

> *I would have to say yes to this question though* [should ethnic-make of the congregation be only Latino]. *Especially the priest, he would be able to speak Spanish, everyone would be able to understand him when he speaks. You would feel less shy to go up to him after mass because he is Latino like you. You wouldn't hesitate to go more often because there are people you know and most of them come from the same Latino culture. Us Spanish people love to talk and when there are other Latinos like you, you like to talk to them in your Native tongue, you share the same expressions, you laugh at the same things, there is more a sense of togetherness that is shared (interviewee 8).*

Thus, one is able to deduce that in general, except for the Latinos and the sole Muslim in the sample, religion does not play a large role in the lives of gang members. However, some individuals have turned to unconventional religions, although perhaps misunderstanding the complete meaning of the trappings of those individuals (e.g., Rastafarianism, voodoo). What is interesting is that the Latino group holds most closely to the early religious beliefs and practices of their family and their youth and feels more comfortable sharing those practices with fellow Latinos.

Across all ethnic groups, religious identification was imposed at infancy, but as these youths got older, they were free to do as they chose. Some individuals turned to

non-conventional religions (e.g., Haitians turned to voodoo, Jamaicans to Rastafarianism) but most dropped out of attending church or synagogue, except for the Latinos and the sole Muslim in the sample. In general then, religion does not play a major role in the lives of most of these youths. The Latino group, unlike all others interviewed, holds most closely to their religious beliefs and practices and feel more comfortable sharing those practices with those of similar Latino background, while all other respondents agreed that the ethnic composition of a congregation was not significant.

Given that religion has an important function in sustaining social unity, one might draw some conclusions about gang membership and professed religiosity. Religion meets psychological, social and cultural needs. Belief and faith in the supernatural provide comfort in times of crises and act as a stress-reliever. Faith sets certain behavioral standards, providing notions of right and wrong. Moreover, religion consists of various rituals such as prayers, ceremonies, and songs that enhance the learning of oral traditions by transferring from generation to generation a specific cultural identity (Cook, 2000; Markstrom, 1999; Youniss et. al., 1999). This effect of religion clearly did not apply to these youths, except the Latinos. Religion was not part of any gang subculture. One might conclude, then, that these youths are united and share social bonds based on this disregard of religion. Furthermore, their sense of morality is weakened making it easier for them to be part of gangs. Often religion acts as a form of social control setting behavioral standards of right and wrong. However, in the case of French, Haitian, and "other" youths, the symbolic sanctions imposed by religion mean nothing to them because religion is perceived as irrelevant to their gang subculture.

One can also see that religion has been manipulated to fit into some of these youths distorted view of what they consider right and wrong. For instance, most of the Jamaicans physically resembled "Rastafarians" in their hairstyles, attitudes, and most said they followed Rastafarianism along with members of their gang. However, these youths did not appear to fully grasp the real meaning of the religion. This is similar to the case of some Haitian youths, who are members of gangs where voodoo is practiced, which persuades them that they are protected from all harm – rather than simply avoiding gangs altogether, these youths convinced themselves that a "religion" could protect them from injury, even death.

Religion may also be perceived as a form of empowerment. Latino youth come together through their sense of alienation and suffering resulting from a stressful immigration process. Their shared religious beliefs serve as a comfort against such perceived injustice, alienation, resulting from their shared cultural experiences, therefore using religion as a form of empowerment from such subjective stigmatization. Such so-called religious allegiance to Catholicism however, has not been strong enough to discourage Latino youth from their gang lifestyles. Clearly religion does not unify most gang members or reinforce their sense of ethnic belonging-ness, except among Latinos and Haitians who considered voodoo a part of their cultural background and a practice that would protect them from adverse events.

Food

Certain foods are associated with particular cultures. "Spain is one of the world's great growers of fruit…is an important ingredient in Spain's cultural riches" (Visser, 1999, p. 118). Hamburger and apple pie are wholly American, while Italy is known for its

famous spaghetti and tomato sauce (Hogan, 2000; Visser, 1999). Ukraine is synonymous with perogies, and poutine is all-Quebec; food is indeed a defining factor and marker of ethnicity (Hogan, 2000).

Our society has steadily become a culinary smorgasbord with diverse ethnic groups borrowing their neighbours' food; such "imported and assimilated foods directly represent the immigration and assimilation of diverse peoples" (Hogan, 2000, p. 975). Distinctive food recipes also symbolise unique cultural customs and identity. In Montreal's multicultural society, then, we can eat meat and potatoes meals, like traditional white Canadians, explore other ethnic cuisines, or eat diets that reflect our ethnic background.

Food is an important element of ethnic identity; people cook traditional menus and dine out at ethnic restaurants to remind themselves of their ethnic origins or to reinforce their cultural characteristics in the face of living in a different cultural world, such as Canada. In discussing food preferences with study subjects, it seems that as a rule, the French respondents were more flexible about the type of food they ate while Jamaicans, Latinos and Haitians preferred to eat (at home, with gang members, and at restaurants) foods that reflected their culture. Among those who fell into the 'other' ethnic category, all individuals ate ethnic food at home (especially when mom or grandmother was doing the cooking). When eating out, these youths did patronize ethnic restaurants, but also enjoyed eating at expensive restaurants because this gave them a chance to show off the money they earned as gang members. Many of these young men lived at home and were not the cooks of the household; they relied on their parents/grandparents to provide meals. Thus, eating at home meant eating what was provided and probably reflects the

desires of the adult cook in terms of retaining ethnic traditions in the kitchen rather than any desire on the part of the young men to pursue their ethnic heritage in the form of diet.

1) Ethnic Food Only

As mentioned above, it is predominantly the Haitian, Jamaican and Latino respondents as well as some within the 'other' ethnic category who prefer to eat traditional foods from the homeland, so to speak. In fact, just two French respondents reported that they only eat Quebecois food when dining at home. This is explained by a 20-year-old (interviewee 15) and a 19-year-old (interviewee 21).

> *My family likes to cook pork with brown sauce on it with potatoes. I love this dish in particular I try to eat it as often as I can and it is also a very popular Quebecois dish (15)*

> *I like to eat Paté La Soupe, it is a Quebecois dish. It is similar to Paté Chinois* [Shepherd's Pie]. *There is vegetables in it and it is like a Paté, it is my grandmother's recipe (21).*

Additionally, only four of the French-Canadian respondents said that they preferred to eat at Quebecois restaurants when eating out alone or with fellow gang members. A 16-year old explains:

> *I used to go to restaurants often. The one I liked to go to the most is called Chez Voisine. We would go in the city at Richelieu and there was this Quebecois restaurant we went to it often, they served very good food. We weren't always in the mood to eat at restaurants so when that happened we decided to eat at home (11).*

All Haitian respondents (N=10) reported that they prefer to eat Haitian food. A 16-year-old Haitian immigrant discloses:

> *I like to eat Haitian food, and I think Haitian food is the best. I especially like to eat fried rice and fried chicken with a little sauce this is considered a popular Creole dish. I really like to eat Creole food (interviewee 1).*

Another 16-year-old respondent said that he would eat just about anything, but his preference is still for Haitian food:

I like to eat chicken, I like to eat anything, if you give me food I will eat it. But if I was given a choice I would still prefer to eat Haitian food (interviewee 20).

It seemed that for most Haitian youths, Haitian food was associated with their mother. In fact, three respondents commented specifically on the fact that they preferred food cooked by their mother:

I like to eat Haitian food, and I think Haitian food is the best. I especially like to eat fried rice and fried chicken with a little sauce. This is considered a popular Creole dish. I really like to eat Creole food (interviewee 1, a 16-year-old Haitian immigrant).

I prefer to eat Haitian food, especially the way my mother makes it. Of course it's better than any restaurant. I like to eat fried rice with fried peas and fried bananas. There are potatoes with the sauce that is a Haitian dish as well (interviewee 19, a 17-year-old Haitian immigrant).

We all agree that Haitian food is the best, especially the way our mamas make it. Sometimes we go to each other's houses and our mothers will cook us a Haitian meal. My mama always makes real good Haitian food. That is why I think I still live with her, because she is a damn good cook (interviewee 7, a 17-year-old Haitian-Canadian).

Two Haitians said that although they prefer Haitian food, they will eat any kind of food just the same. These two subjects, a 15-year-old Haitian-Canadian (interviewee 9) and a 16-year-old Haitian-Canadian (interviewee 20) remarked:

We like eating fast-food at Burger King or McDonalds from time to time but our favorite is Haitian food (interviewee 9).

Me and the guys like eating Creole food, it is crispy, fried, and spicy, it is real good. Sometimes we will eat Chinese food, fast food, whatever. We can't help but love eating Haitian food, we eat this food at home, we got used to it, and is the best (interviewee 20)

Even when eating out alone or with fellow gang members, the Haitian respondents (N = 8), frequent Haitian restaurants, as seen by comments from a 18-year-old Haitian-Canadian (interviewee 12), a 14-year-old Haitian immigrant (interviewee 40)

and a 15-year-old Haitian immigrant (interviewee 7):

> *We go to Haitian restaurants as well in St. Laurent and Jarry. Melu, Melu is the name of the restaurant. It is an expensive restaurant (interviewee12).*
>
> *The popular Haitian restaurant that me and my friends went to was Caisse Croute. There are a lot of Haitians that go to this restaurant. The food is good and it makes me think of Haiti (interviewee 40).*
>
> *I used to go to the restaurant Caisse Croute Chez Pierre. It is a Haitian restaurant in Montreal North. Me and the gang we used to hang out here and the food is good and we felt right at home the owner was always good to us and sometimes he would also give us some free food on the house (interviewee 7).*

All the Jamaican youths (N=10) prefer Jamaican food, as is made clear by a 16-year-old Jamaican-Canadian:

> *I like curry chicken you know. I like jerk chicken. I don't know how to explain it because basically I am not the one that cooks it. If my mom was here she would explain the whole thing you know. In a sense you can say a lot of the Jamaican food is similar to Guyanese* [mother came from Guyana] *food. Even the way they cook their food, the curry comes from the Indian people. So most of the Black people got their roots from the Indian people also too you know. Since they all have their kind of specialty you know. Some may cook it a bit different, they have their special recipe for it, it is practically the same thing, the same names you know(interviewee 24).*

Half the sample of Jamaican youth (N=5) report that although they enjoy eating Jamaican food, they prefer the home-cooked variety. A 16-year-old Jamaican born (interviewee 23) and a 17-year old Canadian born Jamaican (interviewee 27) claim the following:

> *I like my mama's food. She makes Jamaican food. For example she makes curry goat. It is a type of meat, rice, all kinds of stuff you know (interviewee 23).*
>
> *I like my home cooking still you know. Cooking from Jamaica, like my mother and my grandmother they cook some good food like curry goat and stuff like that. I can't eat fish but they make some good fish though (interviewee 27).*

Eight of the 10 Jamaican youths report that they never go to restaurants alone, always

with fellow gang members, and although fast-food restaurants are popular among the group, they will go to Jamaican restaurants too.

Among the Latino subjects, the feeling was unanimous: for all 10, Spanish food was preferred, particularly that from their native countries, as a 17-year-old El Salvadorian says:

> *I like to eat El Salvadorian foods. La Pupusa is like a tortilla but inside the tortilla there is cheese and meat. La tortilla is like a Pita but a little different in the sense that the tortilla is made of cornflower. There are also some tortillas that are made by wheat flour (interviewee 8).*

A 17-year-old Canadian-Chilean goes on to say:

> *I like Chilean food, it is called empanada. If you ever ate a patty, it is like that but there is mince meat in it, there is onions, and carrots and olives and egg and different spices (interviewee 29).*

All Latino subjects said that these preferences for Spanish food were shared by gang members (although they do indulge in fast food as well). A 20-year-old Ecuadorian immigrant (interviewee 22) and a 17-year-old Chilean-Canadian (interviewee 29) explain:

> *We like to eat fast food and all of us eat Spanish food at home (22).*
>
> *They* [gang members] *like to eat fast foods. We used to go to my uncle's restaurant and it was Chilean. I would bring my friends a lot (29).*

And the Latino youths went on to say that although they often ate at friends' homes, again enjoying Spanish food and indeed preferring to eat at home, they also went to restaurants specialising in Latin/Central/South American food. A 17-year-old from the Dominican Republic reports:

> *Us Spanish people, we don't go to restaurants that often. Most of us prefer home cooked meals. My mom even though she is Spanish, she doesn't mind when I bring over Black friends, Spanish friends, my mom will make a big dish for everybody and give them as much food as she can. Like I will give you an*

> *example, I have gone to the house of some of my so-called "Anglo friends" and let me tell you I will go over to their house and they would be eating for example, they won't even offer to give you any food, or let alone a glass of water. Or for example, they will ask you would you like to eat? And if you answer no because maybe you are shy or you don't want to impose, or whatever, they won't even bother to ask you twice or force it a little bit on you. I almost get the feeling when I say no to them, they are happy about it. Whereas you come into a Spanish home, let's say my mother is cooking and she is ready to place the food on the table, she will automatically place an extra plate on the table to feed my friend who just happens to be over, or just happens to stop by while we are having supper and if my friends for example, say no thank-you, she places a plate in front of them with food that smells good, and every time she does that, my friends end up eating, and in some cases helping themselves to seconds (interviewee 41).*

Among those in the 'other' ethnic category, all 10 said they are more likely to eat ethnic foods at home, again, often because a mother or grandmother is the cook in the household and cooks meals reflecting the ethnic origins of that family. Views of home cooking, particularly home cooking of ethnic foods, elicited some warm reactions:

> *When I am at home, oh yes! – my mom cooks some amazing dishes and so does my grandmother (interviewee 25, an 18-year-old Polish-Canadian).*

> *I love Portuguese food and I am not that crazy about going to restaurants. I just love my mother's food. My mom comes here* [the detention center] *and she brings me Portuguese food and it makes it feel nice. I like to eat Portuguese food. I like to eat meat and potatoes. Conasha, that is rice and chicken. I would eat this at my grandma's house. My grandmother is 100% Portuguese (interviewee 26, a 17-year-old Portuguese immigrant).*

> *I like to eat Italian food. I love to eat spaghetti. I go to Italian restaurants, I eat pizza. I prefer to eat Italian food because it is more spicy – I like my food to be spicy (interviewee 39, an Italian-Canadian).*

It appears then, that none of the respondents rejected their ethnic cuisine. In fact, many preferred it, and this preference often seemed to be associated with the fact that the mother or grandmother did the cooking, and less with the specific ethnic-ness of the food. Gang membership did not appear to be predicated on preference of food, and food did not

play a large role in gang activities, except in so far as gang members hung out with friends at each others' homes and at local favoured restaurants.

All the Haitian, Jamaican, and Latino respondents, as well as some within the "other" ethnic category, prefer to eat traditional foods from their homeland. Although this preference often seemed to be associated with the fact that the mother or grandmother did the cooking rather than the specific ethnic-ness of the food, it did seem that Haitians and Latinos went out of their way to eat "their" food when eating out with gang members. This practice, for these two groups had become an important part of their gang subcultures. For Latino and Haitian youth, then, we see that a degree of "social enclosure" (Breton, 1978a) is maintained symbolically through their choice of food and the specific ethnic restaurants they frequent.

Eating traditional ethnic foods is a practice that is more likely to be maintained within the homes of Jamaican and other ethnic youth, although it is not considered very important within their gang subcultures as seen by the fact that they are willing to experiment with different types of ethnic food when eating out with gang members.

2) Diverse Dietary Habits

The French respondents resembled most teenage boys: most (N = 6) would eat just about anything – and not necessarily just Quebecois dishes, but many different kinds of foods. A 17-year-old explains:

> *I like to eat anything. I am not very picky with the food. I like to try different foods that is for sure. I like to eat Chinese food it tastes really good. I like Italian food. I like trying different restaurants as well as new restaurants (interviewee 4).*

Two respondents claimed that they preferred to eat their mother's cooking. This is best exemplified by a 15-year-old:

> *Food from the home is the best. The food that the parents prepare is the best. My mother when she cooks is the best. My mother cooks Italian food, even though she is Quebecois. I like to eat lasagna and spaghetti. I love Italian food. Spaghetti is a Quebecois plate because we probably eat it more than the Italians do (interviewee 10)!*

This openness to other ethnic foods extended to eating out. Most of the French respondents (N = 6) said that when eating out alone or with gang members they were willing to eat at non-French restaurants, open to a variety of different types of meals. The best examples have been provided by a 20-year-old (interviewee 6) and a 19-year-old (interviewee 16):

> *They like anything. Sometimes we went to Italian restaurants, other times we went for Chinese food, and other times we went for fast food, we were never that picky (6).*

> *The Biker's eat the White man's food. They always eat poutine and shit like that. . . Myself and the members of the gang anything. Sometimes we went to Italian restaurants, other times we went for Chinese food, and other times we went for fast food, we were never that picky (16).*

All the Jamaicans report that they will eat other ethnic foods, not just Jamaican food, although they do prefer Jamaican food. A 17-year-old Jamaican-Canadian describes his adventures with his gang members in the non-Jamaican culinary world:

> *We used to like to go eat Greek food like our gyro, we used to get our fries, our bacon, and stuff like that. We would go to La Belle Province and we would go eat there often because it was cheap too. Not because I want to be cheap but you get food there cheap. There are times when you are tired of eating La Belle Province, or Pizza Hut, or McDonalds or whatever you are eating and we will go down to the Jamaican association and go and get home cooked food. There is a restaurant on top. So, they also throw parties and stuff like that too you know. If I want we would go also to I forgot this name of the club it is in NDG. I think the name is Rainbows. We all like Caribbean food the best you know (interviewee 27).*

Among those of the 'other' ethnic category, there is generally some willingness to experiment with foods outside their own ethnic group. While those in this group are more

likely to eat ethnic foods at home (N=10), when they go out to restaurants alone or with members of their gang, they do eat at fancy restaurants (including different ethnic restaurants), outings that allow them to show off the money they make as gang members. This is best described by an 18-year-old Polish-Canadian (interviewee 25), a 17-year-old Portuguese-born individual (interviewee 26) and an Italian-Canadian (interviewee 39):

> *We like to go to restaurants. If I just did a lick, I made good money. A lick is a hit, a run, a money shot. If I just did a lick I am going to go to Baton Rouge for example, I am going to go all of the way. I am going to get good food. I mean really good food. If it is during the week and I don't see no big money coming. I will still go to restaurants but I won't be able to treat myself to like a G for supper. I know that is real funny, actually I feel real stupid after spending that much money on something like supper. You know, it looks good to leave like a hundred dollar tip. How do you like that one. You can't show up with your cheap apparel, you have to wear a jacket. Who gives a fuck you only live once. Me and my boys sometimes go eat hamburgers, hot dogs and poutine. For me a Quebecois dish would be poutine. I like Asian food as well and so do my boys (interviewee 25).*

> *I don't like that greasy shit and the only thing I like to eat is Dagwoods because Dagwoods is not that bad. Sometimes me and my gang members like going to eat at places like La Belle Province, McDonalds and shit like that. We go to these places when we are freaken starving you know. We also like to go and eat pizza, hot-dogs, lasagna why because they taste good, but it wouldn't be my first choice (interviewee 26).*

> *They eat practically anything but there is some people that eat their cultural food* [at home] *and other people will eat some stuff that I eat, like Italian food and sometimes me and the gang members like to eat Quebecois food as well, like poutine and fast-food. (interviewee 39).*

Preference for the food of one's ethnicity appears to be linked to who does the cooking at home. However, it seems that Haitians and Latinos go out of their way to choose Haitian and Latino food, respectively, when eating out. Others, including those of French background and other ethnic backgrounds seem more willing to experiment with different types of ethnic foods when eating out. This difference in preference may reflect

the degree to which people are assimilated or made to feel welcome in a culture in which individuals do not speak the two major languages (French and English).

Like most teenage boys, the French respondents would eat just about anything – including foods traditionally associated with other ethnic groups. This openness to other ethnic foods extended to eating out. Most of the French respondents said that when eating out alone or with gang members they were willing to eat at non-French restaurants and were open to a variety of meals. Overall, though, for the French eating traditional Quebecois food was not a ritual that was common at home or with their gangs.

Music

Music is a reflection of personal taste and can also be a reflection of cultural heritage. Some cultures emphasize the importance of maintaining ties with the 'old country' by encouraging children to study ethnic traditions (e.g., Irish dancing, learning the bagpipes!). However, one would not expect youths in street gangs to be very interested in folkloric traditions, and indeed, that is the case. In fact, it is possible to break down the music preferences of the larger group of youth into two broad categories. First of all are those who prefer rap music, and within this category we can identify French, Jamaican, and Haitian youths as well as those of the 'other' ethnic category. Within the group of French respondents there are two sub-categories: those who speak French and prefer French rap (or other) music and those who speak French but prefer English rap (or other music). The second category, which is not too surprising based on previous findings, is that Latino youths strongly identify with Latino music (salsa, meringue etc.). This carried over from personal listening choices to their listening choices when out at bars, pool halls, after hours clubs. Latinos sought out establishments that played Spanish

music, while all others generally hung out at pool halls, bars, that played rap, reggae, hip-hop, Rhythm and Blues (R&B) (as we shall see in the "Hanging out" section).

Most of the subjects prefer rap and hip-hop music. This genre of music is the preferred choice among youth in gangs because it appalls so many adults. Specifically gangsta rap's underworld identification appeals to most Black and White youth in gangs (Romero, 1997). But rap music has also become more mainstream, and most youth perceive it as cool and a way of fitting in (Yousman, 2003). "The ambitions and goals expressed by gangsta rappers are consistent with the aspirations and strivings glorified in American mythology: the possession and control of beautiful women and material goods, money as a signifier of respect and achievement...violence as a solution to conflict...disdain for softness in males...and masculine power" (Yousman, 2003, p. 383). The violence and anti-authoritarianism associated with gangsta rap clearly appeal to youth affiliated with or in gangs.

Black youth in particular are "more committed to rap music and more likely to see rap music as life affirming" (Sullivan, 2003, p. 605). Black youth are more likely to listen to rap and hip-hop music that addresses political themes such as poverty, racism, and police brutality, whereas White fans may view rap in a different light and may avoid listening to rap that involves a more frank assessment of racism (Sullivan, 2003). Rap and hip-hop are more likely to be linked with Black culture and have been described as the voice of the underclass, the stigmatized and the marginalized. Thus, for Black youth listening to rap and hip-hip, the lyrics have deep-rooted cultural significance, more so than for a White youth listening to this music genre.

Originally, rap (and gansta rap) with its breakout in the early 1980s was

composed to inject political views into music (Sullivan, 2003). For most Black adolescents, "rap's poetic voice is deeply political in content and spirit, but its hidden struggle –that of access to public space and community resources and the interpretation of Black expression – constitutes rap's hidden politics" (Sullivan, 2003, p. 607). Only in the early 1990s did rappers begin changing their lyrics and abandoning antiracism messages to focus instead on money, violent and misogynist masculinity, and glamorized sexual exploits (Sullivan, 2003). The music is now part of the mainstream music world and attracts youth of various ethnic backgrounds, in part because rappers "conceptualize the world as them and us" (Yousman, 2003, p. 376). These kinds of lyrics appeal to most young fans because they speak of a symbolic rebellion and resistance to dominant society (i.e., conventional norms), which has become an attractive ideology for most young people regardless of race or socio-economic status (Yousman, 2003; Sullivan, 2003). Therefore, most young people perceive rap as a truthful reflection of society because it keeps things real (Sullivan, 2003; Romero, 1997).

Gangsta rappers "...construct violent, hypermasculine identities draw[ing] on the representations of masculinity that may be found in all of American popular culture, not simply in Black popular culture alone" (Yousman, 2003, p. 383). Gangsta rap speaks of violence and gang life and criminal exploits, all of which may be interpreted as an affirmation and rationalization of these young men's experiences within the gang. And for Black youth, listening to rap or gangsta rap provides them with an additional, more personalized message to which they can relate at a deeper cultural level because its themes and narratives speak of issues relating to the economic and human exploitation that continue to plague the Black youth (Mahiri and Conner, 2003).

1) English Rap Music

English rap music was identified by almost all respondents as their preferred listening choice. This choice crossed ethnic barriers (except for Latino respondents and some French respondents), and many respondents identified the fact that the music referred to gangsters, gang lifestyles, anti-police sentiments, anti-authoritarianism and violence, which drew their interest to the music. Many believed that the music reflected the reality of their lives – particularly in terms of how they perceived their gang activity. Several respondents pointed specifically to music speaking to their way of life as being attractive to them, as will be shown in some quite revealing quotes.

Among the French, four did not express a language preference for music and in fact listened to either French or English rap and hip-hop music, as is revealed in comments from two respondents, a 20-year-old (interviewee 15) and a 17-year-old (interviewee 13).

> *I like both French and English hip-hop. I like Hip-Hop because you can dance to it. I like what some Rappers say. Sometimes they talk about gangs and how life is. Us guys that we went through it, we like to listen to the music and we know if they are talking shit or not. They will say yeah that is true or no that is not true. Sometimes they denigrate women. They don't have a lot of respect for women. That is the thing. They say they are going to fuck over the police. This is not why I listen to it, what I mean by that it is not about the swear words. It is a little more deeper than that. In a way the music speaks to me, it tells me about things that I already know, it is real. It tells me about a life that I am living that is being in the gang and what it is to be in the gang and how it feels to be in the gang [...]. I don't like music that talks about all kinds of crap that isn't true (15)*

> *I like to listen to Hip-Hop. I like to listen to English Quebecois. There is a group of guys from Montreal North and they are all Quebecois and they do some Hip-Hop it is really cool. Sometimes they throw these house parties and they start jamming together and everyone gets into it and has a good time. What the music tells us about society is that people should learn to mind their own business. They hate the cops. Everyone hates the police, I don't think there are too many people that like the police. There are adults that don't like the police but they have no choice but to respect them. Women are the salops [bitches]- this is what the lyrics*

are about (13).

These youths enjoy listening to French and English rap and hip-hop music because the lyrics discuss gangs and gang life – how it feels to be a gang-banger and be constantly harassed and sought by the police. The youth also discussed how rappers portray women and while the language can be considered harsh (perhaps even offensive), they choose not to focus on the attitudes of the rappers to women, instead drawing parallels between the violent life spoken of in the music to their own lives. Among the French youth, only one claimed to listen to Quebecois music, and one said he preferred the techno music played at rave clubs.

The Haitian youths who listened to rap and hip-hop (N = 5) echoed the feelings of the French youths who listened to English rap and hip hop: they felt that, even though this music was English, not in their maternal languages (French or Creole), it spoke to them about their lives. Often respondents acknowledged the violence in the lyrics of the music, but pointed out that though that degree of violence may not exist in their own lives, a lower level of violence did exist, and this music gave them a means to make sense of their lives. An 18-year-old Canadian-born Haitian explains why he prefers listening to English hip-hop:

> *I like to listen to Hip Hop. I like English Hip Hop and I detest French Hip Hop. The artists I like to listen to are Ja Rule and DMX. Method Man and Red Man. B-I-G., Scarface, I like all sorts of Rap.*
>
> *Hip hop music is a little hard to interpret. In the sense that, there are two types of people that listen to hip hop. There is one type of person that listens to hip hop and likes all the negative lyrics that have words like fuck, kill you, and bastard and blah, blah, blah. I don't like to listen to music because of these negative lyrics. I like to listen to Hip Hop because the majority of Rappers and I like the Rappers... tell some kind of story. A kind of story that... even if it the Rappers say words like fuck, even if he says shut up mother fucker, you listen to what the Rapper is really saying...and what he means is that behind all those swear words,*

he is giving out the message: " that don't get involved and stay out of it." What the Rapper is also saying is that "Life is a Bitch" but you know you just gotta survive it the best you can.

What hip hop music tells us about police officers is that they are assholes. Even if they are assholes, fuckin' pricks, and jerks. What they really mean by this is that these police officers are just doing their jobs. They are dogs, but once they are in the police force what other choice do they have.

The Rappers talk about racism too, it depends who the singer is of course. For example, Tupac talks about racism in a lot his songs. He says things like " the world ain't ready to have a Black president." It is true. If there was a Black president tomorrow morning, all the red necks would be out trying to assassinate him. There is less racism. But it does still exist. He also tells us that there are a lot of bad things happening in the society. Especially in Tupac's song "Baby Don't Cry" he talks about his friends who had a girlfriend, the girl says to the friend "What would you do if it was you" the friend would say "he knows just by the question what he has to do." What I like about Tupac. Even if you do something really bad, what I like about Tupac what I adore about him is even if someone does something really bad...Tupac says that you make up the good another time. Because you had to do what you had to do. Things happen for a reason, and that reason is for better things to come ahead.

Hip hop music tells us that women are bitches, sluts, they are only there to get fucked. I don't believe that. I believe that there are bitches and sluts but that not all women are like this(interviewee 12).

A 17-year-old Haitian-Canadian adds to this, pointing to the issue of racism in society and the association of blacks and crime, experiences he faces and can relate to in his daily life:

I like to listen to the Rap. I like to listen to English Rap. I like to listen to Jay Z. What Jay Z sings about is really positive. I take what I want from his music. Like when he starts saying things like fuck the world. He doesn't talk very well about Black people. He says things that Black people are always committing crimes of some sort or another. It is not positive but you have to take what he says in the figurative sense, that there is the message that maybe us Black folks should get out of committing crimes. We could do better for ourselves. Some of the things Rappers sing about could be real but I would say that they also exaggerate (interviewee 5).

In some cases, listening to rap and hip-hop music has inspired some of the Haitian

youth to rap about their own lives and experiences. A 16-year-old Haitian-Canadian comments on what he tries to achieve with his own music and what he feels rap music offers to society in general:

> *I like to listen to what other artists have done and I try to get ideas from these artists for my own music. I sing Hip-Hop. Rap is more lyrical, and Hip-Hop it is more beat. Rap is more underground and Hip-Hop is more mainstream.*
>
> *My own music is like this: My lyrics are about the philosophies of life and about the philosophies of the streets. How you walk, How you act, there are days that things come up, how you cope with these things, what you are supposed to do. You think about the future. Playing music or composing music is more of an affirmation of my gang identity. For me, playing music is not a way to get out of the gang, but to make people understand what is a gang, and we are in it. I like Jay Z because he will give you a philosophy, he has no complexes. He is like that you give him the beat, and he will come up with the lyrics, on the spot. That is just pure genius. In his lyrics he tells you how to live and how to think, he's a real man.*
>
> *The music also tells us that society is bullshit. It is not worth working for someone else but you have to be independent. You have to work in order to be independent and you have to be independent. More you work, the more you do what you have to do the higher you go. The more money you have the higher you will go. More you will do things independently, the farther you will go. The police it is always them that are wrong in life. They are the biggest cheats and liars. What they say about the Black folk is to remain calm and to do good things. Don't make too much noise, do things more calmly. What they say about women they are two types of girls nice girls, and bad girls. The good girls you have to work a little harder, find out their likes, dislikes, their habits and work on it so that you can win them over (interviewee 20).*

For this youth, although composing his own rap music affirms his gang identity, he feels that he can also educate people about the benefits of gang life and what it means to be a Black person living in a racist society. He too understands that the lyrics of rap music provide a framework for his own life, a way of comparing how things are for him and how things are for black rappers in the US. His understanding of these lyrics gives him a template of not only how to behave, but also how he should perceive society

around him, hence the references to good girls and bad girls, money, the flash and the bling-bling.

Many gang members, including Haitians (N = 5), cite the music of Tupac Shakur as being of particular importance. His music is considered inspiring and reflective of real life – keeping things real. A 15-year-old Haitian immigrant explains:

> *I like to listen to Tupac. What he says is real and the way he lived his life. He says the basis of life when you are in the ghetto. He says not to be ashamed. The line I like most from Tupac is: "Remain strong in this planet full of player haters" (interviewee 7).*

Although it appears that both French and Haitian youth like listening to rap and/or hip-hop because of its controversial and deviant lyrics, it is clear that for Haitians, this music has profound meaning because it is a way to talk and think about racism and the problems related to racial identity.

The majority of Jamaican youths interviewed (N= 7) said they listen to English rap and Jamaican reggae music. Others reported listening to reggae, Rhythm and Blues (R&B) in addition to rap (N = 3). Again, echoing sentiments of Haitian and French respondents, many Jamaicans observed that they identified with the lyrics of rap music, which give them a way to articulate and frame their understanding of racism in society, given their position as minority blacks in a majority white society. Some individuals were inspired by this music to compose their own. As seen in quotes from several individuals, rap music is believed by many respondents to contain recurring themes about violence, gang life and to reflect back on the youths' own lives.

> *I like to listen to English Rap and Reggae. I like to listen to Tupac, Biggie. What I like about Tupac is what he says is true. I think that he is real and he is real to what he says. He talks the truth. Biggie talks the truth the same thing [...] (interviewee 23, a 16-year-old Jamaican Immigrant)*

Rappers are like everybody in a sense man. They are like us in a sense, they've been what we are going through, right now they are on top of the game you know. They are rapping about it. They are talking about what they have been through you know, and how hard the struggle was. Now they are on top and how they worked to get on top and what they did in order to get there. What they tell us about cops is that they are Babylon, everyone hates cops (interviewee 24)

My hero is a Rapper called Little Wayne, he's real you know what I am saying like he's got his kid and he is taking care of him, he has been hustling the streets hard you know and now he is rapping and taking care of his own you know, he is taking care of his own. He came off the ghetto, and he didn't have anything at all and now he is trying hard to make that money and that his kid is everything to him. He is hustling on the streets. He talks about his father in every CD he must of really had a lot of respect for his father. In a sense, he is someone I really look up to (interviewee 24, a 16-year-old Jamaican-Canadian).

I like to listen to rap. Okay, I will rap a few bars, it goes something like this:

After all I look at myself in the mirror but what can I see/
a face looking back at me/
but who is that?/
I try looking back/
I turn off the light/
I see him in the dark every night/
I close my light./
I see him talking to me/
I don't know if he is good or bad/
can't even remember this/
a Nigger who is bad/
a Nigger who is sad/
he is telling me things I can't even remember/
he is like the one who comes down in the thunder/
a little strong that create rain.

I like to listen to Tupac. I mostly like Tupac. In a way I listen to his music mostly. I wouldn't say he is a Rapper you know, because the more you listen to it the more it is like poetry. If you hear most of his songs you start realizing it is more like poetry. What they tell you about women is that they are saying something like oh my girl act like this and this is why she is a bitch, you understand? He is telling someone what a girl did to him okay, and he is telling you why she did that. He is not calling all the girls out there bitches, you understand. He is saying that we have brothers out there that have been played by some women that ended up being real bitches you know. Rap is what you get from it, what message it gives you, you take it from your perspective man. Rappers like talking about the cop. They are often dissing cops, you know, but there is a reason for that. They express

> *their life story about them you know. Like Ice Cube, they all express they got a story with them you know. They say fuck the police, the police did us this and the police did us that. And that is why you know – that is why they talk about the cops cause the cops ain't always fair man, they like Babylon (interviewee 44, a 17-year-old Jamaican immigrant).*

The Jamaican youths interviewed reported that most of their friends and fellow gang members also listened to reggae and rap music, again emphasizing the fact that this type of music speaks to their social situation, particularly as it relates to gang life and societal racism. In addition, the lyrical content of reggae promotes the polemics of Rastafari and its culture in general (Alleyne, 2000). "This leads to a consideration of lyrical themes, which are described as the ghetto people's suffering, repatriation to Africa, Haile Selassie as a living deity, slavery in Babylon" (Alleyne, 2000, p. 16).

For most Haitian and Jamaicans, then, rap is the preferred music choice because it acts as a cultural expression that speaks of a "distinctive form of 'lived' ethnicity" (Bennett, 1999, p. 81), describing in particular what it means to be Black. In other words, rap acts as a form of "resistance" against racism and is very much concerned with issues relating to roots, family, locality, and neighborhood. It voices the opinions of the marginalized, stigmatized black youth and also speaks about survival against injustice and inequality, issues that both Haitian and Jamaican youth experience in their everyday lives.

Among those of the 'other' ethnic category, most (N = 8) preferred listening to English rap, reggae and hip-hop, again because they believed it reflected the reality of their lives – that is, the violence and the criminal activity as well as the attitudes towards women, society, authority and the police that they perceive are appropriate for this lifestyle. An 18-year-old Polish-Canadian comments:

I like Rap. I like English rap and hip-hop. But I like reggae too to listen to, but I like Rap because I write my own and I compose beats.

Interviewer: Do you have anything in mind?

Yeah, I have one bar in my head. I can improvise or I can give you a rhythm or something. I can give improvisation it goes like this:
I've got twenty days left in Cité/
but I am back in the streets slamming 8 Ks/
any fucking way I say/
when I spray it is burbly/
now literally my handguns create magnums/
Then I rob your grandson, holding on ransom . . . .and shit like that.

What the music says about women? It is all about pimping women and how they are bitches. That is not what I believe. About society? I have one line for me which is that I am a convict of society and that is all it is. Who sings that, I do. I am a convict in this society. I can't get out of it because better laws hold me. What rap music does is makes me think about what I want for myself: I just want to buy a house, when I get rich enough... statehood. Yes sirree, you can't do shit to me now. No, because I find lots are stupid. Seriously if someone wants to smoke up that's cool. If you want to smoke coke and kill yourself, that's cool. You want to drive drunk and kill yourself that's cool. Someone's got to pay the consequences. You want to take another man's life, pay the consequences. If someone comes to kill my brother I should be allowed to come back and shoot you as much as I want. That's why. I think the medieval times, and some people called this era the dark ages. But some of those fuckin' laws during that time held up pretty good. We survived them didn't we? What makes us so much better now? That we could hold court, that is stupidity. You know OJ can get off for murder, but if I get caught cutting off someone's finger than I can get twenty years. Because I didn't have the money to pay off the lawyer, I don't think so, that is stupid. Here's another one, why can't I sell guns, but yet we are allowed to supply the fuckin' US army to go do what they want. Why do they make money? It is stupidities. I should be allowed to do what I want. That's life.
What the music tells us about cops is that to fuck them (he laughs) (interviewee 25).

Only two respondents report that they like listening to both French and English rap; however, it does not seem that the language is particularly important, rather it is the message contained in the music. This message, again, as has been shown with all other respondents, refers to how the music reflects real life. This is best described by a 15-year-old Algerian immigrant:

> *I like to listen to French and English rap because the music is real and it doesn't lie. Rappers tells us that you just can't trust women and they are right, women just want you when you have money, and when you have the money they come to you like bees to honey. Then once, you don't supply them with any money or gifts, they are screwing with your best friend because he's got the honey (that is money) and you don't because you are stuck in jail. It depends on the girl, that is (interviewee 36).*

This preference for rap music by those in the 'other' ethnic category extended to their friends; all the youths (N = 10) said that members of their gang prefer listening to English rap. An 18-year-old Cree explains again:

> *They like to listen to Rap as well. What the music tells you about society is that it is just one big game and everybody's playing in the same game and nobody notices it, the same thing comes out of it, money and respect. What it says about gangs? Well it glorifies gangs, it is just the way to get your gang out and flash your gang and talk about it and stuff like that. What it tells you about the streets is that people run the streets, it isn't perfect anymore. About the White man? Some are real, real, racist. I don't believe all White people are racist though, I am sure there are some non-racist people, look at my dad he married someone who is Cree, which is my mother, they are divorced and everything now, but they did get married. That is Rappers say what I can't list some of the things people put out, I just know what it is going to be. What Rappers say about girls is that they are sex objects pretty much that is what they are saying (interviewee 28).*

1a. French Respondents who Prefer English Music

Two French youth said they thought English rap is superior to French rap. A 19-year-old explains that he prefers to listen to English rap because rappers make strong statements that reflect the reality of society:

> *I like to listen to English rap. I like the Rapper's style, I like English Rappers because they always talk about the same things and they tell you to get out of the gang, but they themselves find it difficult. Why I like Rap music is because it has such an impact. I like Tupac* [murdered famous rapper who was rumored to have been a member of the Bloods and then the Crips] *because his story was that he was with the East Side okay. He was with Bloods and he was doing crime for them. He was writing songs for them. He was singing. Then he later ended up in prison because of Biggie* [another rapper/gang-banger]. *Then Biggie goes against Tupac and in his songs he is dissing Tupac. Tupac still wrote music while he was in prison. Then he got out of jail and he changed crew. He went with the Crips.*

Then he didn't stop here he still continued to compose really good music. It was while he was hanging out with the Crips he started writing really good music, he started becoming famous. It was here where he started doing movies, after that he was writing music for everyone like Biggie, Puff Daddy, everyone, like Juvenile. He wrote music for all the guys that couldn't stand him. Then it seemed that he slept with Biggie's girl, Then things started going bad for Tupac. So, then Biggie got Tupac shot and Tupac knew that it was Biggie who got him shot, so he returned the favor by getting someone to shoot Biggie. Tupac and Biggie both died. All of these things have happened because of these two pigs. If it wasn't for these guys there would be no Bloods and Crips.

I like Rap and it tells us that society is contaminated. That people in the government are liars. They are always implicated with the Mafia. They steal our money and we don't even know exactly what we are paying for. For sure they want to legalize pot or drugs, because it will allow them to make more money and it will give them more money in their pockets. They say that is how society is. But the people that sing rap-Rappers tell us their story and when I listen to their stories I see myself like them or living the experiences they lived. For example Tupac says in one of his songs "You live by the gun and so you die by the gun." I have met so many people that have lived their lives using guns. I used to walk around with a gun all the time, I used to live my life that way too. This is one example out of many different phrases. There is another phrase that says who will be the one that will be capable to cut down my last breath, who will be the one who will be capable of placing the final bullet in my chest." I have done these things you understand.
Tupac always dissed women. Women were always bitches for him. I don't think he was frustrated over women because he could easily have them all. I don't agree with what he said about women though.

Tupac talked about racism as well, he was Black and he lived in New York and L.A.. Here I am not that sure that police officers are all that bad. But in New York the police officers are very racist because there are too many Blacks and sometimes Blacks do a lot of crimes. All the Blacks may look the same, but they are not the same and this may cause racism.

Rappers talk about street life, how they the gangsters want to change but love the gang life too much for them to take that step towards change and quitting gang life altogether (interviewee 16).

These youths prefer listening to English rap music because they relate to what the rappers discuss, which is life in the gang and how quitting the gang is not always an option. Whether youths listen to English or French rap or hip-hop music, they enjoy listening to

it because they are able to relate to the lyrics on many levels (e.g., gang lifestyle, violence, police harassment).

1b. French Respondents who Prefer French music

Two French respondents said they preferred to listen solely to French rap and French hip-hop music. A 20-year-old observes:

> *I like to listen to French Hip Hop music. I know that the English hip hop music is more popular, but the English hip hop music doesn't really talk about the violence that we live and they really don't talk about life the way the French hip hop artists do. I really like the Hip Hop tunes of the artists from France because they talk about racism they will say things like: just because I am not the same color like you and we don't come from the same origins it doesn't mean that you won't give up your seat on the bus to give it to my grandmother who is standing and she is a different color from you. Things like this is what the French Hip Hop artists say and these are real things that happen in everyday life (interviewee 6).*

This particular youth explains that he prefers to listen to French hip-hop music because these musical artists sing about things that are important such as racism, while English hip-hop singers are more likely to sing about violence.

1c. Haitians who Listen to Jamaican Music

While we would not be surprised to learn that many youths listen to English rap, regardless of their maternal language or ethnicity, it may surprise us to learn that some French-speaking Haitian youths (N = 5) in this study prefer to listen to Jamaican reggae music. A 15-year-old Haitian immigrant explains:

> *I like to listen to reggae, especially Jamaican reggae. Bob Marley, his music is a little political I guess because it talks about Blacks in general and how we should stand up to authority and let no one put us down. I like what he sings about because it is real and my mother always talks about how Haitians were slaves to the White man and even though we live in a more liberal country like Canada, she tells me that the White people will never accept us Haitians as equals and they will always see us as slaves.*
>
> *I adore Bob Marley because his music is very relaxed. Bob Marley is not about street corner, drugs, and all the rest. His music is about life, pain, and change*

(interviewee 7).

However, like rap music, reggae can be seen (or heard) to refer to the contemporary life of these youth gang members. Two 17-year-olds (interviewee 17 and interviewee 33) say that they like listening to Jamaican reggae because it talks about women, making money, corruption and life on the streets:

> *I like to listen to reggae, English reggae. It tells us about women, parties, and money. It talks about life and death on the streets. It talks about the police and how they treat people badly and how the government is corrupt (17).*

> *Reggae music tells us about women as being wild things and having a wild time with them. They tell us about crimes. In these songs they tell us that someone gets shot and who is usually blamed is the nigger. They diss police officers. I like English reggae, specifically Jamaican reggae (33).*

2) Latinos

The Latino group of youths was different from all others in that these youths actively sought out Spanish music and stayed away from English and French music. They did not refer to the lyrics of the music they listened to as reflecting their own lives, but rather as reflecting their perceptions of Latino values, especially with respect to men and women and family.

All the Latino youth (N=10) reported that they listen to Spanish music in various genres: hip-hop, reggae, and Spanish rap. For Latino youths, music, like food and language, was a way to retain their Spanish-ness in a non-Spanish culture. In addition, the music addressed issues particularly relevant to the Latino community. These include relationships between men and women, what it means to be a man, the family, and authority, which are quite different and in some ways give the appearance of being more benign than the violent gangsta-rap listened to by the other non-Spanish respondents.

These lyrics reflect the attitudes about family and women common to Latinos, and are another way (in addition to language and food) that Latinos can retain their roots. A 17-year-old El Salvadorian immigrant explains in detail how these issues are addressed and what it means to him that they are addressed in music:

> ***The reggae music what it tells us about women*** *is if you want a woman you go after her and try to get her. If you want this woman you have to do everything to have her and even if she says no to your advances, you don't quit, you keep at her until she says yes to you. This music doesn't only speak to guys it also speaks to women as well. Like for example in one of the lyrics of a song it says that women have to learn to dance very well and better than other women, that way they will be the queen of the party and all the men will want them. In the lyrics it also says that women should try to humiliate the other women so that they come up on top.*
>
> ***The music also tells us that the men*** *can change the women whenever they want. The most beautiful women are always around you, even if you told them to get lost they still come back, even after you rejected them so many times. All the women want you when you look good and act cool. Or if the woman you cared for once before leaves you then she is not worth crying over her, there is other women out there better than her.*
>
> ***They also talk about police officers*** *like I said in all the albums I have, all of the artists sing about how cops are pigs and how much they hate them. They say that they were invented to make the law in the world but that is all changed because they are corrupt and now other police officers are looking for him. They forgot about their true vocation and because they have so much power they forgot how to be a good and honest cop.*
>
> ***What the music tells us about the family is:*** *that they love their families and that they love their parents. And that each Latino loves his mother very, very much. The mother is held in high esteem because she was the one to take care of the children, the father as well but the mother is seen as more vulnerable and strong at the same time. She always knows what decisions to take and she knows how to be a survivor. She is vulnerable on the level of her sentiments, and on the level of fear that she is afraid for her son that each time he steps out of his house she is afraid of what can happen to him for example. These lyrics hit pretty close to home because my mother each time I was leaving the house to go out she would tell me to be careful, to be careful of the people I hung out with and things like that. There were times when there were moments when life presented her with little options and she was forced to be strong. She is a good example for the family. Me, my brother, and my sister we all look up to her and we love her very much because life has thrown her some curves, look at me I am stuck here, my father was killed... she hasn't had it that easy with us (interviewee 47).*

Some youths acknowledge the difference between rap and Spanish music, especially in terms of the violence of lyrics. One respondent made clear that he was aware of the violence of English and French rap, and that he found this disturbing, although some statements about society and the police made in these lyrics may be true. This youth pointed out that Spanish music was more gentle, more about personal relationships and less about violence, and definitely less about violent attitudes towards women.

> *I like to listen to Spanish Rap. The Black Rap talks about people being prejudice or either I got money or I killed this guy or you know and the whole bitches and hoes, that's it. Spanish Rap is more hearty you know, how he met a girl, it is about love, relationships, Spanish and Spanish life. It is different and it doesn't talk about hoes and bitches, they have a couple of songs like this but not too many. In the Black rap they talk a lot of about discrimination, fuck the police. I mean in fifty percent of the cases they are right and twenty they are wrong (interviewee 34, a 17-year-old immigrant from the Dominican Republic).*

Latino youths interviewed even expressed an appreciation of more traditional Latin music, views not shared by non-Latin youths. A 17-year-old Canadian born Chilean described his feelings about this traditional music, again pointing out the reduced violence and different attitudes to women in the lyrics of Latin music.

> *I like Salsa, Meringue [...]. The artists I like to listen to for Salsa music that is, Sylvia Cruz, mostly central Americans[...]. What Chilean music tells us about society is that we have a lot of poets and writers that are very famous, like Pablo Neruda, he explains a lot about life in general, and how the political situation is everywhere and how the government was in 1973. There are a lot of people that are very artistic actually. They express their protests through song. It deals with emotions of a person like Massive Attack. Do you know that group? Portishead. It deals more with emotions of how sometimes you feel about life in general about your girlfriend or your fights in life, how you can get back up and it deals with everyday experiences that happen. What Chilean music tells us about women is that you have to respect them. I was always taught to respect women. It is kind of hard to see like when women are treated wrong. Especially when I see these guys in here when they are here for pimping women it bothers me a lot. They go around and they are playing basketball and they are talking about ah yeah I pimped this girl and then I started pimping this other girl. It makes me think of my*

sister or something like that. It bothers me and I tell them to shut up or to get away (interviewee 35).

3) Hanging Out and Music

When it comes to hanging out, again Latino youths seek out Spanish clubs and bars when going out alone or with fellow gang members. In general, Latino respondents liked these venues because the ambience was 'good' and there were beautiful Latino girls to look at. Going to these clubs gave the youths the opportunity to meet and dance with Spanish women.

I like to go to Spanish clubs. Me and members of my gang like to go to Spanish clubs. We used to go to places like 6/49 that is a salsa bar, another Latin club like Salsatec. Every couple of weeks we went to clubs like Conga it is on St. Laurent and Rachel and Manhattan is next to the metro St. Laurent and St. Catherine (interviewee 3, a 17-year-old El Salvadorian immigrant).

In general, across ethnic groups, youths who hung out together preferred (or at least listened to) similar types of music. Music tastes and preferences remain the same with reference to members of their gang, what changes is the language of the music. Among the French youths, eight of the 10 respondents said that members of their gang preferred to listen to English rap and/or hip-hop music and did not particularly enjoy listening to such music in French.

All my friends basically like to listen to the same type of music that I listen to, but they really like to listen to Tupac. Most of them just adore Tupac, "live by the gun and die by the gun." I guess why most people, particularly guys that like to listen to Tupac's music. What they like the best about him is that he doesn't give a shit about nobody. It is all about me, myself, and I (interviewee 18, 19-year-old self-identified Quebecois).

Gang members point out that members of the gang prefer listening to English rap or hip-hop music because that music plays up to their image of what they feel society is really like. In the minds of these youths, listening to such music justifies their feelings of

societal injustice towards them. That a white rapper like Eminem, aka Marshall Mathers, and ex-gang member like Tupac sing about such issues of injustice reinforces the perception that the youths belonging to a gang allows them to fight against the injustices of the world, regardless of whether such injustice is real or imaginary.

For these youths, whether rap music or hip-hop music was sung in French or in English made no difference to them. The message was always the same: what does it mean to be in a gang, the problems of racism and injustice, and the need to combat such issues via violence.

When it came to going out at night with gang members, five of the 10 French youths interviewed said they went to bars and strip clubs while the other four said they went to raves. These venues were hardly places limited to one ethnicity. Bars and strip clubs were not places where music was of primary importance. A 20-year-old explains:

> *I used to go to strip joints with my friends, that is all I liked to do. Plus some of my friends owned these clubs and it is for certain that we would always get free drinks and in some cases free sex. Of course, the owners of these bars would pay for the sex and it would be on them so to speak. We mostly went to bars together as well. I went to Italian pool halls and Quebecois pool bars as well. We hung out at these places to chill, talk, and have a beer together (interviewee 15).*

Raves, however, are definitely about the music and the atmosphere, although again, ethnicity did not appear to factor into the music played at raves. An 18-year-old reports:

> *We would go to clubs that played house music and techno, in some sections of the rave clubs they even played hip-hop and R&B type of music. Just because it is called a rave it doesn't mean that they only play techno. There are a lot of rave clubs that will play techno, R&B and hip-hop. It could be a really big club and then you have all of these different sections (interviewee 2).*

One French respondent a 16-year-old reported that he does not go to bars or clubs and nor do members of his gang; they prefer hanging out in parks. Raves appeal to the

French youth because they are symbolically perceived as an escape from the social order, encouraging drug use and non-stop dancing to hypnotic, rhythmic music, with brilliant, flashing, and fluorescent lights, all of which encourage a relentless desire for pleasure (Hutson, 1999). "Ravers often make individualistic spectacles of themselves through flashy dancing, wild clothing, and fluorescent accessories" (Hutson, 1999, p. 56). Raves are perceived as both shocking and unnerving for adult society, thus making them even more attractive to the youth who frequent them.

Unlike other respondents, most Haitians (N=8) preferred going to house parties with gang members than to bars and clubs. A 15-year-old remarked that he rarely went to clubs:

> *It was rare, I used to go more to house parties and because of my age it was easier to go to someone's house than to get into clubs, it is just less of a hassle. At house parties they usually played reggae, rap, and hip-hop depending on everyone's mood music so it made it interesting (interviewee 10).*

Only a small minority of Haitians (N=2) said that they occasionally went to clubs with their fellow gang members.

> *Me and the guys go to clubs from time to time, personally I don't like to go to clubs that much I don't go too much. I have already been to the club Platinum. I like it and a lot of the members of the gang like going there. They play hip hop and Reggae music. We also go to the Red Light club where they play reggae and hip hop music (interviewee 1 a 16-year-old Haitian immigrant).*

The expense and hassle of going out at night is the driving reason behind most Haitian youths (N = 8) preferring house parties to clubs or bars. After all, many said, it is more difficult for under-age gang members – even with fake id – to get into clubs or bars, and they may end up being hassled by bouncers. Conversely, the desire to show off their financial assets is behind a minority of Haitians interviewed (N = 2) going to clubs: this

provides an opportunity to show off gang colours or sell drugs. As a 17-year-old Haitian-Canadian observed,

> *Sometimes me and my friends from the gang like to go to clubs like Platinum it is somewhere downtown. For sure when they go to the clubs they like to go showing their colors and there is no messing around and they will even try to sell their crack and ask people how much do they want of it (interviewee 5).*

Jamaican youths were different from Haitian youths and more like French in some ways in that they all (N = 10) hung out – whether by themselves or with members of their gang – at billiard bars and Jamaican clubs, which play hip-hop, and reggae. Jamaican clubs provided an opportunity to hang out with other Jamaicans and generally take it easy or 'chill'. This is best described by the following individuals: a 16-year-old Jamaican born individual (interviewee 23) and a 16-year-old Canadian born Jamaican (interviewee 24):

> *I have gone to a Jamaican bar. Where there is only Jamaican people. It is a dance bar where you just chill, and drink and smoke (interviewee 23)*

> *The bar that we would mostly go to in Lasalle is Bar Billiard Sportive. We would just chill and play pool and relax and everything and smoke cigarettes.*

> *Clubs downtown would be Rainbows, we would go where the hot party was. They would play reggae, hip hop, r and b. More reggae and more hip-hop kind of thing (interviewee 24, a 16-year-old Canadian-Jamaican).*

A social club such as that mentioned by a 16-year-old Canadian Jamaican (interviewee 24) "exists primarily for drinking and socializing. It serves as an important vehicle for male bonding and maintaining peer relationships" (Henry, 1994, p. 183). These clubs "are usually island-specific and are further evidence that island of origin is still an important form of segmentation in the Caribbean community" (Henry, 1994, p. 185). The drinks and food they serve and music they play are important elements to expatriate

Caribbeans (Henry, 1994).

The majority of individuals (N=8) in the 'other' ethnic category, like the French subjects, also frequent strip bars and after hours clubs (which are not connected with a specific ethnicity), although a minority (two) did go to what they considered venues that reflected their own ethnicity. An 18-year-old Polish Canadian reveals that:

> *I would go to Red Light, Sauna, Redemption. I would walk in VIP all the way. Because these clubs are controlled these are their clubs, the people I am affiliated with. Strip clubs too belong to them as well, certain one's too. Like Candies, Little Bobbo. Some of them they don't have rules, you can do what you want. You can go on there and dance on stage with the girls if you want to. You have the money, it is fun. You get pissed drunk. Red Light is a French club, they play techno and rap, techno is rave. I would go there and get there at ten at night and leave at twelve the next day. It is after-hours. I got into the Rave scene, like Speed and Ecstasy. They wanted guns too, whoever sells drugs wants guns one day or another(interviewee 25)*

As mentioned, just two respondents from the "other ethnic group" said they occasionally went to ethnic bars and clubs: a 17-year-old Portuguese-Canadian (interviewee 38) and a 17-year-old Irish-Canadian (interviewee 42). However, the importance of this connection between the bars and their own ethnicity was not elaborated on by the subjects.

> *I have gone to Portuguese bars. I used to go when I was working right in front of the bar. I worked as a waiter in a Portuguese restaurant for a while. I would go after work to this Portuguese bar, I would go there to unwind and to relax (interviewee 38).*

> *I went to Irish pubs mostly. I like to go to a pub near my house (interviewee 42).*

Clearly, given the extensive discussion in this chapter, music plays an important role in the lives of these young men. However, it was clear that (except for Latino youths) the choice of rap and hip hop music had more to do with the youths' view of themselves as outlaws and, especially on the part of black youths, a confirmation of their view of

society as racist and anti-black (as demonstrated through the lyrics). Many subjects identified the fact that the music referred to gangsters, gang lifestyles, anti-police sentiments, anti-authoritarianism and violence as drawing their interest to this music.

Lyrics can have a powerful effect on a group's moods, emotions, influencing their feelings of alienation or belonging (Bloom, 2001). As a result, individuals' social identities are constructed by what they hear – their attitudes, principles, and way of thinking, are formed by the music they listen to (Bloom, 2001). The group's ethnic awareness and consciousness may be formed by the type of music they listen to, which may be perceived as potentially accrediting (i.e., lyrics encouraging heritage pride) or jeopardous (i.e., lyrics that glamorize crime and violence). This influence of music can be seen among Latinos (in Spanish lyrics reflecting their culture) and the non-Latino youths (lyrics reflecting gang life and anti-society sentiment, as discussed above).

Rap and hip hop music are significant for the Haitian and Jamaican subjects as they seem to celebrate "the authenticity of Black life" (Brake, 1985, p. 123) and provide a venue for social and political speech – the opportunity to voice their opinions about issues of poverty, risk and danger associated with being in a gang and life in the ghetto. This music allows Black youth to voice feelings and ideas that would otherwise not be widely heard (August et., al., 2001). In addition, "black music [...] which means something to the ordinary Black person" (Brake, 1985, p. 123) provides Haitian and Jamaican youth with a collective identity through commonly experienced problems resulting from a long history and tradition of slavery, migration, economic struggle and race oppression (Brake, 1985) and contemporary problems of racism, oppression, gang

life and police brutality (Yousman, 2003). Therefore, rap and hip hop have a deeper and more significant cultural meaning for these youth.

Rap and hip hop music also appeal to the French and the "other" ethnic youth because the lyrics discuss a "criminal underworld ...against which the norms of ... society are defined, and, by extension, through which they may be defied" (Samuels, 2001, p. 272). These youth relate to this music because it articulates the dangers and risks involved with being gang members and also celebrate aggressive masculinity. In addition, the lyrics are used to "provoke and agitate" (Lusane, 1995, p. 386) mainstream society. Rap and hip hop for these youths appeal to their rebellious and deviant natures and have fewer cultural, ethnic implications. For these youth, then, rap and "hip hop [are] the rebellious voice of the youth" (August et., al., 2001, p. 282) that praise deviant and criminal behavior.

Again among the interview subjects, the Latino youths are different. These youths preferred listening to Latino music because it allowed them to maintain their Spanish-ness. As well, the lyrics of the music often reflect the social and political conditions experienced by the Latino people and powerfully describe the Latino way of life and survival and injustice (Fernandes, 2003; Padilla, 1989). The music reflects Latino identification and cultural unity, maintaining Latinos' cultural heritage. Latino collectiveness is elicited from their shared music; its rhythms, melodies and lyrics "unite the people's cultures" (Padilla, 1989, p. 34).

Across all ethnic groups, music is symbolically significant because various feelings, emotions, and ideas are communicated, uniting group members through their

common music preferences. For some subjects the music has a deeper cultural significance while for others it has important social connotations.

Sports

Sports are popular and hold symbolic significance in contemporary societies (Hartmann, 2003). Youths get involved in sports to be part of a team; sports also provide opportunities to spend time with friends, reinforcing the desire for social connection, cultural affiliation and belonging (Allen, 2003). Sports also provide a way for individuals to retain ties to their ethnicity and encourage nationalist allegiance (Hughson, 1997). We can think of the strong association between ice hockey and Canada and Russia; cricket and the Commonwealth countries (except for Canada),; football (aka, soccer) and European, African and South and Central American countries; and baseball and basketball and the United States to name just a few. Sports participation has often been linked with ethnic collective identity. For example, "basketball has become a means of expression and freedom in African-American communities, particularly those in the inner-city" (Ogden & Hilt, 2003, p. 214) Basketball is perceived as a space for "social interaction and community building among African Americans… as well as an important symbol of racial accomplishment and a source of pride and collective identification" (Hartmann, 2000, p. 233). The basketball court is where boasting, joking, and story telling occur among Black players. This talk on the court demonstrates competence in black language styles that value and support assertive and expressive dialogue that is marked by emotion, humor, and play, as means of self expression (Hartmann, 2000; Mahiri, 1994). Basketball, then, is also a way to express cultural and collective identity and reinforce a social connections among Black players. It provides these minority males

with social standing and recognition from others.

In fact, for most minority males regardless of whether they are Black or any other ethnicity or race, sports participation may be viewed as a vehicle for social mobility and status within a society that usually discriminates against them and provides them with few chances for economic advancement (Ogden and Hilt, 2003). Previous research appears to suggest that minority males who aspire to become athletes are provided with the opportunity to get out of the ghetto, gain respect from others, and become wealthy; that is, sports offer cultural capital for otherwise marginalized and excluded racial and ethnic minorities (Hartmann, 2003).. Furthermore, sports expresses individuals' "rebellion against social and economic oppression" (Ogden and Hilt, 2003, p. 220).

Discovering what sports these youths play may give an added hint of their perhaps unrecognized retention of their ethnic roots. Among the respondents, Haitians and Jamaicans cited their love of basketball, French-Canadians their love of ice hockey and Latinos their love of soccer. Although study subjects did not connect their ethnicity with the particular sport they loved (except for Latinos and one French-Canadian), they did make a connection between their gang lifestyle and sports (i.e., playing sports in public places made them noticeable as a group to police officers).

Half of the French respondents reported they played ice hockey (not surprising, given the fact that this is a very Canadian game), but many also played other sports, including football and golf. Sports, they felt, kept them occupied, and were enjoyable in and of themselves.

> *Yes, I do sports. I like football, baseball, I like to skate. I love hockey, I am not that picky, I can even play golf. I like doing different kinds of sports because they are fun and it allows my mind to remain busy (interviewee 4, a 17-year-old French-Canadian).*

In fact, four French youths commented that ice hockey is their favorite sport and the only sport they participate in:

> *I like playing hockey because it is a Canadian sport and from the time I could walk I learned to skate and I would go to the park near my house and there was this ice rink and me and all my buddies would go there and play hockey, it was a blast and I really love the sport (interviewee 13, a 17-year-old self-identified Quebecois).*

> *Yes, we play sports. We played hockey all of the time, and ice hockey. I know that hockey is a very Quebecois sport so I guess that is a benefit as well. It is part of our culture (13).*

Only one respondent (a 20-year-old French-Canadian) said that he does not really participate in any particular sport except for running. He jokingly revealed that his sport is running from the authorities

> *I like to run. When you don't have a choice you run. No, not really. All we did was run all the time run from our enemies and run from the cops. I guess you can consider that a sport (interviewee 6).*

However, for some French-Canadian youths, sports provide another opportunity for making money illegally through betting and/or dealing drugs. Another 19-year-old explains that even though he likes playing hockey, his gang members made money from other sports such as basketball:

> *We used to play football sometimes on Thursdays and Fridays at noon with the guys from another school, Sophie Bordeau. They would come and we would have contests and bets and we would invite the clients to come see us play and we would be selling drugs to them as well. We would play for an hour and it was all in good fun (interviewee 18, a 19-year-old self-identified Quebecois).*

The majority of Haitians (N=7) said they were more likely to play basketball and football. Ice hockey evidently does not rate high in the Haitian community. Haitian youths prefer these two sports because these are the sports they grew up playing. In

addition, playing sports provides an arena for youths to vent their frustrations and solve problems they may have with gang members. However, one drawback the Haitians find is that playing basketball puts them in a visible place in the city – visible to the police, who, they claim, harass them.

> *Yeah, I like doing sports. I like playing basketball. Basketball is my passion and it is my sport. I am good at playing basketball and all my family, my brothers play basketball. I played in a team at school (interviewee 1, a 16-year-old Haitian immigrant).*

> *I like to play football because my brother plays it, the gang members are into it as well and it is fun shooting some hoops. It is a way to let out your frustrations and if you have some beef with one of the gang members than the way to solve it is on the courts, it helps us to chill. The problem is every time we play we get harassed by the cops they will come see if we are "clean". They say things like you fuckin' smelly Niggers and go back to your country and shit like that just to provoke us, so they can get us mad enough so it gives them a reason to arrest us or give us tickets (interviewee 7, a 15-year-old Haitian immigrant).*

Nevertheless, for most Haitians, sports are an enjoyable experience that provide an opportunity to keep in shape, work out frustrations and aggressions, and impress girls. And although football and basketball are most popular, being the sports most grew up with, soccer is the choice of some individuals too.

> *We like to play basketball because it is fun. There is more competition and a lot of Haitians like playing basketball and it distinguishes us from the rest of the people (interviewee 9, a 15-year-old Haitian immigrant).*

> *Me and the guys like participating in such sports as football because it allows us to physically work out our frustrations and aggressions (interviewee 30, a 17-year-old Haitian immigrant).*

> *I play basketball and I play football, I played baseball and hockey when I was younger too and soccer that is my sport. I like soccer the best cause my whole family likes soccer (interviewee 5, a 17-year-old Haitian Canadian).*

Jamaican youths are also keen on basketball, and seven of the 10 study subjects consider this their favorite sport, again, because it is the sport of their childhood, it is a

way to relax and it gives them an opportunity to hang out with their friends from the gang. Surprisingly, three respondents reported that they and their fellow gang members do not play any sports.

> *My favorite sport is basketball and that is my favorite sport because I like chilling on the court you know and things like that (interviewee 17, a 17-year-old Jamaican immigrant).*

> *Yeah, they like playing basketball. Because they've been doing it since they were young (interviewee 23, a 16-year-old Jamaican immigrant).*

Only one youth from this sample said that he had played other sports such as football and hockey, but emphasized that, like his peers, his favorite game is basketball:

> *Yeah. I play basketball, football. I play hockey. My best type of sport is basketball. I like basketball the best because I have been playing basketball since I was very young. I have always played basketball (interviewee 23, a 16-year-old Jamaican immigrant).*

As one has come to expect, the preference of the Latinos reflects the preferences of their homelands and traditions. All of the Latino youth like playing soccer. Not only do the individuals themselves play soccer, their friends in the gang do too.

> *Yes, I participate in soccer. I like soccer because it is considered our national sport. Like for example, for the Quebecois people it is hockey and for us it is soccer (interviewee 3, a 17-year-old El Salvadorian immigrant).*

> *Members of my gang love soccer, so when we are not doing our gang business we play soccer, everyone just loves this sport (interviewee 8, a 17-year-old El Salvadorian immigrant)*

> *I like soccer because it is a very European sport as well as an Ecuadorian Sport. People in Ecuador go crazy for soccer (interviewee 22, a 20-year-old Ecuadorian immigrant).*

> *Members of my gang they like soccer. It is a very European sport and Latino people love soccer it is in our blood (interviewee 49, a 20-year-old Ecuadorian immigrant)*

Latinos love soccer so much because they remember that when they were boys

they would go with their fathers, uncles, or cousins to the local sports bar and watch soccer on television. And of course, as mentioned, soccer is hugely popular in South and Central America; thus, they say, it is in their blood to play soccer – not to mention, they add, that it keeps them in good shape.

Soccer is also important to one of the respondents of the 'other' ethnic category, this being the 17-year-old Portuguese-Canadian (interviewee 38), who plays soccer with his fellow gang members.

Yes, I do sports. I play soccer sometimes with members of my gang (38).

However, in general, the sports preferences of this group of individuals is fairly diverse. Sports are attractive to these youths because again, they are enjoyable and also a way to stay in shape. Most (N = 8) said they enjoyed different sports – the whole gamut, soccer, football, basketball and hockey, as we see from the comments of a 17-year-old Irish-Canadian:

I used to play hockey. I love hockey the best because it is fun and sometimes me and my buddies will rent an arena and play hockey (interviewee 43).

But most of this group reported that as a rule, members of their gang are not into sports.

The most interesting comments, however, come from the 18-year-old Cree who seems to have a large appetite for games. He refers to lacrosse which is a native Canadian sport:

I play soccer, football, basketball, rugby. I like lacrosse the best. It is kind of like a little net thing on a stick. Members of my gang they aren't really into sports, they will watch football or soccer game when its on television when a really big game is going on. But apart from that it is not really their thing you know (interviewee 28).

One often sees cultural differences in preferences for different sports. Among these study subjects, I also saw a differentiation of sport preference according to ethnicity. Haitians said that they were more likely to play basketball and American football, Jamaicans also cited their love of basketball, while French Canadians noted their love of ice hockey and Latinos their love of soccer. The majority of the other ethnic category reported that they enjoyed a variety of sports – soccer, football, basketball, and hockey. For black gang members, basketball in particular may be a source of hope and aspiration for overcoming social inequalities. Basketball, baseball and football stars are often black men who have succeeded financially and socially; these sports offer disenfranchised youth a way of getting ahead economically and socially (Bergin, 2002; Messner, 1989) – however, none of the youths interviewed noted this.

In a broader social sense, "sports socialize boys to be men [...] boys learn cultural values and behaviors, such as competition, toughness, and winning at all costs, that are culturally valued aspects of masculinity" (Messner, 1989, p. 74). One can also argue that these same kinds of values are being socialized to gang subculture, thus explaining how sport as a recreational outlet serves to further encourage these particular social ideals. And when we think of sports that are directly linked with cultural heritage, we can see that some sports are national past-times that evoke the nation and the national ideal – for example, baseball and the United States, Canada and ice hockey (Schrank, 2001). Sports are therefore a ritualistic enactment of a succession of traditions that reproduce national ideals and desires. This is achieved by the act of encouraging belonging and solidarity among spectators and team players during the game and in the celebration that is encouraged after the game (Bergin, 2002). Overt demonstration (i.e., flags, sweaters with

national emblems) and preference for a particular team representing a group's culture of origin are most evident during the Olympics or World Cup Soccer games.

Sports clearly encourage cultural pride. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Latinos preference for soccer reflects the fondness of their native soils and customs. For the Latino, involvement in the sport of soccer provides a positive setting for closer alliances or interaction with other Latinos (Bergin, 2002). This can also be true for the French youth who expressed cultural pride over his love of hockey, a game that bonds millions of Canadians and serves as a primal source of identity reinforcement for Canadians (Earle, 1995); similarly, the Cree adolescent expressed a passion for lacrosse (a sport very popular among Native Americans) because it made him feel closer to the Cree people (Cohen, 2002).

Although the majority of French participated in hockey and the Haitian and Jamaican enjoyed such sports as basketball and football, youth in the other ethnic category participated in various sports such as soccer, hockey, football, etc. For these youths, sports were not considered to have a specific cultural significance. Most of these adolescents grew up playing their preferred sports and merely incorporated them into their deviant lifestyles. For instance, in some cases youths used sports to make money illegally, thus linking sports with gang activities, and little relevance was given to its cultural connotations.

Politics

Some political movements have similarities to gangs; for example, the Black Panther Movement and the Almighty Latin Kings are both ethnic/racial groups that express ethnic identity and attempt to improve the lot of 'their' constituency. Gangs, such

as those studied here, may be are often coalesced along ethnic/racial lines, and often are considered to arise out of similar social issues – poverty, racism, a sense of not belonging to mainstream society. The Black Panther Movement and the Almighty Latin Kings are two social movements that eventually became 'gangs', losing their social activist mandate. Among the youths interviewed, just one Jamaican-Canadian youth was aware of the Black Panther Movement. However, the two groups do provide an insight into the attraction gangs might have for disenfranchised groups, which would include the youths interviewed here, and in terms of their emphasis on dress and cultural symbols do offer a more sophisticated parallel to the youth gangs which are the focus of this study.

The Black Panther Party came to exist in the U.S. in the 1960s as a response to the failure of the Civil Rights Movement to achieve full equality for Black Americans (Jeffries, 2002); it protested against the adverse social and economic circumstances (i.e., racism and poverty) experienced by many Black Americans (Jeffries, 2002; Joseph, 2001; Williams, 2001). The group – and here we see a possible influence on gang culture and social violence – took its fight to the poor neighbourhoods and ghettos, educating and training residents in self-defence in order to respond to police and other state brutality themselves (Jeffries, 2002; Joseph, 2001; Williams, 2001; Keeling, 1999). Members' wearing military dress and carrying weapons were features that could easily identify them as gang members – features reflected in a less political way by the youth gang members interviewed for this study.

Although the Black Panthers are referred to as a social movement fighting for a just cause they lost credibility by encouraging violence through the use of arms and self-defense tactics, especially when they felt threatened. Eventually the movement came to

be seen as a criminal and violent gang. Their behaviour can be loosely connected to black gang members as an emblem of blackness in this era but also a touchstone for society of who and what black males were.

The Almighty Latin Kings originally emerged in the 1940s in Chicago and continued well into the 21st century. The Kings began as a community organization that helped Puerto Rican immigrants – and eventually immigrants from other Latin American countries – adapt to the US (Brotherton & Barrios, 2004).

Some Almighty Latin King members did fall into criminal activities; nevertheless, the group did make an effort to effect social change (Brotherton & Barrios, 2004; Barrios, 2003). Through work in the barrio, the group attempted to educate Latinos about ways to develop pride and avoid gang membership (Brotherton & Barrios, 2004; Barrios, 2003).

The Latin Kings consider themselves to be a community-based organization – not a gang. Nevertheless, this organization, despite its good intentions, was still perceived as a gang; most members had a criminal record and had been arrested at least once, and drug sales were one of the many common offences for which members were arrested (Brotherton & Barrios 2004). Latinos in jail were attracted to the organization "because it was different from typical gangs in their neighbourhood" (Brotherton & Barrios 2004, p. 24-25). And in many ways, the Latin Kings resembled other gangs by expressing their allegiance to the organization through subcultural style and symbolism – e.g., a specific hand gesture, the five-pointed crown, which referred to the group's manifesto (respect, honesty, unity, knowledge, and love) (Brotherton & Barrios 2004, pp68-69). Their dress was distinctive too: they often wore black and gold bandannas and carried ceremonial black, gold, and red beads that symbolically represented their group membership. Other

symbols included the wearing of "yellow and gold shirts sometimes with a black ribbing, yellow leather boots, sometimes with black laces" (Brotherton & Barrios, 2004, p. 256).

The only similarity between the gangs studied here and these two social movements is the similarity in ethnic composition of each group, the wearing of distinctive clothing and their perception as deviant (whether advocating change or committing crimes) by society. Although it is clear that deviant groups can have overt political and social goals, and although the youths interviewed in this study are aware of their socially and politically disadvantaged state, the youths do not associate their gangs and gang membership with political ends.

In this study, most respondents, as a rule, appeared to have little knowledge or interest of politics, probably reflecting their young age (teenagers for the most part) and marginal economic status. However, some did show interest, and this interest can be categorised in three ways: French-Canadians who are aware of Quebec nationalism and national politics to some degree; the majority of Latinos, who are very conscious of politics in their countries of origin; and finally, a lone Jamaican-Canadian who shows some awareness of the Black Power movement.

1) No Interest in Politics

The majority of French youth (N=6) said they have no personal knowledge or interest in Canadian politics. A 17-year-old explains, in a sentiment echoed by many of his peers:

> *I don't really care about politics. All I care about is taking care of myself. Politics is not an interest for me (interviewee 13).*

This sentiment is echoed by all the Haitian youths who were interviewed. These subjects reported that they and their gang members are not interested in politics, nor are

they politically active. Those who possessed some knowledge of politics (Canadian or Haitian) were quite cynical. Half of the Haitian subjects were quite adamant that they were not interested in politics at all, as one sees by comments from a 16-year-old Haitian immigrant (interviewee 1) and an 18-year-old Canadian born Haitian (interviewee 12):

> *No, I am not interested in reading about politics in Haiti. All I know that there is still the same president (1).*

> *I don't really follow politics in Haiti. All I know about politics in Haiti is that it is going better (12).*

In general, there was a tone of cynicism, negativity and disrespect in comments about politicians among those five Haitian interviewees who said they had some knowledge of (but no interest in) politics

> *Because politicians are actors they pretend they want to do all kinds of nice things for you and they end up doing shit. This is what everyone tells me so I guess they are right. This is why I am not really into politics (interviewee 7, a 15-year-old Haitian immigrant).*

> *I understand a little about the politics that are happening in Haiti. The president in Haiti is what gets to me. They are all assholes and manipulators. When the United States came to help us to make roads and stuff like that, churches, they tried to make them like them the Americans. Politics it ain't shit for me. I don't like Politics. Canadian politics, it is all full of shit. Politicians are like rats – they only serve the rich and forget about us poor folks (interviewee 5, a 17-year-old Haitian Canadian).*

There is clearly a sense among these marginalized youth that politicians only serve the rich and powerful and exploit the poor and helpless. In fact, one 17-year-old Haitian immigrant went as far as describing politicians as "government thugs", claiming that politicians are like criminals – the only difference being that politicians will get away with their "crimes".

> *Politicians never did shit for us Black folks. They always protected the rich and*

> *allowed the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer. How many rich Black people do you know? Not many I bet. So why should I put my faith, my trust, in a bunch of "thugs" that don't give a shit about us? Why I call politicians "thugs"? 'Cause they are. They steal from the poor, they protect the White guy, and they do it under the protection of the government. So, no one says anything because these guys have the power. Of course they will deny that they are doing these things, but because they have the power they will get away with it. The difference between us "street thugs" and "government thugs" is simple. They have the power and the money to get away with their crimes and us "street thugs" go to jail for our crimes because we are trying to make the money that we don't have (interviewee 14).*

All of the Jamaican youths (10) said that they had no interest in politics at all. However, as we will see later, one youth was certainly aware of some aspects of the Black Civil Rights movement of the United States. Again, the attitudes tended to swing between apathy and cynicism:

> *Nothing really, but lately I have been reading the newspaper and there is like some kind of political war that is going on in Jamaica between the prime minister and this next dude. I was just reading up on it, it didn't really tell you much about it. It just told me that whatever, today the prime minister is running the army, the military. I don't know much about politics in Canada, I don't keep track of them things. I don't care about that you know* [he laughs]. *I don't care about that you know* [he continues laughing] *(interviewee 27, a 17-year-old Jamaican-Canadian).*

> *What I know about Politicians is that they are all liars, I just hate them. They are all hoes. They say things like: I promise you this and I promise you that and the promises you never get (interviewee 17, a 17-year-old Jamaican immigrant).*

The majority of individuals in the 'other' ethnic group (N = 8) stated that politics was not an important issue in their lives or the lives of their gang members. Only one individual (an 18-year-old Polish-Canadian) reported that he had some knowledge of Canadian and Polish politics but that this was not something he talked about with his fellow gang members, who are not interested in this kind of thing:

> *I read up on politics here and there. It is all bullshit and the referendum is a waste of my money. Landry just makes us look like a bunch of idiots. Bourque was okay but he had stupid ideas, because I am against separation. And the schooling thing, really*

pisses me off, it really pisses me off. How someone has to go to French school if your parents are not educated, or haven't been educated in English. Also they are trying to control the Cegeps now. With regards to Poland, well they got flooded. The big floods, it is still going on today. Also, I believe they were quite late on apologizing. The government didn't do what it should have in helping the Polish people during the floods (interviewee 25).

Another subject, a 17-year-old Italian-Canadian reports that although he himself is not interested in participating in political discussions, some of his fellow gang members are:

I don't like to mix myself up in these things. I am still too young to implicate myself in these things. They are involved in politics, they give their support and their money. I heard them speak about politics, but I never got involved in these things that much (interviewee 39).

Again, though, there is a recognition that the gang itself can be considered a political entity, as observed by the 18-year-old Polish-Canadian:

In my gang you can say there is a sense of politics, my guys do what I say. It just goes by who has been there the longest, who is the craziest, and who you fear. That is the only reason why I am the leader. They fear me my members because I made money in situations that they would have never would have believed (interviewee 25).

2) Some Interest in or Awareness of Politics

A small number (four) of French respondents claimed to have some knowledge of politics. What interested these youths particularly was the Quebec separation issue. A 19-year-old reports:

It is full of shit here in Quebec. Because of the English that steal from us and they want to take over. The one who is helping them is our Prime Minister Jean Chretien. I don't like him. He is an idiot. He is a "Tas-Tas", he is a real prick. I can't stand him, every time I see him on television and you hear that he has traveled to different countries. The way he talks he is just an embarrassment to our country. I am embarrassed of the fact that he represents us. The English people like him. But the French people don't like him I can tell you that. He doesn't want us to separate, the big hypocrite. He is French and he doesn't want us to separate (interviewee18).

A second French teenager acknowledges the importance of maintaining Quebec culture and identity through political means:

> *I don't think gang members are politically active. There are some that read up about politics from time to time, but I don't think it is something that is really important for the gang. The only thing I do know is that most are Pro-Quebec, and believe it is important to maintain their Quebecois culture. Like for example, I wouldn't mind, like most of them wouldn't mind if Quebec would separate from the rest of Canada. Because Quebec is supposed to be Francophone. Take the example of the Indians. Indian people don't really marry outside their culture. So a non-Indian person cannot marry an Indian person. Apart from France it is one hundred percent French. Here, it is the Quebecois. You cannot say that we are French, here it is French but Quebecois French, it is important that we maintain our identity. There are a lot of people that come to Quebec to work and make a lot of money, that come from other countries. I am not racist but it is important that the Quebecois culture is not lost and most gang members feel the same way (interviewee 10, a 15-year-old self-identified Quebecois).*

It appears that those youth who have some interest in politics and some understanding of the Quebec-Canada question tend to associate together, even though such issues are rarely discussed among gang members.

Interestingly, although many French youths were not aware of national, provincial or civic politics, and said they and their fellow gang members were not politically active, several pointed to the political machinations of being in a gang, particularly when it comes to establishing a leader and keeping up the gang ethos:

> *In the gang there is a sense of politics. When you are in the gang, like the biker gang and things like that, you always have a leader (interviewee 6, a 20-year-old French-Canadian).*

> *There is a bit of political sense in the gang. Don't piss anyone off and don't back-stab anyone (interviewee 10 a 15-year-old self-identified Quebecois)*

> *If you want to talk about a political sense you can say that the gang is organized that way. The gang is based on rankings and there are those at the bottom and those that are placed higher up. There are those that are placed somewhere in between (interviewee 13, a 17-year-old self-identified Quebecois).*

As mentioned above, one individual did refer to the Black Panther movement. Although this reference arose in discussions about whether he saw his gang as a social movement, his remarks suggest that he is aware on a larger level, although not directly related to conventional Canadian or Quebec politics, of the politicization of race in this country and the problems of young Black men. An interest in or awareness of the Black Panther Movement suggests that this is someone who has some inkling of the connections among civil rights, racism and politics.

> *My gang ain't no social movement, it ain't like a Black Panther type of thing. Not really still. I don't know, like Black Panthers they have their gang and shit like that. It was basically a gang. They were trying to teach the people that you know fight, fight for the Black people. Black Power and the White people are devils you know. But us we are not like that we are not racist. I can't speak for everyone else, but for me I am not racist. I know a couple of dudes, like whatever they don't like White boys, for the reason that they think that White boys are pussies and shit like that you know. We are not like that. We are not out there to say Black Power and shit like that. They should already know that from past history but them they are ignorant or whatever they just hate on each other and that's how it is for no reason (interviewee 27, a 17-year-old Jamaican-Canadian).*

Again, there is no surprise that the Latinos are somewhat different in their attitudes, beliefs, etc, from all other ethnic groups and interviewees: the majority of Latino youth (N=6) reported that they remained interested in Latino politics and its impact on the Latino population even though they were living in Canada. A 17-year-old El Salvadorian immigrant observes:

> *I read about this in the Latin newspaper we talk about it sometimes with the members of the gang. We talk about how our country is getting screwed and that the status of Latin America is getting lower and lower. We that live here we should take advantage of bettering ourselves by studying and making something of ourselves and not becoming like most society sees us as no good degenerates (interviewee 3).*

A 17-year-old individual born in El Salvador explains that gang members are into politics as well:

> *It is important in the sense that we talk only about the president of El Salvador. How it is beginning to change and how it is better and how the people are doing better, we talk about things like this. He is a better president in comparison to other presidents of the past. Because there have been presidents in the past that didn't give a damn about our country. They took the money they got while being president and they went on vacation with it, they would take the money to go to the States and visit places like Miami and things like that (interviewee 8).*

The Latino youth inform themselves about Latin American politics and discuss these issues with members of their gang. In fact, these youth claim that they would not mind becoming politically active in the future, especially if it promoted the Latino image. A 17-year-old El Salvadorian immigrant expands on this idea:

> *A little bit, I guess I would like to be in politics one day so maybe I could better help my people to get a better life. People think of Latinos as bums, degenerates, and made for living in the barrios. We are more than that but the people in the government just want to keep things as is, where the French and English are in power and us emigrantes Latinos remain where we belong as no good for nothing bums. If I was in politics I would change that, I would show these people with the money and power that Latinos are better than that (interviewee 48).*

It seems that for this sample of Latino youth and members of their gang, politics is part of their gang subculture and their culture more generally. These youth long to change the negative imagery associated with being Latin and believe the only way to do so is by being part of the government. The Latino youth feel that the government does nothing to help the Latino population and thus is responsible for perpetuating the image that Latinos are criminals, bums, and degenerates. These youth feel this could change if there were more Latino people working for the government. Although these youth are not particularly politically active per se, they do believe in and talk about the unfairness of

government and how it perpetuates racism towards the Canadian Latin population.

In general, Latino youth explain that their interest in politics stems from their concerns about how political authorities in their native countries behave towards citizens and expatriates. Given that most of the Latinos interviewed immigrated to Canada in their late teens, they have a heightened awareness of the realities of political affairs. Family reasons for immigration may in fact be linked to the political situation in the country of origin, such that the youths are more engaged by problems and politics at home. As well, most of these youth are still strongly attached to their native soils and remain interested in how Latin and South American governments treat their "people."

The French youth who were aware of Quebec nationalism and national politics to some extent understood a little bit about the ongoing struggle surrounding Quebec's "distinct society" status and the preservation of the French language and cultural distinctiveness (Meadwell, 1995). Such beliefs resulted from and were encouraged by the perceived discrimination against these youths by Anglophones.

Only one Jamaican Canadian mentioned any political interest, and in his case, he was interested in the Black Panther movement (discussed earlier), which focused on the militant struggle of Blacks for social rights in the US (Scherr, 1999). This youth had some awareness of the civil rights movement of the United States and the Blacks struggle to gain equality in a society that favored Whites.

Overall there is little interest among the youths about politics, and even among youths who have some interest, none of the youths discussed politics in a gang setting. However, some French and "other" ethnic category individuals did point to the political aspect of actually being in a gang, revolving around issues of establishing a leadership

and maintaining gang discipline, philosophy and membership. Nevertheless, the majority of these youths made clear their anti-political sentiments, claiming that politicians are not to be trusted. Most felt that politicians are more interested in advancing their own self-interest and less concerned with helping "the people" – in some instances referring to them as "government thugs" who, under the guise of legitimacy, are able to get away with their crimes (some believed the government literally stole from the poor to give to the rich).

In sum, one can deduce that given the political histories of the countries of origin of the immigrant youths who were interviewed, it is perhaps unsurprising that the Latino youths are more aware of and interested in politics, and surprising that Haitian and Jamaican youths are not more interested in politics. Nevertheless, although the Latin youths of this study may be conscious of politics within their respective countries of origin, they are very different from the Almighty Latin Kings: these youths do not advocate positive social change through membership in their gangs. Even though they may encourage ethnic pride amongst themselves, they do not encouraging such sentiments across the wider Latino community. The same could be said of the Haitian and Jamaican respondents who, although they may experience marginalization as did the Black Panthers, do not belong to gangs that are social movements advocating social awareness or change. This was true of all the gang members in the study. In fact, the only similarity between the gangs I studied and the Black Panthers and the Almighty Latin Kings is that there is an overt cynicism towards politics that which appears to reinforce their rebellion against formal power structures such as the police or the state.

Heroes

The concept of heroes is important in this dissertation because heroes represent role models or idols who may inspire ethnic pride as well as give youths an exemplar for their gang membership. Individuals from many walks of life – sports, entertainment, music, politics and religion – may become objects of idolization, modelling, and worship (Raviv et., al., 1996). Youths' hero worship may take the form of imitation – of their hero's style of clothing, hairstyle, speech and other cultural behavioural patterns. Such idolization is common in youth culture because it is both promoted within and rewarded by the peer group (Raviv et., al., 1996). Furthermore, admiring a particular musician or athlete represents some of these respondent's "unrealistic dreams and desires on to a person whose fame and success appear the fulfillment of these wishes and fantasies" (Raviv, et., al., 1996, p. 632). Connecting with a specific hero may give these youth a sense of identification, especially specifically if the 'hero' is from similar ethnic culture. The hero symbolizes a particular image to which adolescents aspire and also functions as a messenger, providing teenagers with a value orientation that can promote fame, success or ethnic pride. For instance, Black youth may perceive the Black rapper and actor Tupac Shakur as a hero because he represents the children of the civil rights Black power generation through his mother's connection to the Black Panther Party. He is also "cast as a symbol of the contradictions, disappointments, strivings and realities of the Black Power Era's children. He has often been perceived as a revolutionary in the way he lived his life, and his rebellion was often reflected in his music's lyrics" (Keeling, 1999, p. 60). For gang members, Tupac Shakur's criminal past (a prison convict and a victim of a shooting before being murdered) and the lyrics to his music, speaking of black-on-black

violence, using drugs and making money, seem to offer a road map for their own future. Some youth ,then, see him as a hero because of his lifestyle while others may identify with him because he was a black man who advocated pride for his culture.

Knowing who an individual's (or group's) heroes are can give us additional insight into what influences them and how those interests connect with my stated interests – in this case, ethnic culture and gang life. If youths strongly identify with their ethnic group one might expect them to name, when asked, men and women of their particular ethnicity who have contributed in some way to the identification of that ethnic group as being important (for example, American black youths might be expected to admire Martin Luther King, who did so much for black Americans in the 1960s). However, if youths instead cite criminals as heroes, one might conclude that their ethnicity holds less importance for them than other factors

All the youths interviewed were asked who their heroes were. Their responses fell into five categories: family, rap musicians, athletes, others or no hero at all and are summarized in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2. Who are the heroes of delinquent youth?

Category	French	Haitian	Jamaicans	Latinos	Others
Family	2	0	0	1	2
Rap musicians	1	4	1	0	2
Athletes	1	2	0	1	0
Other person	1	0	0	0	2
No hero	5	4	9	8	4

Clearly, most of these youths are unable to identify anyone they would want to

look up to; in addition, when these youths talked about the men (and when a hero was identified, he was always male) they admired, it was in terms of how it helped them deal with their delinquent lifestyle. Given the small sample size, I cannot draw any conclusions about the connection between having heroes, who those heroes are and gang membership and ethnicity.

However, the sole Latino who has a hero bears out my expectations about this ethnic group (albeit his father was a criminal) by having a strong connection with family:

> *Let me tell you something: I come from a good family, a loving family, but at the same time I was always surrounded by crime of some kind or another. Take my dad for instance. He was a respectable man, everyone liked him in the community, he had money, he had prestige, but at the same time people feared him because of what he did for a living (involved in organized crime). But there were people around him that were envious of his life, and wanted what he had. That is why he got assassinated. I have to say compared to the other members of my gang, I was much more lucky, because my father always provided for his family and you could say that I came from a wealthy family. Most of the other members have not been so lucky, most are poor and live in the ghetto and are more persecuted than I am. Although I was well off in comparison to the other members, there was never jealousy towards me at all (interviewee 47, a 17-year-old El Salvadorian immigrant).*

Several youths cited athletes as their heroes. Among the French, just one 19-year-old (interviewee 21) identified an athlete as a hero. This particular youth made sure to explain that he did not believe that a hero was someone who led a criminal lifestyle. Instead, he said, a hero is someone who reached his goal through hard work and chose to pursue a legitimate vocation. His hero was former Montreal Canadiens hockey player and goalie Patrick Roy, whom he admired because Patrick Roy (perhaps contradicting to his stated reasons) was good at his sport and made a lot of money. Although the youth had great admiration for the hockey player, he felt he could never follow in his footsteps because he did not consider himself the athletic type. Thus, in order to compensate for his

lack of athletic capabilities, the youth decided to become a gang member (which allowed him to make a lot of money – like Patrick Roy). He rationalized the similarity between himself and Patrick Roy as being due to their shared ability to make a lot of money (except that the youth made his illegitimately).

Two Haitian youths named black athletes as their heroes: for one a football player (also a cousin) and for the second, the internationally renowned basketball player Michael Jordan. The 17-year-old Canadian-Haitian (interviewee 5) whose cousin played football for the Wolverines (a Michigan college football team) said that he looked up to his cousin, who made a lot of money legitimately, while he himself made a living through criminal activity. The 16-year-old Canadian-Haitian (interviewee 20) who reported that basketball player Michael Jordan was his ultimate idol commented:

> *Michael Jordan, he loves basketball, he is good at it and he is making money and is famous. His philosophy is: "keep it mostly simple" his moves are smooth. He worked and practiced real hard to get where he is. I would love to have a life like Michael Jordan, he went through hard times and was tested many times in his life. His father passed away, and he won the championship. He passed big challenges in his life and he survived. For me that is what a hero is all about.*

Just one Latino youth said that he looked up to a hero. This 17-year-old immigrant from the Dominican Republic reported that his hero was a football player

> *Barry Sanders, he is a football player, he is short and he is successful. I would like to be like him one day (interviewee 41).*

Barry Sanders is a Black American who played running back for the Detroit Lions (a US football team), who happened to be one of the shortest and lightest football players in US football when he played (five feet eight inches tall and weighing just 200 pounds). This youth saw a connection between himself and the football player because both were

short (the youth was just four feet eleven inches tall); seeing a short person succeed in professional football inspired him and gave him hope that he too could be successful regardless of his height. For this youth, his success came from his membership in a gang, which gave him power, status and respect.

As we have seen, few of these youths had any heroes. Those who did were more likely to admire individuals who made a lot of money such as rap stars, family members involved in organized crime or athletes. These youth believed that most of these "so-called heroes" have mainly "achieved their position without long years of study, work or sacrifice" (Brake, 1985, p. 61). This focus on and admiration of family members who were criminals may be due to the fact that most of these youth seem to be influenced by culturally socialized traditions that promote law-breaking behavior. Family members encourage deviance by rationalizing the behaviors favourably and these attitudes are communicated within family settings, thus having a greater impact on these youth. The youth perceives the family member as an authority figure who has taught them the complexity and sophistication of in illicit behaviour. These authority figures, by glamorizing criminal activities and condoning unlawful behavior, provide justifications for illegal conduct which the youth adopts and internalizes as "normal" and "valuable" ways of achieving economic success. The end result is that these authority figures, through their successful crime stories, are portrayed as heroes and teachers – men who have mastered the criminal vocation – and these youth look up to them and aspire to mimic their success. And the fact that these heroes (and consequently the youths) make a lot of money illegitimately is more interesting and exciting. Ethnicity does not seem to play an important role in these youths' choice of heroes.

Material Culture

Observing each of the respondent's gave me the opportunity to assess the type of material culture each consumed. After all, most "youth are exposed to substantial amounts of media content on a daily basis" (Roberts, 2000, p. 10), which may also be reflective of a cultural identity or portray a symbolic allegiance to ethnic heritage. Youths listen to music and read – the music, books, magazines and papers are all possible places where youths can make connections to their ethnic culture. And these youths were no different. In the closed custody facilities where these youths were held, each one is allotted a room for himself and is allowed access to a radio, a compact disc player and different types of reading material. He is also allowed to decorate his room with posters and pictures or other artifacts which may make his stay in the center more comfortable and less like being in prison. As one young man pointed out (interviewee #4), it is important that the room felt comfortable, especially if one had to spend one to two years there. Surrounding himself with pictures of his family made him feel more at home.

Room observations can provide insight into what interests these youth as well as a 'reality' check for their comments in the interviews. The observations can also support the findings from the interviews relating to the differences and similarities among the different ethnic groups. The French, Haitians, Jamaicans and others generally are more alike in their room arrangements than dissimilar; they are all quite different from the Latinos. The Latino interviewees, again, make a distinctive group.

Although many interviews passed without incident, it was always necessary to bear in mind that some of these youths were dangerous – something that could be quite unnerving for the interviewer. One 18-year-old individual (interviewee #2), displayed

several photos of his girlfriend, as well as the cute stuffed animal toys that she gave him (with messages of "I love you", "you and me forever", "you are the love of my life"). This young man commented, "you may think of me as a bit of a romantic, I like having all these cute things around me because it reminds me of my girlfriend." It was later discovered that he had a significant record of physically assaulting his girlfriend, who, somewhat surprisingly, continued to visit him every Sunday while he was detained, showering him with gifts. Interestingly, it is this individual who, alone among the French interviewees, had decorated a wall of his room with the fleur de lis, the Quebec flag.

We can break down room observations into several different components: 1. Wall decorations and displays (photos, posters, etc.); 2. Religious relics; 3. Clothing; 4. Music; and 5. Reading material (books, magazines).

1. Wall Decorations and Displays

It seems that young boys held in a youth center, regardless of ethnicity, like to have pictures of pretty women on the walls as well as various music/rap artists; family, however, played less of a role, except for the Latino interviewees.

Among the French youths, six of the ten had posted pictures of their family and friends; four of the ten had pictures of their current or previous girlfriend, and two of these ten displayed photos of their children.

All the Haitian youths (N=10), in addition to posters of young women, had at least one poster up of a Black male rap artist such as Tupac. The Tupac poster of a 16-year-old Haitian immigrant read, "*respect women and keep your head up.*" He liked to listen to Tupac and said that some of his favorite lines were *"no love for the bitch," "there are girls you respect," "fuck the police"* (interviewee 1). Other rap artists

decorating the walls of the rooms of the Haitian youths included: Ice Cube, Cash Money, DMX, Outlawz, Bone Thugs-'N'-Harmony, Snoop Dog, Methodman, Exhibit, Nelly and Li'L Wayne, Jay Z, and Fifty Cent.

In an example of cross-cultural admiration, a 16-year-old Haitian immigrant had a poster of Jennifer Lopez, saying he liked her because, like most Latin women, she is passionate, sexy and knows how to dance (interviewee 1).

Most Jamaicans (N=7) displayed posters of Bob Marley. A 17-year-old Jamaican born individual explained that he liked Bob Marley because he understood what it meant to be Jamaican and Black in a world full of "Babylons," which the youth interpreted to mean ignorant people who looked down on Blacks (interviewee 17). All of the Jamaicans (N=10) put up posters of Black rap and hip-hop artists such as DMX, Nellie, JD Kiss, Beanie Sigel, Cash Money Millionaires, Li'L Wayne, Foxy Brown, RZA, Buzy Bone, Snoop Dog, and Tupac.

Among the youths of the "other" ethnic category, the majority (N=8) put up posters of English Rap, Reggae and Hip-Hop artists, such as Tupac, Wu-Tang Clan, Dr. Dre, Ice Cube, Bone-Thugs-'N'-Harmony, Eminem, and West-Side Connection. In addition to this, most of these youth put up posters of White female models and/or posters of White female pop artists such as Christina Aguilera and Brittany Spears.

As we have seen throughout the interviews, the Latino youth are dissimilar to those of the other ethnic groups interviewed. All ten of these youth showed family photos – their current and ex-girlfriends, children and other family members. Family has come through as an important aspect of Latino culture in all aspects of this study, and the

Latino youth seemed in all respects to be more family oriented than the other youths interviewed.

The Haitian and Jamaican youths all display posters of Black rappers, all appearing to have a common fondness for the rapper Tupac Shakur. This favoring of black rappers suggests that the youths relate to the rappers from the standpoint of racial identity. Most rappers, and in particular Tupac, often rap about what it means to be black in a society that discriminates against blacks through a process of systemic racism that denies all blacks equal access to jobs, education, decent housing, etc. These are issues that both Haitian and Jamaicans can relate to at a racial level. However, Haitian and Jamaicans differ in how they choose to display symbolic allegiance to ethnic heritage. Jamaican youth displayed posters of Bob Marley, a famous reggae artist from the Caribbean and self-professed Rastafarian and could be said to be making a political statement about their ethnicity by doing so – proud to be Jamaican and Rastafarian (in one case). Haitian youth, however, did not display any posters of Haitian musicians or political figures that could be perceived as showing symbolic allegiance to ethnic culture.

The French showed pictures of their family, friends, or children. For them such photos appeared to symbolize feeling closer to home and perhaps made them feel less lonely, but did not really demonstrate any link to their ethnic culture, except for one French youth who hung a flag of Quebec in his room. Respondents in the category of "other" displayed posters that were reflected popular culture rather than their ethnic culture.

2. Religious Items

As has been learned from the interviews, religion plays a very small role in the lives of these youths – except for the Latino youths. Room observations bear this out. Just three of the ten French youths displayed religious items, and only two of the Haitian youths, one Jamaican, and five of those in the "other" ethnic category. However, eight of the Latino youths interviewed displayed some form of Catholic icon.

Among the Jamaicans, just one 17-year-old youth (interviewee 27) who identified himself as Rastafarian had any religious items in his room. His religious material included information on the Rastafarian religion downloaded from the internet. Six other Jamaican youths also identified themselves as Rastafarians, but had nothing in their rooms to show that they actually followed the Rastafarian religion, apart from their dreadlocks.

Again, it is the Latinos who are different from the other interviewees. Most (N = 8) Latinos interviewed claimed to be very religious Catholics and had a Spanish bible. Among these youths, some had pictures of Jesus Christ and/or of the Virgin Mary and three had rosaries – a 17-year-old from the Dominican Republic (interviewee 34) kept his in his pillow case, a 17-year-old Chilean-Canadian (interviewee 35) kept his in his bureau drawer, and the 17-year-old immigrant from El Salvador (interviewee 47) wore a cross around his neck. As has been discussed previously in the literature, religion (specifically Roman Catholicism) is very important to Latino culture because it emphasizes strong family values and a sense of community drawn from Latino culture. Their religion also teaches them to help one another through the community – values that are important within Latino culture. These values were also emphasized by the Almighty Latin Kings

movement. However, the Latinos here were unaware of this movement. Furthermore, the Almighty Latin Kings in its legitimate form did attempt to steer the US Latino community away from crime, whereas although the Latino youths in this study may share strong religious values, these values do not appear to be strong enough to steer them away from a criminal gang lifestyle (this is evident in Chapter Three in the section entitled "quitting the gang").

3. Clothing

Clearly from the interviews, these young men have money to spend and many, especially the Jamaicans and the Haitians spend it on clothing. It seemed that as a rule, the French and the youths from the "other" ethnic category shared similar dress sense, while the Haitians, Jamaicans and Latinos tended to follow the same clothing style.

The French youths (N=10) wore the same kind of clothing while at the detention center as they did when released, preferring a dressy or sporty style (depending on the occasion). Mostly, though, these youths wore jeans, jean jackets, and sweat pants. For more formal occasions, they wore dress pants and dress shirts, which is what they usually wore (at least in detention) on Sundays when their families visited them.

All of the youth in the "other ethnic category" (N=10) had dressy and sporty clothing (name brands Rocawear, Rapper Gear, and Wu Wear). Both the French respondents and the youth in the other ethnic category adopted clothing that is inspired by the styles and tastes of American culture as opposed to their particular ethnic culture.

All of the Haitian youth (N =10) wore baggy pants, baggy short-sleeved and long sleeved shirts; they also wore jeans one size bigger, which drag at the crotch. These youth called this "the gangster look." The Haitian youth referred to their clothing as

"rapper/gangster hip-hop name brand clothes." They liked wearing name brands such as Phat Farm Baggies, South Pole USA, Pelle Pelle Jackets, and Fubu clothes – most of their favored rap artists wore (or even designed) these brands too. They wore running shoes (Nike, Reebok, and Adidas) and also wore Lugz boots, another "gangster rapper" style boot-wear. Their more fancy attire consisted of baggy pants of various colors and animal print or flowered shirts. The youth claimed traditional Haitian dress was colorful, warm and tropical and that their wearing these distinctive multicolored, multipatterned shirts reflected pride in their heritage; it also announced their symbolic allegiance to their ethnic heritage.

The Jamaicans shared sartorial style with the Haitians, namely, the "rapper gangster hip-hop style" and wore similar brand name clothes. The Jamaicans wore running shoes and Lugz boots (like the Haitians) and wore dreadlocks, while the Haitians generally had their hair done in corn rows. What was particularly important and unique to the Jamaicans was the importance of jewelry, which as I have noted already, played a role in identifying gang membership for Jamaican youths. In fact, all of the Jamaican youths interviewed wore some kind of expensive jewelry, such as gold chains, gold pendants and diamond earrings, often having one to three earrings on one ear. The display of jewelry and its associated symbolizing of wealth and prestige became earmarked as part of Jamaican identity, especially in comparison with other ethnic groups in this study, most of which were not into wearing expensive jewelry. This display of jewelry evoked an image of coolness and sophistication, which allowed Jamaicans to be identified as distinctive and separate from other ethnic groups – in particular the Haitian youth.

All of the Latino youth (N=10) followed the so-called "vagabond" style: baggy pants, baggy shirts, jeans, and sweat-pants. These wore the popular "rapper/gangster style" name brands also preferred by Haitians and Jamaicans. They also had more fancy attire such as dress pants and shirts from such name brands as Hugo Boss, Armani, and Tommy Hilfiger (similar to the French youths). The more fancy attire adopted by Latino youth inspired an identity that was very showy and colorful and made them attractive to young women (they believed). The fancy attire adopted by the Latino youth is a symbolic extension of their ethnic identity, an identity that conjures up images of the well-dressed Latin man who is constantly "on the prowl", able to seduce any woman with his charm, wit and style. The wearing of fancy, name brand clothing is also encouraged within their respective gang lifestyle and is especially evident when they go out to clubs and bars dressed to impress.

The rapper/gangster/hip-hop/vagabond style adopted by the Haitian, Jamaican, and Latino youth is symbolic of an exorbitant, "bling-bling" lifestyle of wealth that is linked to their gang status. This type of clothing style symbolically represents a political statement (although not a conscious one) about an underground, marginalized community which voices contestation, racial tensions, and hierarchies that continue to be present within a White racist society (Fernandes, 2003). Although choice in clothing style may be influenced by American cultural tastes, for Haitian, Jamaican, and Latino the rapper/gangster/hip-hop/vagabond styles take on a more personal cultural and racialized significance. Their clothing style is a symbolic protest against "the authorities, the state, or those in power" (Fernandes, 2003, p. 587).

Hebdige (1979) suggests that styles have a double meaning:

> On the one hand, they warn the "straight" world in advance of a sinister presence – the presence of difference- and draw upon themselves vague suspicions, uneasy laughter, "white and dumb rages." On the other hand, for those who erect into icons, who use them as words or curses, these objects become signs of forbidden identity, sources of value (p. 3).

These youth in particular, identify themselves as marginalized and part of an underground culture. They have combined the concept of style with politics, which become emblematic of a hard-edged evaluation of society that celebrates both Black and Brown culture (Fernandes, 2003). Such clothing styles erect a forbidden identity that is perceived as violent, criminal and aggressive and for these youth it becomes a defence mechanism against a marginalized identity.

Among the Haitian, Jamaican, and Latino respondents, gang styles have earned them a further externalized identity that is also a symbolic expression or extension of their ethnic identity. The gang styles are significant of resistance against discrimination but also provide them with a sense of belonging to their fellow outcasts. Racial and ethnic pride is displayed through distinctive hair-styles, ethnic artifacts and clothing which identifies who they are and where they come from. These youths are marginalized and experience high rates of joblessness; one way they can resist this is to adopt clothing styles that bolster an image that celebrates ethnic identity and symbolically challenges those in positions of authority (e.g., adults, police, the state) (Fernandes, 2003).

4. Music

Clearly, from the interviews, rap music plays a particularly important role for these youth gang members; all, except for the Latino subjects, prefer rap and hip-hop over other kinds of music (see earlier discussion in this chapter).

The Latino youths showed distinctly different tastes, preferring Latino or Spanish music. All of the Latino youth (N=10) listen to Spanish music, some of which has been transformed into Spanish hip-hop, reggae, and rap. The artists they listen to include Shakira, Gypsy Kings, Blue Lines, Trip hop, Spanish House Music, Celia Cruz and Portishead and a Spanish group called Guineda. They especially enjoyed listening to meringue and salsa music.

5. Reading Material

Reading material, like music, can provide insight into the personal philosophy of the reader. However, this group of youths did not show themselves to be particularly fond of reading. And indeed, the reading preferences of these young men in detention were not particularly sophisticated.

In fact, when it came to French youths, only one (a 17-year-old, respondent #4) had any kind of reading matter in his room, and this was an English magazine, *The Source Magazine*, a periodical that covers the rap and hip-hop music scene and culture. The reading material reflects the conspicuous consumption and influence of American rap and hip-hop culture.

Again, a low reading rate was seen among the Haitian youths. Just one (a 15-year-old Haitian born) had any kind of reading matter in his room. This included the French Archie comic books and also the French magazine *Faites Votre Choix*, a magazine that looks at issues such as searching for a job and careers. This youth was one who seemed to be making an effort to lead a legitimate lifestyle and who said that he wanted to go the legitimate route and leave the deviant lifestyle behind.

All of the Jamaicans (N=10) had a copy of the rapper magazine *The Source*. Such reading preferences not only speaks of American cultural influence but is also perceived as more personal for the Jamaican youth because it speaks to him about celebration of racial identity that also takes on a more personal cultural connotation through the magazine's coverage of Black musicians and Black culture.

The majority of Latino (N=8) youth read comic books such as Batman, Superman, and Archie. However, one youth, a 17-year-old Canadian-born Chilean (interviewee 29) had more sophisticated literary tastes, reading a book about a Spanish poet (*Las Vidas Del Poeta* by Oscar Aguilera). He also had a book about mythology (*The Encyclopedia of Mythology*), *The Hobbit* by JRR Tolkien, and *Works on Eastern Philosophy: Essential Zen.* In general the reading choices of Latino youth reflected the tastes of their age group rather than their ethnic background, except for the aforementioned Latino respondent who did read some Spanish writers.

Finally, among the "other" ethnic category, half (N=5) read various "rapper magazines" such as *Blaze*, *The Source* and men's magazines (known in England as lad mags for their portrayal of scantily clad women) such as *Maxim*. The reading choices for this particular ethnic category are influenced by popular cultural tastes and are not linked to ethnic culture.

Other artifacts were also found in the rooms of the "other" youths. An 18-year-old Canadian-born Pole (interviewee 25) and a Portuguese-born 17-year-old (interviewee 26) posted calendars on their walls and crossed off each day so that they could track the time left to their release date, an activity they called the "calendar countdown". A 17-year-old German immigrant (interviewee 46) showed the interviewer his "promise of love poem"

that his girlfriend had given him and an 18-year-old Canadian Jew (interviewee 50) had a pack of cards and a dice. He said to me that he played cards with the other youths for cigarettes.

In assessing the room observations for all of the respondents one concludes that most of the respondents, regardless of race or ethnic culture, are influenced by American media and advertising. This is no different from what ordinary Canadian youths consume in the way of this material, and this fact sometimes makes it difficult to assess whether some of the respondents' tastes and styles are indeed influenced by ethnic or popular culture. However there is no denying that some of their tastes do have ethnic influence – especially for Latinos and Black youths.

General Conclusion

While many youths appeared aware of their ethnicity and, certainly in the case of the Latino interviewees, worked hard to retain that ethnicity, for the most part, the youths did not make an explicit connection between their ethnic culture and gang affiliation. While one can see some differences among the ethnic groups, it appears that one of the sole places their ethnicity comes to the fore is in their food and language choices; even religion is left by the wayside. I will now synthesize the findings discussed in previous pages through the lens of collective, symbolic and external culture.

Ultimately, one must ask whether the feeling of "ethnicness" is symbolic, collective or external among these gang participants, and whether it plays an important role in their gang lives. To recap: when ethnic culture is expressed at a symbolic level, cultural identity is perceived as more subjective, flexible, and situational and is sometimes hidden. This means that a youth may choose to express ethnic belonging

through a particular language, through a shared philosophy of life, or by following a particular religion. Therefore, one's choice in the expression of ethnic allegiance is individually defined. These youth in gangs may only need to affiliate with symbols of their culture as preferences prescribe and situations dictate. For them, ethnic belonging is based on the voluntary freedom of ethnic expression. Cultural identity may be expressed verbally or non-verbally ranging from the display of particular religious relics symbolic of an ethnic culture, to the wearing of a tattoo that depicts a youth's country of origin. Symbolic ethnicity describes how these youths choose to express the feeling of being ethnic and how this in turn embraces the more subjective "in-group feeling" (Gans, 1979). The feeling of ethnicity may be appropriated to fit into their version of ethnic identity or may be authentic culture.

The expression of ethnic identity at the collective level occurs through the communal sharing and group expression of various ethnic practices, such as food, religion, language, sports, etc.. The sharing of common ethnic customs and practices emphasize ethnic belongingness and excludes those who do not fit the chosen ethnic criteria. Thus, one can examine gang members' degree of participation in their respective ethnic communities and the collective expression of that involvement.

The external definition of ethnic identity highlights the consequences of being labelled "outsider" or "non-Canadian," the result of ethnic segregation in the wider Canadian community. External cultural identity in general encompasses the external characteristics, such as skin color, facial features or accent associated with a particular ethnic group; in terms of gang culture, it comprises gang styles displayed by gang members. External cultural identity is a trigger for prejudicial attitudes and

discriminatory behavior on the part of mainstream society toward youth gang members who are often labelled as "outsider" or "deviant."

Among the French youths, ethnicity is identified collectively and symbolically. *Language* and *sports* are cultural practices that are most emphasized within the gang subculture and therefore meet the criteria of ethnic belongingness (Isajiw, 1977). There exists a collective and frequent communal sharing of language and sports in the gang. This means that all the youth in the gang speak French and participate in the same sport, i.e., hockey. In contrast, *religion* and *politics* are more symbolic and individualistic – active on a personal level (Gans, 1979). Thus, in terms of *religion,* French youths may feel some affinity to Christian religion (e.g., go to church on important religious holidays to please family members). At the *political* level, they may have an understanding of Quebec nationalism and may agree with the notion of one nation and one language but will not necessarily advocate such beliefs to gang members; others will express their nationalism through the display of the Quebec fleur de lis flag. Thus, *religion* and *politics* may be more relevant at a personal and emblematic level but not within the gang subculture. Music, too, is symbolic of French youths' rebellious nature rather than their ethnicity. Most listen to English and some French rap and hip hop. However, the lyrics in both languages do not speak to ethnicity but rather a sense of being "outsiders" and against the law. Finally, Quebecois cuisine was not a major consideration for these youths at home or in the gang; when it came to food, the French had diverse tastes.

Haitian subjects made explicit connections between *language, food* and *music* and their ethnic origins, views shared within their gangs and their *neighborhood.* These associations emphasized ethnic group cohesion and collective belonging. As a group the

Haitians spoke Creole, ate Haitian food, listened to rap and hip-hop music and lived in Haitian neighborhoods that were heavily gang affiliated. *Religion* is unprescribed, and there is a low level of religiosity among Haitian gang members. It may be considered a more symbolic extension of their ethnic identity, particularly among those who claim to practice voodoo (common in Haitian culture). In Finally, *politics* is unimportant collectively and symbolically, and *sports* at an individual and group perspective are not assumed as automatically linked with their ethnic identity.

We learn from the Jamaican respondents that *language, music*, and *neighborhood* are communally allied with their ethnic heritage and are part of their gang subcultures. As a group they spoke Jamaican patois, listened to reggae, and lived in neighborhoods with a strong gang presence and where the majority of residents were Jamaican. *Religion* however, plays a collective and perceived symbolic role in the lives of these youth as well as within their gangs. Collectively Jamaican youth claim to follow the "Rastafarian religion" (which is very much associated with Jamaican culture). However, these youth do not fully grasp the true meaning of the religion but follow it because it is a symbolic reminder of their ethnic culture. Eating *Jamaican food* is a practice that is more likely to be maintained at home and less likely to be encouraged within the gang. Eating ethnic food at home is representative of their ethnic roots but such a custom is not imposed within the gang and thus is perceived as more voluntary. Jamaicans view *politics* and *sports* as neither collectively nor symbolically linked with their cultural heritage.

The Latino subjects experience their ethnicity collectively and frequently. We discover that *language, religion, music, sports, food, and politics* are associated with their native countries and are strongly celebrated and emphasized within their gangs. They

speak Latin, are Roman Catholic, listen to Latin American music, play soccer, eat Latin American food and keep up to date with the politics of their homelands. These youth share a strong sense of "peoplehood", comprising the core of their shared definition of Latin-ness. Their ethnic culture is consistently reinforced in the gangs mores as well as within their personal lives; they clearly have not only a collective allegiance to ethnicity but also a symbolic one.

Individuals in the "other" ethnic category practice *language* at the symbolic and collective level. They may speak their maternal language at home or with gang members as well as speak French and English. These youth may, then, affiliate with their culture linguistically, identifying themselves as belonging to a specific ethnicity by the language they speak, but may choose to speak other languages depending on the situation. In this case, ethnic belongingness is not measured by the degree of knowledge of ethnic language, degree of participation in traditional religions or eating ethnic foods. Instead, ethnic belongingness is based on individual preference, which may also be influenced by the context of the circumstances (Isajiw, 1977). Hence, *religion* and *food* were merely symbolic for youth in the other ethnic category; that is, these youth acknowledged some form of religious affiliation and claimed to visit their place of worship occasionally, but did not consider this to be important to their gangs – it was neither encouraged nor discouraged. Although most of these youth preferred to eat food from their respective homelands, again, such a practice was neither imposed nor rejected by their gang members. *Music* and *sports* were not linked to their ethnic cultures either. Like most teenagers, their preference for rap and hip was influenced by popular culture, and they

played a wide range of sports not necessarily linked with their ethnic heritage. Finally *politics* was not important at a personal, symbolic, and/or collective level.

Across all ethnic groups, language and ability to communicate collectively in their language of choice was a shared value. However, these youth also gained external and symbolic identity through their adoption of argot and slang, both of which personify an underground culture. This code language communicates and symbolizes anti-authority sentiments.

Finally, I have found that Latino, Haitian, and Jamaican youths share an external ethnic identity resulting from their skin color, facial features and accents. They are "visible minorities" and as such are often negatively labelled as outsiders; on occasion, they have been perceived as not Canadian enough. For these youths, gang participation provides them with the respect and status that mainstream society will not. What I also discovered is that Latinos may in fact alienate themselves from mainstream society and thus limit their opportunities for economic and social advancements. Some Latinos have claimed to be in between "two worlds/two cultures": they still claim ethnic allegiance to their country of origin and have not quite integrated themselves within Canadian society. Their values, beliefs and ideas are strongly influenced by their traditional cultural heritage and most feel comfortable around other individuals who share similar sentiments. All of this explains why Latin culture is so important to Latino gang members: these youths find comfort and refuge within their gangs, which help them cope with the culture shock of living in a foreign country. The gang becomes romanticized as their safe haven, especially when they believe the outside world does not understand

them or perceives or treats them as alien or different, and it ultimately protects them from stigma and social alienation.

The sense of ethnic group cohesion is experienced across all ethnic gangs under study. The French, Haitian, Jamaican, and others are more likely to experience it at the collective and symbolic (i.e., appropriated) level, whereas the Latinos are the group that has the strongest ethnic allegiance, allowing ethnicity to play an important and communal role in gang life.

CHAPTER 6: PERSONAL RELATIONS

Individuals' commitment to their ethnicity (and perhaps rejection of it) as well as their openness to other cultures can be assessed by the relationships they form with individuals from other groups, as well as the ethnic characteristics of food, language, music preferences, etc., discussed in Chapter 5 In this chapter, I will examine youth gang participants' personal relationships in order to gain insight into the importance they place on their ethnic identity and their openness to other cultures. The personal relationships I am interested in here are who these young men choose to be their girlfriends or sexual partners and whether, if or when they have children, they will raise their children to have strong ties to their ethnic group. I will also assess whether, in some of their choices, these youths are rebelling against the perceived strictures of their own ethnicity or indeed, whether ethnicity plays a role at all in their personal relationships. In addition, I will be able to see whether their gang affiliation influences their decisions about girlfriends and children. Interviews with the 50 subjects made clear that one can differentiate between two broad groups: first, those who prefer to have relationships only with those individuals of the same ethnic background and are adamant about raising their children according to their own ethnic traditions, and second, those who are willing to have relationships with young women outside their own ethnic group and are willing to educate and expose their children to the ethnicity of the child's mother (if they do marry or have children with someone outside the ethnic group). I will also examine what these personal relations signify at the symbolic, collective, and external level.

Before addressing the findings of this study, I will situate the issue of personal relations in the context of some existing literature on the subject. Endogamous intimate

personal relations can function to maintain ethnic culture and ethnic identity among individuals who participate in such relations. In contrast, exogamous intimate relations can create repercussions and cultural conflict. As we will see, some ethnic and racial groups are more likely to participate in endogamous versus exogamous relations than others. In terms of some gang members, these inter-ethnic relations might only be casual sexual relationships. As well, children of mixed ethnic parentage may face unique difficulties with respect to their definition of their ethnic identity.

Benefits of Endogamous Relations

Individuals often choose to marry within their own ethnic group because this ensures "that their spouse will abide by ethnically specific norms and conventions, increasing the chances of coordinating reciprocal exchanges within a marriage" (Nave, 2000, p. 329). That is, endogamous unions are believed to strengthen the boundaries within groups, in large part because children of these unions tend to take on the ethnic identity of both parents, and thus follow and adopt the ethnic norms and conventions specific to that ethnicity. It may be considered "safer" to marry or date within the group because the individual can then follow the traditions learned as children and will not have to learn new ones (Nave, 2000). When ethnic groups choose to marry endogamously, their ethnic traditions and culture persists over time, allowing for central reproduction and maintenance of ethnic group boundaries (Nave, 2000). This often persists across class lines: "While ethnic groups may be increasingly stratified across class lines, marriage choices continue to be primarily defined by ethnicity, with class considerations taking a back seat" (Nave, 2000, p. 332). Furthermore, marrying or dating outside the ethnic group may lead to threat of punishment from immediate family members (Nave,

2000). Ultimately, individuals enter into endogamous intimate social exchanges because they sustain their beliefs, values and cultural heritage and discourage alienation from the family.

Repercussions of Exogamous Unions

Exogamy is the practice of marrying outside one's ethnic group, and it may be discouraged among some ethnic cultures because "children of mixed religious marriages are less likely to conform to any parental religious ideology or practices, like church attendance" (Bisin & Verdier, 2000, p. 960). Religious beliefs are often a barrier to inter-faith marriages, especially on the part of parents, who feel that an inter-faith relationship will compromise the religious upbringing of future grandchildren (Bisin & Verdier, 2000, p. 963). Parents may also have a personal interest in preserving their religious and cultural traits, and there is often a fear that exogamous unions may end in divorce (Bisin & Verdier, 2000). Inter-faith and inter-ethnic unions are criticized because the couple lacks any shared cultural norms, and conflicts may arise around child-rearing, food ways, and hospitality behaviors, among various things (Nave, 2000, 336).

Other negative aspects of exogamous relations are that exchanges with members of other ethnic groups are more unpredictable than exchanges with members of one's own ethnic group. Such unpredictability and thus conflict may result from the failure of both parties "to understand the language, values, and moral viewpoint of *others*" (Nave, 2000, p. 337).

Race and Intimate Relationship Preference

Some ethnic groups are more likely than others to marry outside the group; for example, "Mexican Americans [...] have a weaker tendency to marry within their group

than do blacks" (Fu, 2001, p. 157), likely because Latinos are often seen as white – like Caucasians (although some, including a darker-skinned Latino youth interviewed in this study are thought to be black). Black Caribbeans in Britain tend to endogamous relationships (Model & Fisher, 2002), while in New York, "Jamaicans live out much of their lives apart from the presence of whites" (Model & Fisher, 2002, p. 747). Blacks tend to be more endogamous because they are far too often targets of racial discrimination and therefore have an in-group preference with reference to intimate partner selection. This allows for the transmission of black identity and culture in a racially segregated society.

Whites also tend to have endogamous intimate relations (Heaton & Jacobson, 2000) because of a desire to maintain their position of privilege and hierarchical ranking; they are more likely to exercise what is usually referred to as "white racism."

Sexual Relations

Young men report more sexual partners (concurrently and sequentially) than young women in contrast, "African American male respondents are more likely to report overlapping sexual partners" (Giordano, 2003, p. 273). Furthermore, "it is young black men who express the greater reluctance to form stable, monogamous unions" (South, 1993, p. 358), which may be attributable to the economic differences between blacks and whites, given that whites are more economically privileged than blacks and may not see marriage as a threat to their economic stability (South, 1993). Black men's economic instability rises out of their limited educational and thus economic opportunities. This makes it difficult for black men to have the financial resources to become a husband and father and they may see marrying and having children as creating more financial stress

for them (South, 1993). Moreover, "compared to white men, black men anticipate less improvement from marriage in their sex lives and personal friendships, and these differences account for most of the differences in the desire to marry" (South, 1993, p. 368).

In contrast, marriage is expected within Hispanic culture, and this desire to be married "lies in that part of the machismo concept that stresses the importance of raising a family as an indicator of personal accomplishment and adult responsibility" (South, 1993, p. 368) – an achievement more important to Hispanic than white or black men (South, 1993).

Children of Mixed Heritage

"Children of inter-ethnic marriages tend to take on the ethnic identity and corresponding cultural norms of a single parent as a strategy to better negotiate social relations, and to marry someone of that same ethnicity" (Nave, 2000, p. 229). The parent whose ethnic cultural traditions are transmitted to them is usually the most religious of the couple, speaks their ethnic language fluently and frequently, and is more likely to feel that maintaining ethnic cultural traditions is important (Nave, 2000). Such cultural aspects are usually negotiated between the interracial couple before their children are born; the partner who is less attached to his/her ethnicity is less likely to make a big fuss about it. Usually the spouse who has a weaker affinity with their ethnic culture will go along with the spouse who feels a greater obligation to maintain their cultural heritage.

Children of mixed black and white parentage tend to be identified as black or white (rather than mixed), and in some cases, children who are darker skinned and say to individuals that they are white may confuse others see them as black and not white

(Model & Fisher, 2002). "There are pressures against adopting a mixed ethnic identity. To do so puts individuals at a strong disadvantage, particularly when trying to negotiate social relationships with other people seeking entry into safe exchange scenarios, where critical variables are well, and mutually understood" (Nave, 2000, p. 344). Thus, it is often easier for mixed race children to accept society's label of them because it causes less racial conflict and confusion on the part of society. "The most telling social fact is not how mixed race people view themselves but how the larger society views them"(Model & Fisher, 2002, p. 748).

Clearly, there are advantages and disadvantages to endogamous and to exogamous relationships. And as said earlier, the youths in this study fell into two major categories: those who preferred endogamous relationships and those who preferred exogamous relationships.

Staying within Culture

Among the French, half the youths (N = 5) interviewed stated that they preferred dating French-Canadian young women and were not at all interested in dating young women outside their own culture:

> *I never really dated girls that were outside my culture. If I had a choice I would date a girl that was Quebecois. I don't know why, it is probably because I am Quebecois as well. I have never had experience with other girls who come from different cultures [...]*
>
> *I would never date a Haitian girl though. The reason is because we are not the same, it is not the same customs. I find them a little cold. Haitian guys...let's just say I don't like them very much, so I guess the girls are probably the same. Haitian guys are always trying to prove something. The Haitian girls it seems they don't have the same customs, they are less clean. I don't know why I say this, but I find that they are less clean. Maybe the reason why I say this is because when I was eight years old there was an African family or Haitian, I am not sure exactly what they were and they moved next door to me. They were a family of thirteen, can you imagine 13 people living in a five and a half! There are about five or six in the room that is just disgusting. The guys didn't work, and they got*

> *everything from their mother, if not from the mother they would go and steal and give money to their mother. In my corner of the neighborhood it was like that, that was the only Black family I encountered and they did not give me a good impression (interviewee 10, a 15-year-old).*

> *I prefer to date a Quebecois because if I speak with her she will understand what I am saying. What I am looking for in a girl is that she respects me and that she is faithful to me (interviewee 13, a 17-year-old).*

Furthermore, these youths prefer to marry within their own ethnic group. However, a common theme among the French respondents was that they saw young black women as potential sexual partners, and often referred to 'using' a black woman for sex. As an 18-year-old self-identified Quebecois says,

> *I have a girlfriend and she is a Quebecois. Yes, this is important but I have to say it depends but what really matters is that she is my girlfriend and that I love her. If I had an adventure with another girl from a different origin than it wouldn't really bother me. In fact in the past I have slept with Haitian or African girls. I used them for sex and I was curious at first to know if it would be different than sleeping with a White girl, it is for sure it is not the same thing and I had a little fun with them. But to be serious with someone it has to be a Quebecois. I would only marry a girl who comes from my origins (interviewee 2, an 18-year old).*

These youths, as might be expected, also stated that they would marry or cohabit with someone from their culture and would raise their children as Quebecois, as emphasized by a 19-year-old youth (interviewee 21):

> *I have a son he is two months old. I am going to bring him up like a Quebecois. It is important because I am Quebecois and I want him to understand and be proud of his roots.*

Given our earlier discussion about the relationship between French and Black youths (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6), and the fact that many French Canadian youths interviewed expressed a desire to 'not act black', one might conclude that French-Canadian youths' focus on young Black women as potential sexual partners, but

undesirable romantic/marital partners, reflects their views on race and their comfort level with blacks as well as the gang's perception and beliefs about black youths and black culture in general.

Among the Haitian youths interviewed, only two respondents, both 17-year-old Haitian immigrants (interviewee 19 and interviewee 30) said that they would choose to date or marry only a Haitian girl:

> *I like Haitian girls because they are not easy to get with all of the time. I am sure there are girls from other ethnicities that are not easy to get. You take them and you get to know them, and they know when you are bullshitting them (interviewee 19).*

> *If I had a choice I would prefer to go out with a Haitian girl. I find that Haitian girls are very pretty. It is always within my own race. I don't mind going out with girls that come from a different race. If I had to choose I would definitely choose to have a relationship with a Haitian girl. I would also prefer to marry a Haitian girl (interviewee 30).*

All ten Haitians interviewed reported that they are more likely to bring up their future children as Haitian-Canadian, but that they would also teach their children to respect and understand the ethnic heritage of the child's mother. They believe this is important because it will open more doors for their future children. This type of thinking is directly influenced by their gang affiliation; all these youths identify themselves as Haitian-Canadian but believe it is important to understand and learn about different ethnic cultures (see chapter 4). An 18-year-old Haitian-Canadian explains:

> *I would really love to have a son. I would bring up my child as a Haitian and a Canadian at the same time. I will teach him the Haitian values and I will also teach him the Canadian values. More options you provide your children the more you leave them to choose who they are most comfortable to want to be. He would be the type of person that would respect both cultures and I think this is important because he will have more of an identity and he will be less likely to be controlled by others. My son will be a leader, he will be like me. If I marry a Latina girl, my son will learn to be Haitian, Latino and Canadian. The more languages and*

> *cultures he will be exposed to the better. I would like him to speak all the three languages and to have the benefit of all the cultures. Yes, I would like him to have the benefit of all three cultures and if not more, I want him to speak French, English, Creole and Spanish (interviewee 12).*

Almost all of the Jamaicans (N = 9) claimed that they would choose to date and/or marry a Jamaican girl. A 17-year-old Jamaican-Canadian (interviewee 27) best exemplifies the group's sentiments:

> *Jamaican girls are sweet, just sweet, I swear. Sweet means they are good and everything. They are fit. To tell you the truth whenever I look at a girl I don't look at Oh she is nice, or if she has a nice personality. I just look at what kind of body she has, and if she has a big ass and everything and if her face is nice and that is what I look at still you know. But most Jamaican girls are good-looking and they are very nice and dedicated to their man.*

What is common among all Jamaican youth (N=10) from this sample is that they are not attracted to Haitian girls and completely steer clear of them.

> *I have never seen a lot of pretty Haitian girls, I have seen a lot of ugly Haitian girls* [he laughs]. *I swear I see a lot of ugly Haitian girls (16-year-old Jamaican-Canadian, interviewee 31).*

> *Real, real Haitian girls like both their parents are Haitian, I can't really handle it. I don't know some of them stink. Some of them really do smell. They have a distinct odor to them. I don't know, the only Haitian girl that I see myself dealing with are the ones from the States, because they have their kind of stylish thing going on you know. It is like you can be talking to someone down there and you don't even know they are Haitian but down here you will know automatically. Their whole style the way they move. The way they act, the way they talk you know. Like Haitian people down here that is all they speak their French and their Creole and everything. Haitians down there* [in the US] *they speak their Creole it is more in a closed area with their families. But they are always speaking English but you can never tell the difference because they don't have that Haitian accent. Their language is French and Creole and that is all they speak you know. I stay completely away from Haitian girls and are willing to have sexual adventures with French girls. I would never consider having a long- term relationship with a French girl nor a Haitian girl (17-year-old Jamaican-Immigrant, interviewee 17).*

All of the Jamaicans agreed that they would bring up their future children as Jamaicans.

> *I don't have a kid. I would want him to be brought up as a Jamaican because I come from there (16-year-old Jamaican-born interviewee 23).*
>
> *I don't know if I have a kid I am just going to bring him up and you know he is going to know a little bit about Jamaica and things like that you know (17-year-old Jamaican-Canadian interviewee 27).*

Jamaicans generally prefer to conduct personal relationships within their own ethnic group – although they are prepared to turn to French-Canadian girls for sex. And like Haitian youths, one might surmise that this willingness to use white French girls for sex is related to the racism Jamaican youths experience from white Canadian Society. Like Haitian youths, the Jamaican youths interviewed also made derogatory comments about Haitian girls.

All of the Latino youths said that they prefer to date Latinas, whether they were from the same part of the world as the youths or not. A 17-year-old El Salvadorian-born youth explains:

> *Yes, I prefer to date Latinas because I understand them and I know where they are coming from. They understand more how you feel and it is easier to relate to someone that comes from the same culture. On the one hand it is not always good because when you love them you lose them right away. In other words if you love someone so much the way I loved my Cuban girlfriend and she knew where I came from...in my case it is being a gang member. She didn't like it one bit that I was in the gang. She begged me so many times to get out of it. But I knew that I couldn't even at the risk of losing her.*
>
> *Another reason why I prefer to date Latina girls is because of the way they are, they have really strong characters, and they are full of fire and I like that. For example, they are very spirited and they are very religious at the same time. My ex-girlfriend went to church every Sunday and this was very important for her (interviewee 8).*

All the Latin youth agree that when it came down to settling down and getting married they would only marry a Latin girl (again, not necessarily from the same country as the boy himself).

Latina girls are sexy and sweet and they speak the language of Amor. I would only marry a Latin girl (a 17-year- old Dominican Republican immigrant interviewee 41).

Most (N=8) said they would bring up their future children as one hundred percent Latino.

I would definitely bring up my child as a Latino. No I do not have a child right now. But if I had a child I would definitely raise him as a Latino. This is very important for me because I am Latino, my son would have my blood and he is Latino (a 17 year-old El Salvadorian born interviewee 3).

Yes, it is necessary that I date and/or marry girls who come from the same ethnic background because they are more likely to understand a guy like me. Also the girl is able to speak Spanish to my parents. I have a girlfriend and she is Latina and I have a son with her and my son has 100% Latino blood in him. His blood is not contaminated with another culture's blood. I am Latino and I am proud of this and this is why I only date Latina girls, they are also the most beautiful girls in the world and this is my opinion (a 20 year-old Ecuadorian born interviewee 22).

Only two 17-year-old Chilean Canadians (interviewee 29 and 35) claimed that they would bring up future children as Latin-Canadian (that is, not just Latino but also Canadian), but they emphasized that it would be important to emphasize to their children their Latino roots be respected first.

I would bring up my child first as Chilean of course and then as a Canadian. I want my son to be respectful towards his family, to go to church, to speak Spanish, and be proud to be Chilean and Canadian at the same time (interviewee 29).

If I had a child I would bring up this child as a Chilean Canadian. I would like to teach him about his roots. There are a lot of things I would like to teach my child. I would start out with my culture and then I would move on to other things (interviewee 35).

Clearly, it is important to the Latino youths to embrace their ethnic background; I have seen this among all other aspects of their lives as young gang members (see

Chapters 3, 4 and 5) and it is no surprise to find that this group of individuals feels most strongly about protecting their heritage through their long-term relationships. Protecting their language and culture are aspects which are consistently reinforced among their gang members and this attitude is perpetuated with their personal relationship choices, including their opinions about their future children's upbringing. What is interesting is that the only two youths who were open to bringing up their future children as both Latin and Canadian were the only individuals who were born in Canada.

Among those of the "other ethnic group" category, just four of the ten reported that they would only date and marry girls from the same cultural background. A 15-year-old Algerian-Immigrant (interviewee 36) comments:

> *I would prefer to date and marry girls that come from Algeria. I don't believe in mixing the races, it is okay to have them as friends and to hang out with them and all but to date someone from a different culture I don't like that. Let's say you are dating some girl that comes from a different culture and you invite her to come have supper at your house while your parents meet her. Everyone there at the dinner speak Arab and she is the only one that doesn't speak the language and if she isn't Muslim this may cause problems. She will have a difficult time adapting to the Muslim culture and she would want things her way and this is why I prefer to date a girl that comes from the same ethnic origin as myself, it is simpler and less complicated the relationship. I don't drink alcohol and I go to the mosque.*

And as might be expected, these four youths stated that they would want to raise their future children following their own ethnic heritage.

> *I would bring up my child as an Algerian (15 year-old Algerian born, interviewee 36).*

> *I would bring him up as a Portuguese and I would bring him up with everything I was brought up with. To basically listen to your father. I would send my kid to Portuguese school (17 year-old Portuguese immigrant, interviewee 26).*

Relationships Outside the Ethnic Group

As half the French sample interviewed expressed a desire to remain within their ethnic group for relationships, the other half had no strong feelings on the subject. They were open to dating (and marrying) outside their culture but also dating French-Canadian girls. As a 17-year-old (interviewee 4) remarks:

> *It is a little personal the answer but I have to say with regards to sexual relations girls that come from different cultures...it is just not the same as for example having sexual relations with girls that come from the same culture. I prefer to date Asian girls and Spanish girls. I like Asian girls because they have beautiful black hair. I love girls that have dark hair. They are beautiful, and it is sure I would never date a big girl of 300 pounds. I am very attracted to Asian girls. Also I am very attracted to Latina girls because they have dark hair as well. I love their culture as well. If there is a good looking Quebecois girl it is for sure I wouldn't mind dating her, but I have to say I tend to look at Asian girls more. There are so many Quebecois girls out there and Asian girls are more rare to find. Anyway, when you see a beautiful girl it is natural to just want to be with her, you just don't want to sleep with her but you want to have her for a girlfriend and that is when everything changes.*
>
> *I don't necessarily want to marry a girl who is Quebecois because that is what most Quebecois guys do, marry someone who comes from the same culture. I am the type of guy who likes being "marginal" who likes to be different from everyone else. I wouldn't mind being in a mixed relationship, what is important for me is the person I am with and how she is on the inside but of course she has to be good looking. Whether she is "yellow or orange for me it means nothing, or it is all the same to me as long as she is beautiful. So I would consider marrying a Quebecois girl depending on how pretty she is. But I would also consider marrying someone from a different culture (interviewee 4).*

These youths, willing to marry or cohabit outside their own ethnic group, were also open to raising their children in or exposing them to the ethnic background of the child's mother. As a 17-year-old remarks,

> *It depends on who I marry or have a child with. If for example, I marry an Asian girl then I will definitely bring up my child as an Asian, not like a Quebecois. I am not into just bringing up my son or daughter as a Quebecois I think it is important that my son or daughter gets to know the best of both worlds.*

> *It is simple, if I love the person then no one will take her away from me. I presently do not have any children. Again it depends on the girl I marry as well if she is all screwed up for whatever reason then of course I will bring up my child as a Quebecois because that is all I know who to be. If I spoke Spanish for example, then I would teach my son and daughter to speak Spanish as well. So there you go the girl has to be beautiful, preferably come from a different culture, and have a sincere heart and attitude (interviewee 4).*

A 20-year old (interviewee 6) reveals the following:

> *Let's say I would marry a Chinese girl. I would make sure that our child would be brought up as a Chinese and as a French Canadian. Since we live in Canada and I would want my child to appreciate the mother's culture (that is if she comes from a different culture) and must also appreciate her Canadian roots (respondent's culture).*

Nevertheless, although these youths are willing to marry outside their ethnicity and to raise their children in the traditions of another culture, they still believe that they would want to expose their children to French-Canadian culture as well. Thus, it is not a question of rejecting their roots, but exposing their children to the cultures of both parents. This desire, and a concomitant pride in French-Canadian culture, likely reflect the fact that these youths are French-speaking and will want their children to speak their language. It may also reflect the gang subculture, particularly among those who share nationalist sentiments. That is, youths who share nationalist sentiments are more likely to date and marry girls from their own ethnic culture and to want to raise their future children as French Quebecois. These individuals are also more likely to favor political independence and emphasize the importance of maintaining the French linguistic – and Quebecois cultural – heritage. `They have no desire to mix with girls from other ethnic cultures. Participating in endogamous relations allows some of these French Quebecois individuals to maintain ethnic boundaries which separate them from Blacks and other

ethnic minorities.

The majority of Haitian youths (N=8) are open to relationships, including marriage, outside their ethnic group. Haitian respondents also reported that they would have sexual adventures with French girls because they are fun, don't ask too many questions, and they are "easy" – compared to Latina or Haitian girls. However, these sexual adventures would not extend to a serious relationship. One could hypothesize that this reliance on white girls for sex only is a response to the racism felt by Haitian male youths from French-Canadian society (see Chapter 4). Thus, the Haitian youths may gain 'revenge' for these racist attitudes and behavior by using white women for sex only, tossing them aside in the same way the youths themselves have been thrown away by French-Canadian society. In addition, this behavior on the part of Haitian youths may earn them status with their fellow gang members; thus, while spitting in the face of racism, they are earning 'props' as gang members. Ultimately, though, they inflict their anger and frustration on French girls and by extension sully the reputation of those girls with French-Canadian male youths, rather than targeting the true objects of their discrimination – French male youths. A 17-year-old Haitian-Canadian explains:

> *French girls are sluts and they sleep with just about anybody. I got no respect for that, girls like that ain't no long-term thing [...] What also doesn't work is having some White guy with a Haitian girl or vice versa, come on man I just don't understand that. You just don't do that. In a sort of way it bothers me if my little sister would date a White guy shit... It would be like a slap in the face, I wouldn't like it man. Like for example one of my girl cousins married this White guy and I didn't show up at her wedding. I don't believe in mixed marriages what kind of crap is that... it is no good for the two cultures to mix together and form some kind of alliance it just can't work I am telling you it could never work. It is gonna fuck up their kids they really don't know who they are White or Black, and the kids at school won't accept them as one or the other and this is why some kids get all fucked up. I give you an example if the father feels that it is okay to slap his kid and the mother doesn't think it is right, it is going to cause conflict with the parents and it is gonna reflect on their kids. It just can't work (interviewee 5).*

Interestingly, these eight Haitian youths revealed that they would prefer to date or marry Latin girls, because they are beautiful and full of life.

> *I have to admit I would prefer to date Latina girls. What I like about Latina girls is that they are tough and have a lot of spunk. But honestly, if I had a choice I would prefer to date or marry a Latina girl because she knows how to charm you. When I think about it Haitian and Latina girls have the same kind of attitude but I find Latina girls much more pretty, more outgoing, and I love how they dance (16-year-old Haitian-born interviewee 1).*

> *I like Latina girls because they are rough. When you fuck around with them you know, when you screwing up with them or with their friends and stuff like that I like them because they fight back, they are all on fire (17-year-old Haitian-Canadian interviewee 5).*

Furthermore, these youths rejected Haitian girls, whom they painted in very negative terms: too possessive, manipulative, less inclined to have good personal hygiene or take care of themselves physically. A 17-year-old Haitian-born individual (interviewee 14) and a 17-year-old Haitian-Canadian (interviewee 5) best demonstrates the majority of respondents' sentiments on why they would never date or marry a Haitian girl:

> *The Black girls especially Haitian girls are dirty, some of them really smell, and they are aggressive. They watch their men like hawks, and they wonder why they are alone and have no men in their lives. They bust your balls twenty-four seven, and they will call everyone they know just to get into contact with you (interviewee 14).*

> *The Haitian girls are manipulators. They get into your pockets, they always want money, that is for real. At one time I was in love with a Haitian girl and I was fucking around with her* [that means hanging out with her] *and she already had a kid, of course during this time I had some money in my pockets and she is telling me things like ... " I have no money, I have no money, and can you give me some money and I need money cause I have a kid... " she would say shit like that to me, so of course I would give her some money and then she kept asking me for more money practically every week. So I got fed up and shit her kid wasn't even my kid and she expected that I give her money and she would use sex to get her money, then I started feeling like her pimp shit... and she was milking me for all the money I had. I dumped her ass after I realized she was taking advantage of me.*

> *But you know, that is how Haitian girls are they get themselves pregnant and then they expect some poor bastard to take care of them, why the fuck they get themselves pregnant in the first place if they can't take care of themselves let alone a kid (interviewee 5).*

What is particularly interesting about the Haitian youths is that they are so put off by the idea of dating or marrying a Haitian girl, even though most (eight) of these youths are from female-headed families. One might surmise that these youths identified Haitian girls too strongly with their mothers – strong and matriarchal – and that their gang membership was a way of escaping this strong, dominating female relationship, one which they did not want to echo in their own personal relationships of choice. One may argue that the attraction of Latina girls is because these girls are neither white nor are they black.

> *I can see more a Latino guy with a Haitian girl that is more of the same culture man. We understand each other better as a people because we are still considered immigrants with a very specific culture and way of thinking...Latinos like Blacks still had to struggle to get by where the white Quebecois have it good and they just don't understand where we are at (17 year old Haitian Canadian interviewee 5).*

As was stated in the previous section, nine of the ten Jamaican youths interviewed said they preferred Jamaican girls. Only one, a 16-year-old Jamaican-Canadian (interviewee 24) has explained that although he would be open to date Spanish girls, when it came to settling down for a long-term relationship he too would choose to be with a Jamaican girl.

> *If I had to choose someone to marry I would prefer to marry a Jamaican girl. I like Spanish girls for the body thing too you know. I like it yo, when they speak Spanish and that shit. You know how people say that French is the language of love I say yo, Spanish is the real language of love. Spanish drives me crazy. But, I have to say I wouldn't mind having a Spanish chick just for a girlfriend but when it came down to marriage I would definitely go for a Jamaican woman.*

Like the Haitian youths, all ten Jamaican respondents said they would be willing to have sexual adventures with French-Canadian girls but would not have them as girlfriends or for longer-term relationships.

> *As far as French or Quebecois girls are concerned to me they are whores, I don't mean to say it like that, but in a sense some of them are real freaks. They are bound to do whatever, you can't really trust the Quebecois or whatever. Because a lot of them start off at a young age and whatever. A lot of them move on to a lot of people you know. Like in a sense from what I have seen personally, I am not speaking for every French or Quebecois girl. From where I went to school almost every Quebecois girl is like a whore. No matter from the type of clothes they wear, either from the lies they are covering or from the straight lies they feed you and everyone knows that they are whores. Except they always like to sleep around. You have sex with Quebecois girls and you don't have a real relationship with them. I can't see myself being married to a Quebecois girl or getting serious with any one of them any time soon (a 17-year-old Jamaican-Canadian interviewee 32)*

> *About Quebecois girls or French girls and everything we consider them hoes too like you know. I don't know there is not one French girl that I haven't met that I haven't slept with like you know. Every single French girl you know [...] man, they just sleep around with anybody you know. I don't know if there is any clean French girl but every French girl that I have met they always sleep around and they are easy and yo, you say you want to do it, they will say yeah, or oui, you know. That's right* [he laughs] *(a 17-year-old Jamaican-Canadian, interviewee 33).*

Just two of the Latino interviewees, both 17-year-old Chilean Canadians (interviewee 29 and 35), claimed that although Latin girls would be their preference they would however be open to date girls that come from other ethnic cultures.

> *But I have to say it also depends on the girl. In the past, I also went out with a Haitian girl, and I liked it too... Haitian girls have strong characters as well. I like Haitian girls because they are nice (interviewee 29)*

> *I wouldn't mind dating an Asian girl if I were given a choice, because they would have wisdom like me [referred to himself as a Buddhist]. They would be a little bit more relaxed, they would be easy going also. Their personality would be more easy going. Don't get me wrong I still love Latin girls, but I also find Asian girls*

cute and sexy too (interviewee 35).

Again, like the Haitian and Jamaican respondents, the Latino said that they were open to having sexual relations with French girls but did not respect them enough to settle down with them for longer term relationships.

> *If I had a choice though, I have to say I am not that crazy about Quebecois girls because the majority of them (not all of them of course) have a slight problem. What I don't like about Quebecois girls is that the majority are Hoes. That means they are sluts. You see what is different about a Quebecois girl or should I say what is bad about her is that she may be your "girl" but at the same time she has no problem sleeping around with other guys while she is dating you. And a Latino man like me can't have this, there is no way. Put it this way, Quebecois girls will sleep with just about anyone. For example, many times I went to a Spanish club and there would be a couple of single Quebecois girls hanging at the bar. You buy them a drink, you talk to them a little bit and before you know it they are having sex with you, that's right just like that. They are just too bloody easy and I personally cannot have respect for a girl like that or worse have her as a girlfriend where she probably slept with half of Montreal or worse, most of your friends already slept with her. My friends would laugh behind my back or lose respect for me altogether if I had or should I say any of us had a girlfriend who is a Hoe and unfortunately you will see this a lot with Quebecois girls. What is important for a Latino man especially like myself is the moment I decide to choose a girl to be my girlfriend it is understood that she has to be faithful and true to me the way I will be towards her. My girlfriend will not make a fool out of me so that people can call me a Cabron [Spanish term for idiot] – this is why I stick with my own kind Latinas because I know how they think, sure they like to flirt too it is in their nature, but they understand that if they want to get serious it is with one man at a time and that suits me fine (a 20 year- old Ecuadorian born interviewee 49).*

Just over half of those interviewed in the "other" ethnic group category (N=6) said that they would be open to date and marry girls that come from similar cultural origins or different cultural origins. A 17-year-old Portuguese-Canadian (interviewee 38) best exemplifies the group's sentiments:

> *I had a girlfriend. She was Cambodian. My parents don't care either way who I choose to date, they never told me things like I had to only date a Portuguese girl. In fact my parents met my former girlfriend who is Cambodian. They accepted her and they really liked her. I would prefer of course, to marry a Portuguese girl because she comes from the same place I come from and our children would not be confused and they would learn to speak the Portuguese language and this is*

very important to me. But I have to say I wouldn't mind dating girls from other cultures as well, I think it could be an interesting experience and it may happen that I could marry someone who is not necessarily Portuguese. I never thought that I would date a Cambodian girl and we dated for a year and it was a nice relationship and she is a nice girl, things didn't work out. She didn't know that I was a member of the gang. I broke up with her because I ended up here.

These same individuals (N=6) said that they would bring up their future children acknowledging their own (the father's) ethnic background but also that of the child's mother.

I haven't really thought about that stuff, that is whether I would bring up my son as Cree, or as something else, depending on who the mother of my son is. Maybe I would bring him up as Cree, if I would end up having a child with my present girlfriend. It depends. If let's say for example, my present girlfriend who is Egyptian is gung ho about bringing up our children as Egyptian, I wouldn't exactly put up a fight. I would say okay whatever. I would bring my children to POW Wows and stuff. I would like them to learn Cree but I am not going to force anything on them that is for sure (18 year-old Cree-Canadian interviewee 28).

I don't have a child. But if I had a child I would bring up my child as Italian-Canadian. The reason why I would bring up my child this way is because I want my child to learn to speak Italian, and to learn to speak English and Quebecois (17 year-old Italian-Canadian, interviewee 39).

I would bring up my child as an Irish Canadian. This is important in order to get a job you need to know French and English. I would like to have kids one day, like get married and stuff. But it also depends on who I marry. Let's say I marry a Greek girl for example, the child I have with her will be brought up as Irish, Greek, Canadian and will also learn to speak different languages like English, French and Greek (17 year-old Irish-Canadian, interviewee 42).

For these youths, their ethnicity is not so vital to them that their relationships must remain within the group and their children must be raised solely in the tradition of that particular ethnic group. They do acknowledge it would be important for their children to learn about their roots, but these roots would encompass the heritage of the mother as well as the father.

Discussion

Personal relationships for these youths did seem to be influenced by their ethnic origins, some more so than others; as has been noted elsewhere, much of the pressure to marry or date within the group has been prescribed by the group itself. In fact, it seems that for French-Canadian, Jamaican, and Latino youths, it is important to choose a mate (for a long-term relationship or marriage and certainly as a mother of a child) from within their own ethnic group.

Haitian youths in this sample were also willing to date or marry girls of another ethnicity, and although they would want to raise their children as Haitian-Canadian, they would teach those children to respect and understand the ethnic heritage of the child's mother. These youths were clearly willing to participate in exogamous practices (dating or marrying outside their ethnic group).

In this study, the Latinos prefer to date and marry inside their ethnic culture, which is contrary to previous findings (e.g., Fu, 2001), while the Haitians prefer to inter-racially date and would prefer to marry outside their ethnic group. Dating is seen as casual and not necessarily connected to marriage, so the idea of marriage for some is still a long way away given their young ages. Their attitudes towards inter-ethnic dating and marriage may change with maturity and life experience. However, one explanation for why Latinos of this sample prefer to date and marry within their own ethnic group is that compared to the other ethnic groups in this study, religion and ethnicity are important to the youths, both in gang and personal lives, and these factors may influence intimate partner choices. Most often Catholics tend to avoid interracial relationships because they are perceived as 'sinful,' (Yancey, 2002); theological beliefs that prohibit racial exogamy

have been historically and philosophically based on conservative Christian dogma (Yancey, 2002).

The Haitian youths tend to be more open and willing to socially integrate compared with the Jamaican youths, who are adamant in distinguishing themselves from Haitians and who practice exogamous relations. This openness towards inter-racial dating on the part of the Haitian youths also appears to reflect practices of contemporary African Americans, who "are statistically just as likely to interracially date as members of other races, yet African-Americans are less likely to intermarry than other minority groups" (Yancey, 2002, p. 183). Within the African American group there appears to be a wider acceptance to inter-dating as opposed to inter-marriage. "This indicates that there may be different social pressures facing African American Blacks when it comes to exogamous marriages as compared to interracial dating" (Yancey, 2002, p. 183). Again, marriage and dating are two quite different affairs: one is more casual and the other is (ideally) permanent, and choices may change depending on the individual's life circumstances (e.g., age, maturity, educational status, and place of residence), making ethnicity of a partner more or less important.

Another factor that seemed relevant was that Haitians and Jamaicans wish to neither date nor marry Haitian girls. Jamaicans want to remain distinct from Haitians (and this also includes staying away from Haitian girls), and are also resolute about bringing up future children as Jamaican. Haitian male youths see Haitian girls as strong and matriarchal, traits these young men feel make the girls too much like their mothers.

However, it seemed that those who were willing to pursue long-term relationships with girls of a different ethnicity than their own were equally willing to keep their

children in touch with the ethnic roots of both parents. Such an attitude may be connected to the fact that for these youths, particularly of the 'other ethnic group' category, gang membership is not solely based on specific race and/or ethnicity. Most refer to themselves as "Hyphenated Canadians" and are first or second generation Canadians; they are therefore more likely to be open to marry outside their ethnic group. In fact, among Whites, most marriages today involve some degree of ethnic intermixing (Alba, 1995; Waters, 1990).

French girls carried a particularly bad reputation among Haitian, Jamaican, and Latino youths, all of whom agreed that they had no problems having sexual relations with French girls. These girls were seen as sexually accessible and available, but this accessibility and availability made them, in the eyes of these youths, unsuitable candidates for long-term romantic or even marital partners, and definitely unsuitable as mother material. One could argue that these youths used French girls sexually to symbolically 'dis' French youths and perhaps wider French-Canadian society. This attitude is strongly reinforced within their gang's mentality. The fact that Haitian, Jamaican, and Latino youth claim that they are open to having sexual relations with French girls (some have said they have had sex with young French women) likely stems from the fact that French girls from an early age are encouraged by their parents to express sexual liberty. French parents usually impose fewer restrictions on their children and encourage the use of birth control pills (Meintel. 1989), which means that young French women are more sexually available (because of less fear of unwanted pregnancy). The French youth of this study on the other hand, have claimed that they will never marry or date Black girls but are open to having sexual relations with them. The French

negative perceptions towards blacks are also encouraged by their fellow gang affiliates.

Although previous research has indicated that Blacks tend to be more sexually promiscuous compared to other ethnic groups (Giordano, 2003), this study indicates that this is true for other groups too. French, Haitian, Jamaican, Latino youth interviewed said they were open to having casual inter-racial sexual relations. Since dating appears to be more casual and not necessarily connected to marriage, inter-dating can be viewed "as sowing wild oats rather than making a permanent relationship with family and racial identity ramifications" (Yancey, 2002, p. 181). This openness to casual sex may also be attributed to the fact that youth who are gang members may hold a different value system than non-gang youths with respect to sexual issues. One may also speculate that because the peer group is very important for these youth in gangs, they are influenced by the ideas imposed by their comrades that may encourage casual sexual relations. Non-gang members may be exposed to a different value system that may encourage education, participation in sports, stronger religious values and discourage pre-marital sex.

In short the French, Jamaican, and Latinos youths' choice in personal intimate relationships are more likely to be collective and frequent. Gang affiliates within these ethnic groups share similar collective sentiments with reference to the willingness to participate in endogamous gender relations. These particular ethnic gangs express common sentiments (shared cultural values and customs) that influence the choice of a partner; ultimately, there is a desire to sustain and maintain their ethnic heritage. They prefer to date or marry inside their ethnic culture and to bring up future children in accordance with their ethnic roots; this allows them to maintain ethnic boundaries. Such personal choices are communally and frequently reinforced by their gang associates.

However, one cannot deny that, as with all other variables these youths were interviewed about, Latinos hold the strongest feelings in favor of endogamous relations. What appears to influence this preference is their symbolic allegiance to Catholicism and Latino culture, both of which encourage endogamous relations (South, 1993).

The youths within the category of *other* base their personal intimate relationships on symbolic criteria. Gang participation neither encourages nor discourages intimate relationships within their own ethnic group, and these youth therefore have the choice of dating or marrying whomever they want. For these youth in particular, their marital and dating patterns are based on a more emotional and cognitive attachment. Their choices are based on individual choice, which is voluntary and situational, dependent on the particular context they find themselves in. Shared ethnic culture is advantageous (both share language and culture) but not necessary for a relationship. Most feel that, depending on who they marry, they will allow their future child to be brought up acknowledging their father's ethnicity as well as the mother's (even if she is from a different cultural heritage). Allowing their future children to acknowledge both ethnic cultures may be perceived as a symbolic declaration of ethnic identity and that their hypothetical children would be free to express their ethnic identity in a more flexible and subjective manner that is not restrictive to any one specific culture.

For Haitians, personal relationship choices are more external. Gang members encourage dating and marrying outside their group. As discussed in Chapter 4, Haitians do see themselves as Haitian-Canadians first and foremost; one can conclude that this is related to their experience of racism in Canadian society. Nevertheless, they do ascribe some importance to the Canadian component of their lives (viz., their self-definition as

"Haitian-Canadian"), and their openness to dating and/or marrying outside the group may offer a way of assimilating to the broader, multicultural Canadian society. They also rebel against their own culture by refusing to date Haitian girls, but at the same time, proclaim their distaste for mainstream French culture by treating French girls merely as sexual entities.

An individual's choice of girlfriend or partner does not seem to be driven by gang mores, although gang members do tend to share similar views about potential girlfriends and sexual partners. In sum, though, one can say that ethnicity does play a role in the personal relationships of these youths, being an important consideration for some (particularly the Latino and French youths) and a minor consideration for others.

CHAPTER 7: REACTIONS TO AGENTS OF SOCIAL CONTROL

I have examined many aspects of youth gang members in relation to their ethnicity and their views about gang life. In this chapter I will explore how racial and ethnic identities may be socially constructed by agents of social control, and how these youth react to such external stimuli. I will investigate their perceptions of how agents of social control (intervention workers, social workers, teachers – both at the centers and at regular schools – and police offers) in turn perceive them. This analysis allows me to assess how these young men react to racism or perceived racism, and how their relationships with agents of social control have symbolically shaped these young men's ethnic identities.

The Birmingham perspective also drew on labeling theory to explain how societal reaction towards deviant youth subcultures creates moral panic as a result of some of these youth being identified as "folk devils" by the larger society. Labeling theory is a means to better understand how societal reaction aids in creating and solidifying gang identity, and racial and ethnic stereotypes. Consequently, youth in gangs may be treated differently by society not only because they belong to gangs but because they also represent a particular racial and ethnic group. Understanding youths' perceptions of how they are perceived by agents of social control is valuable because deviants (those who have broken 'the rules') are often seen as outsiders – but these outsiders may feel that the arbitrators of 'the system' are also outsiders to the youths' own lives (Becker, 1963).[1] The reader will be better able to understand whether youths' reactions to agents of social control result from perceived or real racism, which itself is a response to their ethnic

[1] Becker applied the labeling perspective in his work but was not himself a Birmingham theorist.

culture and identity.

A new concept in the field of ethnicity research is that of ethnic matching; that is, does it make a difference to delivery of services if providers (e.g., health care, teaching, social work, policing) are of the same or different ethnicity to the client. Researchers examine how meaningful ethnic identity is and how it operates in social relations between clients and social agents. A series of case studies has focused on matching minority social agents with minority clients (Bortolussi, 1999; Couton, 1999; Weinfeld, 1999; Russell, et al., 1996; Snowden et al., 1995; Sue, 1992; Matsuoka & Sorenson, 1991). It is believed that through *ethnic matching* will ensure efficient and fair delivery of services to an ethnic clientele. This literature offers a parallel to assess the meaning of ethnic identity of the subjects of this dissertation, including how ethnic identity plays a role in their daily interactions with agents of authority – that is, is it seen as better or worse to deal with social control agents of the same or different ethnicity. I will explore whether these youth prefer to deal with social agents from the same ethnic heritage and whether this is a collective belief shared by all members of that ethnic group, or whether such a preference is more an individual one with symbolic connotations. Youth in gangs may be treated differently by agents of social control not only because they belong to gangs but also because they represent a particular racial and ethnic group. Consequently, some youths will be identified and treated as outsiders with a marginalized external identity.

Our capacity to understand these youths' perceptions of their own lives and how society sees them will offer avenues to address youth delinquency through developing appropriate plans, programs and policies, ultimately targeting rehabilitation, reintegration

and lowering of recidivism rates.

Ethnic Matching

Several studies of ethnic matching have been conducted (Bortolussi, 1999; Couton, 1999; Weinfeld, 1999; Russell et al., 1996; Snowden et al., 1995; Sue, 1992; Matsuoko & Sorensen, 1991) Findings have been mixed: ethnic matching appears to be beneficial in some cases and not in others.

A study of visible minority police officers in Ottawa suggested that shared language between police officers and city residents is advantageous for relationships between police and visible minorities in that city: "a common language offers more than a simple medium of communication; it can also create a relationship of trust and confidence" (Bortolussi, 1999, p. 100). Furthermore, "the presence of visible minority officers holds symbolic value: although these officers may not perform differently or more effectively than white officers, their presence may provide a measure of reassurance and comfort for members of visible minorities" (Bortolussi, 1999, p. 107).

Interviews with 45 health care and social service professionals in the Montreal area supported the positive aspects of ethnic matching (Weinfeld, 1999). Like Bortolussi, Weinfeld found that shared language facilitated effective and efficient delivery of services. Furthermore, Weinfeld noted that language acted as an anchor for better cultural understanding and thus generates an atmosphere of trust between both client and service provider due to the provider's cultural competence.

Haitian teachers in Montreal were found to share a common culture with their Haitian students, which gave them insider knowledge about the known social deprivation and poor social conditions Haitian children and their parents experienced while living in

Haiti (Couton, 1999). The Haitian teachers felt they were more cognizant of this reality and as a result felt competent in helping these students cope with adapting to the educational system in Montreal – and indeed could positively impact the students' education. Again, language was an important factor in this situation because: "many teachers indicate the ability to communicate in Creole is frequently an asset when explaining difficult points or trying to establish a closer relationship with certain students" (Couton, 1999, p. 152). The assumption is that it creates a better relationship between student and teacher.

However, Bortolussi (1999) and Weinfeld (1999) point out that there are downsides to ethnic matching. In the case of police services, younger people may perceive police officers from their own ethnic group as sell-outs and may resent them as a result; also, the minority offender may expect to be treated more leniently by an officer of the same ethnicity (Bortolussi, 1999). The reality may be that some officers may rather treat minority offenders more harshly by being more verbally aggressive towards them when speaking to them in their shared language, perhaps an act by the police officer to demonstrate that s/he is not being lenient simply because of their shared ethnicity (Bortolussi, 1999). In the case of the Montreal health service providers, some service providers claimed that every professional (regardless of cultural background) should adopt a universalistic orientation to care that expresses cultural sensitivity to difference: "any true professional ought to be able to treat any problem, regardless of the origin of the client or patient" (Weinfeld, 1999, p. 134). Other care providers reported that some of their clients resented them because they feel that the service provider understands too much about their culture, which is not advantageous to the client. For example, the

provider might see through stories told or claims made by a client because of client and provider's shared ethnic background – that is, the service provider *knows too much* and therefore will be more likely to be judgmental as a result (Weinfeld, 1999). And in the case of the Haitian teachers, some felt that they might be perceived as favoring some students over others because of significant cultural commonality (Couton, 1999). Other teachers believed that teaching has to transcend the factors of culture and race, and that teachers have to be aware of the diversity and different needs of their student population (Couton, 1999).

Shared language and culture predominate as the advantage in ethnic match, as shown in work by Snowden et al, (1995) who found that when mental health service clients were matched with a clinician of the same ethnic culture, they had fewer emergency service visits than did clients who were not matched. Similarly, Russell et al., (1996) observed that therapists who were ethnically matched with their clients were better able to understand the behavior and verbalizations of their clients and therefore were able to avoid cultural biases in treatment and management of their clients. In the field of social work, Matsuoka and Sorenson (1991) found it is important to provide services that are effective and sensitive to the needs of the ethnic community, and are based on a multicultural service approach.

Reactions to Intervention Workers

It is not possible to generalize that all non-white, non-French youths ethnicities were treated poorly or unfairly by intervention workers (IW) those working at the detention centers) given the statements by the respondents. For example, most of the French (six respondents) and Jamaicans (nine of the ten interviewees) felt that they were

treated unfairly by intervention workers. In contrast, most of the Haitians (six respondents) and Latinos (nine respondents) felt they were treated fairly by intervention workers, while among those of the 'other' ethnic category, half felt they were treated fairly and the other half felt they were not. What is particularly interesting is that French youths felt that they were treated better than black youths because they were French (like the intervention workers). And what is also interesting is the reasons for youths' perceptions of IWs vis-à-vis their treatment of the youths.

French youths generally pointed to a sense of petty authoritarianism on the part of IWs, through belittling the youths, denying them privileges, reprimanding them for minor reasons, as well as their enjoying better conditions (e.g., having access to comfortable furniture). We can see this from several comments by French youths.

> *On some occasions they will devalue you by making snide remarks and saying things like put that stick down you look like the killer you are, and admittedly some guys here like when the intervention workers say things like that in front of everyone but as for myself I have to say that I don't like it and I don't appreciate it. I am not interested anymore in having this bad boy image. I realize that is not respect and when the intervention worker reminds you of who you were on the outside with the comments they make that aren't so nice it is almost like they never want you to forget it and they base their judgments solely on your past and not who you are now it is almost like some expect us never to change by their attitudes. It is about changing our attitudes to be better. But my question is what about their attitudes and being more open. Some of us are no longer impressed by the crimes and the streets (interviewee 4, a 17-year-old youth).*

> *Often they* [intervention worker] *will tell you something you don't like and if you answer them they will tell you to go to your room. And sometimes they scream at you and if you scream back at them they will place you in your room. Sometimes they laugh at you and make fun of you in front of everyone else and if you make fun of the intervention worker in front of everyone (the other workers and inmates) they will place you in your room. They attempt to put you down in front of everyone. When they put you in your room it is long, and they take everything away from you like your stereo, they take away your books, and when you are in the room you are twiddling your thumbs, it could be really long and frustrating once you get locked up in your room (interviewee 2, an 18-year-old).*

> *For the intervention workers they have the comfortable chairs, we are stuck with the hard wooden chairs. If any of us dare to sit on the intervention worker's chair they will take a fit and tell us to get off the chair. They will shove you off without warning. They sometimes sit on those freaken chairs the whole day, they just observe all of us without saying a word or talking to any of us. They laugh at us when we tell them that all they are doing is sitting on the chairs. It depends on their moods if they are having a bad day, they could ignore us for the whole day, or sit on the chair and laugh and make fun of the guys. They sometimes treat us like we are a big joke to them (interviewee 6, a 20-year-old).*

Only four French youth claimed that the intervention workers treated them fairly, and this was only because they (the youths) followed the rules and did not cause trouble. A 16-year-old best exemplifies what some of these youth believed:

> *In general they are okay if you don't piss them off they don't piss you off, if you are good to them they are good to you, if you are nice to them they are nice to you and they feel the way you feel. It is not that complicated (16-year-old interviewee 11).*

All of the French youth (N=10) had respect for the full-time older intervention workers but resented the younger part-time workers, who they felt to be too close in age to them and, therefore, lacked authority. Indeed, these youths felt that young IWs did not merit having any authority over them because of their closeness in age.

> *You come here and sometimes the girl could be 22 years old and she comes to work here and here I am 18 years old. If I go out to a club I could probably end up going out with a girl her age. Here she is trying to tell me what to do to go into my room bitching at me all of the time and she is only 4 years older than me and I am thinking that she should stop getting all nervous. People over here, will treat you like you are nobody (interviewee 18, an 19-year-old).*

> *But some of the younger intervention workers have something to prove because they know most of us don't take them seriously. If they are living a stressful time in their own lives I am sure that they don't come here and take their frustrations out on us. Where most of us who actually live in the center sometimes wake up in a bad mood and will take out our frustrations out on the workers (interviewee 15, a 20-year-old).*

Many of the French youth (N=6) believed they received differential treatment from the IWs, who they thought were sometimes more easygoing with the French kids

and tougher on the non-French kids. In particular, French youths believed that non-French speaking youths were more likely to be watched closely and forbidden to speak their own language. A 20-year-old explains:

> *To be fair to everyone, I don't feel that they are always fair to everyone. They are racist. Let's say I do something that I shouldn't do there are consequences. The Haitians, they have no right to speak Creole never, never, never are they allowed to speak Creole. There are consequences for this. For instance, being placed in their rooms, or they will be reprimanded, all the consequences that you can imagine. From time to time when the intervention workers will know that the Haitians are saying swear words in Creole they will tell the Haitian kids off and/or punish them. The sad part is that the intervention workers are always closely observing the Haitian kids more than the White kids and it seems like they want to catch the Haitian kids speak Creole. Creole is easy to understand: it is a mixture of English and French. There is a bit of Polynesian and Spanish, there are a lot of mixes of languages. The intervention workers when they catch the Haitian kids speaking Creole they tell them to stop (20-year-old interviewee 15).*

The ethnicity of the IW was not really important to any of the French youths (N=10); what mattered was that the IW was pleasant and fair.

> *I would say that the majority of intervention workers that are here are Quebecois. No, the color of a person does not have very much importance for me. I don't give a shit about the color of the person regardless if the person is red, green, or yellow it is the person that makes all the difference in how they will treat you. I am not a racist. I know an intervention worker who is Haitian and this guy is really nice (17 year-old youth, interviewee 4).*

> *It depends on the person, who the person is and how this person acts towards me. There is a Quebecois intervention worker that I definitely don't get along with over here. There are some intervention workers here that are real nice, they will play Ping-Pong with me (19 year-old, interviewee 18).*

> *It doesn't bother me at all because people from other cultures* [not French] *they are less arrogant. For instance, they don't play like the superior (18-year-old, interviewee 2).*

A common point of view shared by all the French youth was that, regardless whether IWs treated the youths fairly or unfairly, there was always room for improvement – in particular, by changing their attitude. Suggestions about how IWs

could do this included: stop throwing youths' pasts in their faces and thus show the youth that they were not abusing their power; be more friendly and less like 'the authorities'; show they care for youth; be more respectful and less judgmental; and be more patient. Youths generally felt that these kinds of changes in IWs' attitudes would improve relations between the two. Below we see some of the issues raised by youths:

> *They should have more patience sometimes. It is up to me to say I want to change and because the intervention worker cannot cut my contacts because there are guys here that their brothers are in the gang. It is their family. If I keep all the time the contact with them, it will always be there* (a 19-year-old, interviewee 18).

> *I don't know. Maybe not the intervention workers, the problem lies with the center. We are closed in. They have gates that remind you of a prison. This place seems more equipped for old people. I feel like I am living in an old folks unit* (interviewee 13, a 17-year-old).

> *Here there are not enough meetings. They are no group meetings. Here, it is about trying to regulate your own problem. They don't really talk about the reality of things. They really don't discuss what happens on the streets or about the reality of the streets. They talk about helping the youth to cope with their social lives and how to regulate their problems* (interviewee 16, a 19-year-old).

The French youths felt that it would be helpful for the intervention workers to openly discuss youths' past street life and their membership in gangs. Acting as though this was not real denied IWs opportunities to discuss youths' lives openly and, potentially, address why youths might be members of gangs and perhaps encourage them to 'go straight'. As well, many youths felt that the over-regimentation of the detention centers, which they felt resembled adult prison, nevertheless protected them from the outside world. However, once they were back outside, their excitement and euphoria at being free led them into too much temptation and they often returned to their old criminal ways and – ultimately – to the center. One policy that particularly annoyed the French youths was that of separating family members in different units. The administration

thought this policy was a better approach to rehabilitating individual youths. However, the strategy served only to anger youths, some of whom had siblings in other units. These youths perceived this separation as a means of total control by the institution over them. The youths felt that the best approach to rehabilitation would be to allow gang members (and family member) to be detained in the same unit so that they could learn to deal with criminal youths in the institution, setting them up to deal with them once they were released. This, they felt, would improve the recidivism rate because youths would have learned how to withstand pressure from their old/present gang members to commit criminal acts or gang acts.

Most Haitian youths said they encountered positive relations with IWs, that the IWs treated them fairly and gave them enough space to change at their own pace. In fact, these youth said they felt safer inside the center than outside – they felt they don't have to constantly look over their shoulder as they do on the streets.

> *Yes, because this is not like the United States and the boot camp and things like that. Here, the intervention workers treat us right. When you have problems they will not ignore you but will sit with you and ask you to talk about your problems and they will actually listen to you. They will help you to try and solve your problems. They will try to find better ways to cope and also help you with your family problems as well, that is if you have any. Also they will try to help you get away from the gang members and work with you to distance yourself from them. I like that and I find that they treat you well here I really don't have much complaints. It is easier for me to live and be here at the center than it is to be on the outside. Outside of here, you cannot walk on the streets without worries. On the streets you always have to look over your shoulders. I committed some crimes and beat some people up and these guys now are looking for me and want some revenge and one day will try to pay me back for what I have done. I worry about this every day because I know one day they will want a pay back. These guys are from rival gangs (interviewee 1, 16-year-old Haitian-Immigrant).*

> *They are pretty straight with their affairs. They take things one day at a time and they let you change at your own pace. I have never had problems with the intervention workers. They were always good to me, so I can't really complain. They don't bug you too much, they try not to frustrate the guys. To talk to the*

guys, but not force the guys to change. They give guys alternatives (interviewee 20, 16 year-old Haitian-Canadian).

Yes they treat me fairly. If I act up, they will punish me and if the guy next to me acts up in the same way, he will be punished as well (interviewee 30, another 17 year-old Haitian-Canadian).

These six Haitian youths had positive views of the IWs, and felt that the IWs were doing everything correctly – thus, they had no advice to offer on how IWs could improve their interactions with the youths.

The way they are doing now is fine. To be fair to everyone and to make them realize if they are here, it is not only because they were part of the gang but because they committed crimes as a result of it (interviewee 14, a 17 year-old Haitian-Immigrant).

They do it already. When you come here and you come with your friends from the gang they make sure that they don't place you in the same unit. They place you with the gang members that are your rivals. They oblige us to communicate with each other and to live together (interviewee 19, a 17-year-old Haitian-Immigrant).

The Haitian youth understand that the objectives of IWs are to help youths understand the wrongness of their crimes and not necessarily to address gang affiliations. Haitian youths, unlike French youths as discussed above, found it helpful to be split up, which gave them the opportunity to interact with rival gang members. These youths felt that this interaction forced the youths to put aside anger and grudges.

Only a minority of Haitian youth (N=4) felt that they were not treated always fairly by the intervention workers.

Sometimes they are a little racist though. For example, I do something. They will make me stay in my room for two hours. A white kid does something they will make him stay in his room for one hour. If it is a White person and he is not racist then, I don't have a problem with this person (interviewee 7, a 15-year-old Haitian immigrant).

Some of these youths had advice for the IWs, for example, a 15-year-old Haitian-Canadian commented:

> *They should treat us like human beings but instead they treat us like dogs ...for real. We ain't got any rights but they can do whatever they want over here. I ain't got my radio for example, and that is a privilege to have a radio. Fuck, what the fuck is that. It is a privilege to have a radio at night, it is privilege to have this. I understand when they got to put you in the room when you do stupid stuff and stuff like that, but at some point you know it is too much especially here in this unit. In other units it is very different, the workers are more relaxed... in this unit the workers are more crazy, it is tough, they expect more from you maybe too much. The workers here freak too much. They are always screaming at you and demanding that you do this and that they don't talk to you or listen to what you have to say but they just like telling you what to do. Some of these workers are on a power trip. I give you an example: let's say you disagree with something an intervention worker says, he will automatically place you in your room. Shit does that make sense to you. You understand that!? (interviewee 9)*

The advice offered by the Haitian youths reflects that offered by the French youths: learn to trust the youths more, be more relaxed, less rigid and severe, and less nervous, all behaviors that the youth picks up on, leading to stress and a sense of inadequacy.

Unlike French youths, most Haitian youths (N = 6) would prefer to deal with Haitian IWs if they were employed at the center. The youth felt that Haitian IWs would better understand where they come from and would be more sympathetic towards them; in contrast, they felt French IWs judged them more harshly and less like humans.

> *Yeah I prefer to deal with Haitian intervention workers because they are from where I am from. Because they understand my struggles better and they would be more sympathetic (interviewee 5, 16-year-old Haitian immigrant).*

> *Yes, I believe so. Because if I had an intervention worker that was Haitian he would be more understanding. He would be more understanding than a White intervention worker and because he would probably better understand the affairs of the streets and where I come from (interviewee 40, 14-year-old Haitian-Immigrant).*

Only three Haitian youth claimed that they did not care about the ethnic background of the intervention worker, only that the worker was fair and nice. Interestingly, one youth explained he would prefer to deal with more non-Haitian IWs, as he considered Haitian IWs more likely to be more severe and tough, ultimately making him feel worse about himself rather than better.

> *No way would I like to deal with intervention workers that come from Haiti. If they are like my mother they are probably going to be severe towards me. I know because there are some intervention workers that are black and they are definitely more severe and tough. They are tougher with you because they know what you went through and they want you to get out and that's why they are tougher. But the problem with that is that they make you feel worse as a result (interviewee 12, 18-year-old Haitian Canadian).*

While most Haitians felt they were treated fairly by IWs, the same was not true for most of the Jamaican youths (N=9), and youths' feelings about this are best described by a 17-year-old Jamaican immigrant.

> *Some of them intervention workers are really fuckin' assholes. I was supposed to take out the garbage and my task is to take out the garbage in the staff room. He said it is your job to take out the garbage and I did it and I took it down on the door. Then he looked at me and said what the fuck is this and he kicked it, then I said what the fuck is this and I kicked it. I said fuck you too and I went to my room and he came to talk to me. He was Black and he was a fuckin' asshole you understand. Like I told you, it don't matter if you are Black or White, it is that they are fuckin' assholes out there you understand? So, anyway he came and tells me that I had attitude. I answered him if he asked me to do it in a more appropriate manner I would do it no problem. What, am I supposed to say please and get on my knees for you? No, no, I would never do that for you. Fuck man, you know what I am saying. It doesn't give somebody the right to treat you like shit just because you are in here. Man I am paying my dues to society, what the else fuck they want? What does it hurt to be nice to someone or polite for once, it can't hurt can it? Yo seriously. Instead of asking us, like do you or did you have something to do with this? They accuse you right away and tell you to go to your room. Sometime they will just come at you and say things like you did this and this and this, and now go to your room. You are going to your room for the whole day and you coming out of there tomorrow and you haven't even asked me if I do it. That is what they will do, sometimes right out of the blue they will come at you and say you, you, and you go to your room and we will think what the fuck is this Man? What's up with that? You know, so they come at you and accuse you*

> *without any questions of doubt. They tell me that I am supposed to be nice to people, but then they come at you and say I am going to make it my duty to make your life fucked up, you get it. You understand and so what the fuck do you know what I mean? Treat the boy the way you want to be treated you know. If I want to treat somebody fuckin' bad in the street, I am gonna expect him to fuckin' treat me bad too. It is simple (interviewee 44).*

This youth in particular feels that IWs impose their authority simply because they can. When he has been reprimanded, he feels that the worker does not explain why this is done, which confuses him about why he is being punished. This behavior on the IW's part is often mistaken for bullying.

Some Jamaican youths offered IWs advice about how to treat youth in the center better. Reflecting comments heard earlier from the French and Haitian youths, common themes are getting workers to listen more and be more encouraging rather than constantly reminding youths of negative things, such as their criminal behavior. We see these desires in comments from two 17-year-old Canadian-Jamaicans (interviewees 27 and 45).

> *Me I just want to be heard that's it. I feel sometimes that I like I talk to the staff and shit, they don't want to hear nothing I am saying and they think I am just a criminal, this and that. I am never going to change. They don't understand. If they were more understanding and they could understand and if they could listen to shit without having to say anything, like you know, just listening and don't speak. That would be good. But they always have something to say (interviewee 27).*

> *They would just fuckin' listen to the person and their problems. Here the intervention plan is that you are here to work on your problem and find out what your problems are and then help you work on them. But you can't work on shit while you are here until you start your re-insertion, they don't even want me to go on to my re-insertion. This means that you go out to work and then you come back at night time, and go out to work and then you go out at night time. Me, I would be doing that right now, and what my primary worker told me is that the only reason why you are not going outside is because you talk to one particular youth and that's it. I think that has nothing to do with my problems outside, just because I talk to another youth* [intervention workers claim these two youth are a bad influence on one another] *and so whatever. They don't know what the fuck my problems are and they don't know what I have to work on (interviewee 45).*

Only one 16-year-old Canadian-born Jamaican reported that intervention workers generally treated him fairly, allowing him to see where he went wrong and how he can lead a non-criminal, non-deviant lifestyle.

> *Yeah, I think they are fair. They basically try to show you where your errors are alright and what you are doing wrong. That way you can become a productive member of society, you know, when you leave here. They try to make you find something good about yourself so that way you don't have to resort to the lifestyle that you were living. Actually, these people I idolize them in the sense where I think about how maybe I will become an intervention worker too, you know. From my lifestyle point of view or what I can show kids because I have already been in the system and I know what they are going through. Like in the States they have these special things like they have State Criminals you know. They go to schools and they are under good supervision. They are living it right now and they would be the best person to talk to and they are living it for the rest of their lives (interviewee 24).*

Most of the Jamaican youths (N=9), however, would prefer to deal with black IWs as they believed that white IWs tended to be more racist and more harsh towards Black youths. Of course, as noted previously, the vast majority of IWs at all centers were White; those in French centers were French speaking and those in English centers were English speaking and thus Black youths did not always have access to Black IWs. They felt a black intervention worker would be more patient with them.

> *All the workers are White, you know what I mean, and I would prefer if some of the workers were Black. I don't know why exactly but I think that some of them are racist to tell you the truth. Especially sometimes the way they act. Certain White persons may treat a Black person right and certain White people may treat a Black person right. Every Black person here thinks the same way, man. You know, because they treat the White person better than they treat the Black person. For example, they will tell you to go to your room, you know what I mean. A lot of the White guys get away with much more than we do (16-year-old Jamaican born individual interviewee 23).*

> *I would probably feel more comfortable with a Black intervention worker. They understand what the Black kids are going through because they live around the area. They see everything that is going on. They can relate to stuff. But like some of the White workers they don't understand you when you tell them that you have*

> *been through this, you have been through that re, re, re, life was hard, you know they think it is just like so get out. As if it is that easy. They don't understand how hard it is like. I find it is better to work with Black intervention workers still (17-year-old Canadian born Jamaican interviewee 27).*

As we know, most Latinos (N=9) felt that IWs treated them fairly and were helpful and understanding towards youth. A 17-year-old El Salvadorian born individual reflects the sentiments of the group:

> *I think they are fair on the whole and they treat me well over here, I don't have any complaints. They understand and they know all about what I lived when I was on the outside. They know about all the bullshit I went through when I was on the streets and they know all about how I handled myself. They also know what I did in order to survive the risks involved while being on the streets selling drugs and how I handled myself in the mists of violence and most importantly how I survived it. All in all they know if you are impulsive or not and they try to work with all the background information that they have on you (interviewee 8).*

Only one individual, a 17-year-old Canadian-born Chilean, reported that intervention workers did not always treat him fairly – but he attributed this to his behavior (he was often insubordinate to them) rather than his ethnicity.

> *I know they don't like talking to me that much. The intervention workers get very frustrated with me because I am very good at arguing with them. Especially when I prove my point and it is in front of the other kids (interviewee 29).*

Even though most Latinos felt that they were generally treated fairly by intervention workers they were still willing to offer advice to IWs on how to better treat youth in the center for the future. These youths emphasized communication and working closely with youth rather than merely laying down rules and dictating what youths should do.

> *Maybe to stop being in our faces all of the time and to stop judging us. Instead of telling us what to do maybe they should think about listening to us more. In this place here, I have had intervention workers tell me that because I spent fifteen months in the center they just don't want to waste their time on me. They don't*

> *want anything to do with me (17-year-old born in Dominican Republic, interviewee 41).*
>
> *Whether or not you are in a gang they treat everyone the same way. At the same time there is always room for improvement like trying to understand me better, understand me when I tell them something, they should also understand when I am upset. They know what I don't like about them and how they can try to solve this. They should also know what I do like about them and if they can't change then it is up to me to change (17-year-old Chilean-Canadian, interviewee 35).*

All the Latino youth would prefer to deal with intervention workers of similar ethnicities, as is pointed out by two 17-year-old El Salvadorian born individuals (interviewees 48 and 47), who believed that Latino IWs would be more sympathetic and less judgmental towards Latino youths.

The intervention worker that comes from the same background as me would be able to understand me better because they come from the same country as you which is completely different from this country and basically they know where you are coming from (interviewee 48)

> *If there is someone who comes from the same ethnic background as myself then I would have to say even better because we get along better and the person may treat you more like a family member and less as a stranger. If the person was El Salvadorian specifically it would perhaps be a little bit better. What I mean by this is that he will better understand everything I experienced and lived as a child and up until now. The El Salvadorian intervention worker would probably have a better idea of what I would do once I get out of this place (interviewee 47).*

Among the ten youths in the 'other' ethnic category, half felt that IWs were generally fair towards youth and half did not. Of those who felt positively towards IWs, their comments reflected their view that IWs were doing their job and treated all equally.

> *Intervention workers are alright with us, I really have no complaints (interviewee 26, a 17-year-old Portuguese-born individual).*
>
> *I don't get into much trouble and I seem to get along with them. They are fair*

towards everyone (interviewee 46, a 17-year-old German-born individual).

Those who were less positive, noted that IWs could be racist towards youth, leaving a bitter taste in the mouth, and could also be sarcastic on occasion.

> *They can be a little racist with their jokes. For instance, they will say things to a mulatto person that they are like chocolate milk. They said things to me like do you like pork and cheese? They say this because I am Portuguese. Or they are sarcastic and they will be sarcastic towards you. You will say one word and they will tell you things like trap your mouth (interviewee 38, 17-year-old Canadian-born Portuguese).*

> *Well I have seen them sometimes how they treat me a little more different than the others because I am Indian. I don't like what they are doing to Native people here when they come inside. The intervention workers will say nasty things like " we know you guys have your own detention centers and we can send you guys there for the amount of time you guys have. They do this because I am Indian and they treat me a different way and all of this stuff. I am a Native so they will sometimes treat me a little different from the other guys, you feel it when they make jokes about you saying things like, "it figures you guys belong in the forest with the animals." I feel sort of isolated here because you have all of these guys from different backgrounds and I am the only one that is Native (interviewee 28, 18-year-old Cree).*

Some of these youth were also willing to offer advice for IWs, much of which echoed statements we have already seen, namely, being less judgmental and being easier on them. They also commented that IWs should stop reminding youths of their past criminal behavior. Some particularly interesting comments reflected an awareness of the structure of their rehabilitation. They felt that the way the center was structured did not aid in their rehabilitation but rather taught them to play by (and win with) the center's rules. For example, they quickly learnt that to achieve privileges (e.g., more weekend passes, working outside the center), they should follow simple rules and tell the IWs what they wanted to hear, or pretend to be working (some pretended to have legitimate jobs outside the center while in fact they were still continuing their illegal businesses). These attitudes are best depicted by interviewees 25 and 28:

They don't care if you are a gang member here, right. They are not here to work on that. Like I said, if you made the choice then you go for the gold. Sure you can play the game here, but me I just refused. All of the members are playing a game. Yes, some reform, yes, some go and get a job or say they will get a job when they get out. Some are out to get jobs while they are still in here. But you know what they are doing they are going through their gang members to get fake pay checks, okay, pay stubs and bring them back as proof of 140 dollars a week. You leave a number which will always answer. Hold, the person on the other end of the line who is selling to (i.e., drugs) and calls someone else to let them know that someone is looking for "Mike." The guy goes to a quiet room, he tells the other guy what to say and the other guy is talking to the whomever is checking up on "Mike" and assuring the other person that he is indeed working, sure he is working he is dealing drugs, but works for this "so-called company" supposedly legit and everything but while "Mike" is out and making money he is really dealing for the company, get it! Then they will let "Mike" talk on the phone and "Mike" will say yeah I am working hard, it is really hard moving them boxes. Yeah bringing them in those big trucks is fucking hard. Oh look, I will try to be back around five, so can you keep a meal for me. I am still doing my gang shit. That is how it is here, it is a joke. I am not going to play no game in here, it is a joke. I am against that shit, even if it is for a good cause (interviewee 25, 18-year-old Canadian born Polish).

I don't know, I really don't know any other ways. If I was given a choice I would rather be placed in a residence that was Native-run. Because here you are just marked as what you are. There they already know what you are. There they don't have to tell you all of the time what you are or what you did, NA, NA, NA. Here they always put it in your face that you are Native for example. Some of the intervention workers here are in the habit of doing this, reminding me of where I come from and what I have done. But in all fairness, not all of them are like that. But the ones that are like that just make me more angry and not want to listen to what they have to say (interviewee 28, 18 year-old Cree).

When it came to dealing with IWs of similar ethnic backgrounds, these youths were split down the middle: half would prefer this and half would prefer the opposite. Those who preferred to deal with IWs from a similar ethnic background felt that this gave them a greater comfort level in openly expressing themselves. Those who did not take this view felt that IWs of a similar ethnic background would expect more from them (the youths) and would be tougher on them. We see conflicting views from a Polish-Canadian and a Portuguese-Canadian:

> *I met one. No because it pissed me off worse than hell. Because he was on my case more because he was a Polak (sic), I guess. He would say things like, we don't do this in our country. Shut the fuck up! We are not in our country. I don't want to hear bullshit like that (interviewee 25, 18-year-old Canadian-born Pole).*

> *I don't say that all of the intervention workers have to come from my culture. All I would say is that one or two intervention workers that are Portuguese for example, would make a difference. Especially in the way they express themselves would make a difference. They would better understand where I am coming from because they come from the same culture. I would prefer it because they would understand me better and they would be less judgmental (interviewee 38, 17-year-old Canadian-born Portuguese).*

Clearly, all these youths share similar views about IWs – generally expressing a desire that they were more easy-going and that detention was a more pleasant experience. Interestingly, although we might expect Haitians to see racism from white IWs, we do not; rather, their ease with French IWs may have to do with shared language rather than race. In contrast, as we might expect, Jamaican youths did see racism on the part of IWs, as did some of the 'other' ethnic category, particularly those (e.g., the Cree youth) who might be expected to be particularly sensitive to this. Latinos shared a uniform opinion, but did not perceive any real difficulty with the non-Latino IWs. Given the small sample size, it is difficult to generalize about ethnicity and perception of fair treatment by IWs in this particular sample of youth.

Reactions to Social Workers

What is fascinating about the way the detention system in Quebec works is the fact that so few of these youths had any contact with a social worker, which is what one might have expected. As it turns out, most of the youths (9 of the French, 8 of the Haitians, 7 of the Jamaicans and Latinos, and 6 of those in the 'other' category) did not have any strong opinions about social workers because they had no or little contact with

any. It is the minority in each group who had any contact with a social worker, and few expressed a preference dealing with a social worker of the same ethnicity (simply because social workers were out of their realm of experience).

Most French, however, did not believe that the ethnic background of a social worker would be an issue. However, although one French youth did feel that some social workers were more fair than others, he did not attribute it to their ethnicity and in fact, believed that Quebecois social workers were too judgmental and expected too much from him given he too was Quebecois. He firmly believed that a social worker of a different ethnicity would be more open and less judgmental.

> *The guys that have been here for a longer period of time tell me that social workers pretend to be your friends and you confide in them and they use this information against you. So I have kept this in mind and I basically tell social workers what they want to hear. They don't care about us. For them I am just another case, another delinquent.*

> *I guess I wouldn't mind it and maybe I would prefer it if the person was not Quebecois. Because like I said before, if the person is not Quebecois they would be less judgmental. We usually expect more from our own kind that is the way it goes, I guess the way it has always been. For instance, let's say you get back-stabbed by someone who comes from a different culture, you figure heck what do you expect from this guy he is not like us etc. But when someone comes from the same culture as you, you think why would he do this etc. We would take it a little harder I think (interviewee 10, a 15-year-old youth).*

This youth believes that if he had a social worker who was of a different ethnic background he/she would be less judgmental and more open to listen to what the youth had to say.

As few of these youths had any dealings with social workers, they did not have much advice for them. However, one youth argued that social workers should be more caring and less manipulative. He claimed that social workers at his particular center have inappropriately provided center workers with information that, he felt, had been used

against him.

> *What comes to mind is that maybe they should be more honest and less manipulative. I guess what I mean by this is don't try to be my friend and then back stab me with the information you have on me. At least in the gang you know that you have some kind of loyalty even if that person is not your friend (interviewee 10, a 15-year-old youth).*

In particular, he believes that social workers should provide more information to youths about what will be written in their reports, for example what their recommendations for court, judge, etc., will be. This openness, he believes, will encourage the youth to be more involved in the process and less antagonistic to the social worker and, perhaps, the system.

Of the two Haitian youths who had had interaction with a social worker, one claimed that his social worker treated him fairly while the other reported that he did not trust social workers at all. Their perceptions of and attitudes to social workers seemed to have less to do with race and/or ethnicity and more to do with the power of the social worker to affect sentencing or punishment.

> *I have no real problems with my social worker (interviewee 14, 17-year-old Haitian- Immigrant)*

> *I don't like social workers and you can't trust them. Sometimes I am talking to them and I trust them and I tell them some stories and after I see in my report, they will say all these things about me and the things we talked about as well, I don't like that. That's why I don't trust nobody. I don't trust the intervention workers either. Even them, everything you do, every single thing from the moment you get up, to the moment you go to sleep they are writing about you on a paper. Everything you say to them they are writing on a paper. I am getting out this Monday from this place and I am so happy. I am so happy. I don't want to come back. I can stop. Sometimes I get caught for the dumbest things. It was so dumb for the times that I got caught, and sometimes the cops don't want to let you go so they find little things so you can go in jail. For that they put me six accusations, for one thing, they put me six accusations. That is tough all because of my social worker (interviewee 7, a 15-year-old Haitian immigrant).*

None of the Haitian youths had any advice for social workers on how they could improve their relationships with youths, and all dismissed the ethnicity of social workers as unimportant.

Just three Jamaican youths had had contact with social workers; these three claimed they were not always treated fairly – getting the sense from social workers that they (the youths) were dangerous and not trustworthy. Indeed, the feeling among the youths was that social workers did not believe they would change, a belief that led to anger and resentment on their part towards the social workers.

> *I haven't had any contact with a social worker so far. The first encounter with a social worker was when I committed my first crime and I was detained for the first time and this woman she really screwed me over. She did more investigation like a detective, she brought up all my school history and I guess that was her job in a sense you know. She gave this all to the detective in charge of my case and of course the detective already had a very negative picture of who I am. I am not saying that I was some kind of angel when I was in school, but because of this one real big confrontation that I put someone in a coma and he was in critical condition. They made me out to be worse than I really was. Like I know I committed a crime, and I know I hurt someone. But the social worker and the detective acted like I was the type of person that would do this over and over again. I am not the type of guy that has committed several crimes and been in and out of the center. This only happened once, and they acted like I did this type of thing often. So, yeah you can say that I don't have trust in social workers or cops for that matter. They treat you like once you make a mistake, that is what you are only about, making constant mistakes. I am more than that, but the system doesn't treat you that way at times (interviewee 24, a 16-year-old Canadian-Jamaican).*

Unsurprisingly, these Jamaican youths preferred to deal with Black social workers rather than white ones, feeling that they would be less racist and more understanding.

> *I don't trust social workers. She never did anything for me. All she did was give me fuckin' breaches. Even if I would be late for a meeting one time or I would be late or I couldn't make it or something you know. I would call her and say I can't make this meeting whatever you know. They would be like oh, I am going have to breach you. Like what the fuck, that is fuckin' all she would do is breach me all of the time. She was White too. I don't know why she was always fuckin' breaching me or whatever. When I went to court before I came here on my previous probation report there, she recommended that like...when I sat down with her*

> *alone you know and we were talking and whatever and she then gave me a copy of it and then at the end of it she recommended fuckin' eighteen months you know. I am like yo, what the fuck is wrong with this bitch or whatever. I talk to her on the phone, she is like oh, this is not the final thing and we sat through the whole thing, I don't know what you call that, but my mom was there and whatever and other people there. After that shit, she finally recommended six months. Then we went to court and the court agreed that I do six months at the center(interviewee 37, a 17-year-old Canadian-Jamaican).*

These youth did have advice for social workers. Specifically, they felt that social workers should be more honest and lay out from the beginning what they expected of the youth rather than make recommendations without an individual youth's input.

> *All I am asking is that they be more honest. If you are going to recommend a longer sentence then tell me, don't go behind my back and tell the courts or change your story around when I am not there to fight for myself. Like for example, when I first came here the social worker was cool with me and she was good to me as well. I went out for a smoke break and I heard her talking to the intervention worker and saying that she had her suspicions about me. When I came back from the smoke break they said Yo, you can't go and get out of here and smoke a cigarette. You are supposed to go up north and I said Yo, what the fuck are you talking about? I am saying that I am going up North you understand? I came back and I kicked the chair and I said Yo, you go fuck yourself, I don't give a fuck about you, and you've gotta fuckin' watch your back. They were standing there* [social worker and intervention worker] *and they were saying you gotta calm down, you gotta calm down. I picked up the chair and said Yo, the only fuckin' way I am going to get out of here is if you are going to fuckin' strangle me to death. Either way I am not going out of here. They called security and they tried to calm me down. You want to fuckin' calm me down, that is what I said to security, I tell him like no, no, no you know I don't want to go up north please man! They handcuffed me and my first day I was placed in isolation! (17-year-old Canadian-Jamaican, interviewee 33).*

Just three Latinos had had any contact with social workers; these three claimed that they had been treated fairly but that they would prefer to deal with a Latino social worker. As a result of their relatively positive experiences with social workers, these youth had little advice for how social workers could improve their results with delinquent youths. The majority opinion was reflected by a 17-year-old Canadian-Chilean:

> *Most social workers are very neutral and they are not very prejudice and they usually don't try to take sides. It helps when the social worker is Latin, especially with my mother and my father, because they are more understanding with my parents. My mom doesn't speak French or English so much, but my dad he speaks English and French. Social workers have been alright with me so I can't really complain (interviewee 29).*

Only four of the respondents in the 'other' ethnic category had had any contact with social workers. One youth said he had had positive encounters, while the other three said they had experienced more negative encounters. The sole positive commentary came from an 18-year-old Jewish-Canadian, who said:

> *They treat me fairly and they don't treat me like I am a different person or anything. They treat me like a human being. They don't treat me different (interviewee 50, 18-year-old Jewish Canadian)*

The best example of a negative experience is provided by a 15-year-old Algerian born:

> *I don't like them too much. You tell them something, and they make it bigger than it really is (interviewee 36).*

Two of these youth said that they would prefer to deal with social workers from a different ethnicity, as demonstrated by an 18-year-old Polish-Canadian, who thought that social workers of Polish background would likely be more strict, which would be a more unpleasant experience for him:

> *It would have been worse if social workers came from the same background. I think they would have been harsher. They would have been cursing me in Polish. If someone curses me in English I laugh at you, curse at me in Polish, hey what the fuck that is like primal you know for me. That is just freaken a piss off. Don't bring my own language into this, I just associate curses with impoliteness (interviewee 25).*

Two of these youths did not believe that the ethnic background of the social worker was

important, as explained by a 17 year-old Irish-Canadian:

> *I am not prejudiced or racist, I deal with people I have to deal with. It doesn't make a difference to me the ethnic background of the social worker as long as they treat me like a human being (interviewee 42 17 year-old Irish Canadian).*

Reactions to Teachers

The majority of youths from all categories considered that their teachers, both at the detention centers and at regular schools, treated them fairly. This was true for all 10 of the French youths, eight of the Haitian youths, all ten of the Jamaican youths, nine of the Latino youths, and eight of the youths in the 'other' category.

Among the French youth, just two stated that they preferred teachers who were not Quebecois because they felt that non-Quebecois teachers were less authoritarian and less likely to demand more of the youths as representatives of Quebecois culture.

> *I can tell you though that teachers of color are often more fun. They want to play less the authority and act less controlling (interviewee 2, 18-year-old).*

> *I wouldn't like to have teachers from the same ethnic background on the outside or in the center. They would be more judgmental (interviewee 10, 15-year-old).*

When all of the French youth were asked how teachers on the inside or outside could better treat them, none had specific advice.

> *The teachers on the outside or in the center have always treated me fairly (interviewee 21, a 19-year-old).*

> *Yeah. Well, they give you chances here, it is kind of if you fail a test or something like that, they correct it and you go over it on your own and the ones you get right the second time, they will give you points for it (interviewee 16, a 19-year-old).*

> *I think they treat us fairly over here, they were always nice towards me, but I was just rebelling against them when I was on the outside because I would rather hang around with my friends or not go to class it wasn't anything personal towards the teachers. I don't think teachers need to change I think the individual has to change (interviewee 13, a 17-year-old).*

Comments from the Haitian youths who for the most part feel that teachers treat them fairly reflect the sentiments of the French youths.

> *The teachers on the outside always treated me fairly. Here they treat everyone the same and no one gets preferential treatment (interviewee 19, a 17-year-old Haitian Immigrant).*

> *The teachers here they are chill with us. They are really nice; they don't act like we are criminals. Like we are normal kids and I like that (interviewee 40, a 14-year-old Haitian born).*

However, two youths noted that teachers at regular schools did treat them unfairly.

> *Yeah, they are okay at the center. On the outside, they had their shoo shoos, it is like they had their pets man...they showed who they preferred and that pissed me off a little (interviewee 5, a 17-year-old Haitian Canadian).*

> *Sometimes, it really depends on who is your teacher. I had teachers on the outside tell me to my face that I dressed and acted like a hoodlum. So, if I would just move from my seat slightly, I would get into trouble. So in a way, just by the way I looked and the way I acted caused me to be looked at as bad. Just because someone is in the gang, it doesn't mean that this person should be treated differently from someone who is not in the gang. A gang member should get educated as well. It is the same thing as saying because I am Black; I don't have the right to be educated as someone who is White (interviewee 20 a 16-year-old Haitian Canadian.*

Unlike the French youths, most (eight) of the Haitian youths did not feel that the ethnic background of their teachers was particularly relevant to them, explained by two respondents, a 16-year-old Haitian immigrant (interviewee 1) and a 15-year-old Haitian-Canadian (interviewee 9):

> *It doesn't bother me. I have had professors from the same ethnic background and some that are not from the same ethnic background and it doesn't really make a difference for me. I have no problems either way (interviewee 1).*

> *As for teachers it doesn't really bother me from what culture they come from (interviewee 9).*

Only two Haitian respondents, one 15 year old Haitian-born (interviewee 7) and

another 17-year-old Haitian-born (interviewee 30) said that they would definitely not want to deal with Haitian teachers, who they considered would be stricter towards black youth and less likely to accept misbehavior in class.

> *No, I don't like that because they will just be harder on you and most of them understand Creole and if you are trying to say something to your friends in Creole they may punish you faster than someone who doesn't speak Creole and will just tell you to stop disrupting the class because this teacher would not really understand what you are saying (interviewee 7).*

> *Nah, not really, they would probably be stricter on me because they are Black (interviewee 30).*

The advice from the Haitian youths about how teachers could have better relationships with the youth echoed sentiments about social workers and intervention workers; that is, teachers should be more patient, less prejudiced and treat all equally regardless of race or ethnicity.

Like most of the other respondents, all of the Jamaican youths reported that they were treated fairly by teachers, although their preference was to be taught by Black/Jamaican teachers, who they felt, would be more sensitive to issues of racism in Quebec society and consequently more inclined to help and encourage these youth in their education.

> *Teachers for me are all the same thing. I like the teachers in the institution because they are very patient, because they help you more and because there is also a smaller group of students. There is more one on one and basically they have been able to bring out the best in me. I have had a chance to prove that I have brains and I am not stupid. On the outside the teachers were alright. I can't say I had any complaints because most of the time I wasn't in school. I was on the streets hanging out with my friends, for me my friends were more important than getting an education. As far as whether I prefer to deal with Black or White teachers, yo I would have to say a Black or Jamaican teacher would be ideal. Why? They understand the culture, they know where we come from and what we went through and how White people will never truly accept us. Black teachers would probably be more sympathetic and patient because they know nothing comes easy for us and that is the reason most of us turn to the streets, yo (17-*

year-old Canadian-born Jamaican, interviewee 33).

Again, for most of the Latino youth (nine), the feeling was that they were treated fairly by their teachers:

> *The teachers here treat us fairly. They don't treat us like criminals, they want to help us to learn and they act like they genuinely care whether we learn or not. The teachers on the outside were just as nice as long as you didn't bother them when they were teaching you (interviewee 22, a 20 year-old Ecuadorian immigrant).*

Just one individual, a 17-year-old youth born in the Dominican Republic, with darker skin, and who has already commented on being seen as 'black' by others, reported that teachers at the detention center where he was held could be particularly racist towards non-white youth.

> *There is a teacher here, I hate her guts. She is nicer to the White guys and she ignores the colored kids. She won't give us opportunities and she is much more lenient with the White kids. Anyone who has brown skin or has a different color, she will automatically treat this person differently and somewhat unfairly. She is in your face basically if you are dark skinned or if you look Black and she will be racist and she will give you less attention (interviewee 41).*

All of the Latino (N=10) prefer to deal with Latino teachers, who they felt would be more patient with them and more sensitive to the difficulties the youths face as non-English, non-French immigrants.

> *It would be ideal, because they come from the same culture and like I said before they are more likely to understand you better because they come from where you come from (interviewee 47, a 17-year-old youth from El Salvador).*

Again most (eight) youths in the 'other' ethnic category felt that their teachers treated them fairly.

> *Let me tell you, the teachers here, treat me really well. There is one professor in particular here and whenever I need help with a topic I don't understand, he really takes his time and helps out. I never had any trouble with teachers when I was on the outside (interviewee 39, a 17-year-old Italian-Canadian).*

Only two youths claimed that teachers at regular schools labeled them, treated them like criminals, and imposed too many rules; these observations were made by a 17 year-old German-Canadian (interviewee 46) and a 17-year-old Portuguese-Canadian (interviewee 38):

> *At the beginning yes, but after they found out I was a gun smuggler, personally they treated me like a gun smuggler. For example, well one called me the gun smuggler (*he laughs*). Another one said "ooh let's not get mad at him bring a gun just for him." Another would flinch every time I would walk by, she was terrified of me, and I could see it in her eyes. I never told her anything, I never even did anything to her, I would make a funny gesture and would crack up with all of my friends, and a few times she looked like she was just about to pass out. I would just crack up when I saw this. The professors on the outside I am not too crazy about them because they impose too many rules. They take on too much the role of the authority (interviewee 46).*

> *The nationality of the teacher is not important, what is important is that they treat all the students the same regardless of who the student is (interviewee 38).*

The ethnicity of their teacher was not particularly important to these youth; rather, they valued the 'fairness' of their teachers. What is interesting to note is that for one of these youths, his teacher's fear encouraged him to act out more. And the advice they had for their teachers involved getting teachers to be more open and aware of their students' activities, so as to give a common touchstone for teacher and student.

> *No, I would like to have someone that came from the streets and that would be nice this would be a welcome change. A teacher that is from the streets that could teach me something that is real. I don't want to hear about the Pythagoras theory, how do you think he fucked that one up (he raises his voice to a falsetto to make it sound like a woman's voice to poke fun) (interviewee 43, a 17-year-old Irish-Canadian).*

Reactions to Police Officers

Not unsurprisingly, given the fact that these youths were interviewed in juvenile

detention centers, most of these youths had negative perceptions of police officers and of their interactions with them. Looking at all 50 youths, there is no difference across ethnic group in terms of whether these youths perceive that police officers have treated them fairly or not. Eight of the French youths, eight of the Haitian youths, all of the Jamaican youths, nine of the Latino youths and all of the youths in the 'other' ethnic category believe they are treated unfairly by police. Selected views of the French youths are described below.

> *The police are the police, regardless whether the person is Black or White. I prefer to have no relations with the police officers whatsoever. Like I said I would rather have nothing to do with them. They are real assholes that is police officers. They always find some excuse to stop you or to criticize you for something or other. They give you tickets because one of your headlights on your motorcycle doesn't work at all (interviewee 15. a 20-year-old French-Canadian).*
>
> *I hate cops period, regardless of their ethnic background and I don't want to have to deal with them at all. I don't like them. I would place them all under the same category regardless if some of them are Quebecois, or Haitian or Latino (interviewee 2, an 18-year-old French-Quebecois)*
>
> *I don't want anything to do with police officers in general. I can't stand them period. The majority that go into the police, they are there to act like bastards and to make other people's lives miserable. I will give you an example. The police was doing some kind of intervention in my neighborhood. That same day I went to my sister's house and I don't remember anymore after this but when I went back to my neighborhood, the police stopped me and told me to stand in the corner street because they had some questions to ask me and other people who were outside. They started treating some of the people who they thought might look in their eyes and look suspicious, like crap. They thought that I might look suspicious as well so they took me and pushed me against the cop car and started to frisk me and check if I had any weapons or drugs on me. They did all this once they found out that I already had a record, but still... at the time I was clean, I wasn't into anything. All I was doing was walking to go back home from my sister's place. That is why I say, that all police officers are pricks because they get into such a profession so they can play God and dictate how people should live, and it gives them a chance to play with people's heads (interviewee 6. a 20-year-old French-Canadian).*
>
> *I think police officers in general exaggerate. They are not always fair. For example, once I was with my friends and we were all wearing our bandannas.*

> *They started harassing us and threatening us, saying that we shouldn't walk around like this. They kept provoking us and I think they did it on purpose. Just so that we would give them a reason to arrest us. They would also say things like if you don't take out those bandannas we will beat the shit out of you (interviewee 11, a 16 year-old Quebec born youth).*

> *The police officers when they know you are a member of the gang they are very careful with you. When they don't know they are not careful. When they know you are a member of the gang they will do everything to stop you and they will follow the law to the tee. If they don't know you are part of the gang they will be more careless and they will think that you are all alone. This is how the police officers will think: " he doesn't know anything about the law, he doesn't know anything because he does not have any lawyers." Because often when you are a member of the gang you always have a lawyer on your payroll, ready to represent the gang. If you ever get stopped you can usually count on our lawyer to get you out (interviewee 2, an 18 year-old French-Quebecois).*

While most of the French-Canadians preferred to deal with French police officers, two said that they preferred to deal with non-French police officers because they believed these officers treated deviants and delinquents more fairly. They felt that, in contrast, French police officers were more likely to be authoritarian and aggressive towards youth. A 17-year-old elaborates:

> *Police officers, I prefer not to see them at all. I don't like police officers. I hate them. I would prefer to see a Black standing next to me than a police officer. I prefer to deal with police officers that are not Quebecois and the reason is because they are smarter than the Quebecois. When I was stopped by two Black cops they were alright with me, they didn't really harass me. Another time, I was stopped by two Quebecois cops and they were mean to me and they told me to take off my cap and they made me pull down my pants. They talked on my cellular phone. They then took my cellular phone, dropped it on the ground and started stepping on it. These police officers were White, and they both had Quebecois names and that is how I knew they were Quebecois. I was once stopped by a Latin cop and he just gave me a warning, he at least gave me the benefit of the doubt (interviewee 13).*

Advice offered by French youth on how police officers could improve relations with youth and youth gang members included, as we have heard in similar discussions about social workers and intervention workers, getting police officers to treat them more

like human beings, less like delinquents and being less racist towards non-whites.

> *I would say that they should at times forget about their duties towards their citizens even towards a freaken little delinquent. Shit we are human beings like they are and maybe to see us as human beings first and delinquents later. All they think about is stopping you because you are perceived as a threat and a delinquent; they can't think like we do, or exactly know what is in our heads. For them we are guilty (interviewee 4, a 17-year-old).*

> *Stop harassing people for no reason. The police can stop you whenever they want even if you didn't say nor do anything they might still try to harass you. For example they shouldn't hit people or use force especially if you are willing to go with them and are not putting up a fight. Or let's say someone gets caught for committing a crime and sometimes they will try to escape from being caught by the police. So they will try to run from the police. So the police runs after them ready to catch the "so-called criminal"... and once they catch up to him they are all pumped up and enraged that they will take out their anger on the criminal by beating him until they are satisfied that the beating taught the guy a lesson. A lesson that could sometimes leave a guy unconscious (interviewee 6, a 20-year-old).*

> *I was never stopped by police officers patrolling my neighborhood. And in my neighborhood the police officers that patrol are the following: There is a Chinese police officer, and the rest are Quebecois. The police officers of my neighborhood are really racist. They are mostly racist against the Blacks. They will do anything to stop them or find a reason to stop them. Instead us Quebecois that look for them and try to "set them off" and get in their faces on purpose. They will either dismiss it. And say things like stop acting so stupid or else we are obliged to stop you and take you in. We say yes Mr. So and So. We usually know them by name and they will let us go just like that (interviewee 10, a 15 year-old).*

Some of these French youth recognize that they receive preferential treatment from the police because they are both French and white, while non-white and non-French youth are treated more harshly.

Haitian respondents, most (eight) of whom believed they received unfair treatment from the police, attributed this treatment to their skin color; that is, because they were black, they were easy targets for police harassment and discrimination, as described by two 17-year-old Haitian-Immigrants (interviewees 14 and 19).

They are all full of shit. The police work for the rich people, it doesn't work for us poor folks, especially us poor Black folks. If I would call the police...what can they do for me....I tell you what they will do for me, they will do shit. They won't come in our neighborhoods to help us they will come to harass us man. You on the street for fifteen minutes and the cops come by and start to ask questions like if you in the gang, why you hanging out on the streets, man they hate us black folks that is for sure. When I walk on the streets I always have cops harassing me just for walking man, I ain't doing nothing illegal, just for walking they stop me they are racists man that is for sure. They are assholes. They will see a guy like me on the street and they will stop me for no reason and ask what I am doing on the street. I have had police officers follow me with their cars for no reason. If I don't do anything, they will continue to act like assholes all the time. I tell them all the time. I am not bothering anyone. I am not hurting anyone, just to leave me alone. They will not leave me alone! (Interviewee 14).

No not really because the cops are always looking for trouble or looking to find trouble. For example, if the cops know who you or are used to seeing you often... they will come look for you and harass you for no reason just so they can get their kicks. For example, there was one of my friends who were chilling at the park and the police officers were patrolling this same park. So one of these police officers went up to one of my friends who happens to be Haitian and in a gang of course and this cop kept asking my friend what he was doing in the park. Then this cop's partner kept asking my friend where he was hiding his drugs! He was being very demanding and he kept getting in my friend's face. My friend all he was doing was chilling and smoking a cigarette and these cops kept pushing my friend so my friend was getting angry but didn't do anything about it because he figured what was the point they were going to lock him up even if he wasn't the one who started it. In the end it would be my friend's word against the cops and who would listen to my friend right? Because my friend is young he figured no one would believe him anyway, so just waited for the cops to leave and they finally did when they realized that my friend wasn't fighting back, because that is exactly what the cops were looking for, which is some kind of fight so that it would give them a reason to hit or hurt my friend. Just typical! I believe all cops are the same they abuse the law because they know they can (interviewee 19).

Two Haitian youths, however, said that police officers have always treated them fairly.

Up to now all the police officers that have stopped me have always been fair towards me. I have never said that police officers are bastards and things like that because they don't bother me. Firstly because the police it is one of the first reasons why I started acting up because I wanted to cross them, it brought me a thrill. Each time the police stopped me I always congratulated them for catching me. I would tell them things like "congratulations that you caught me" I would

also say things like "Good job for catching me." I always had a good relationship with the police. The police officer that stopped me about a month and a half ago when I came here, we were talking to each other and laughing and no one was rough or violent towards me. Most of the time police officers are very relaxed around me because I am kind to them and I don't attack them. I don't say things like don't touch me you fuckin' mother fuckers, I do whatever they ask and what I have to do. They have no reason to be mean to me (an 18-year-old Haitian-Canadian, interviewee 12).

I have never encountered any racism towards me personally from police officers. Once, I was in the park with my friends and some Quebecois cops came up to us and even asked if our beer was any good and they walked away. They are not always there to harass you. They are okay, they are just doing their job. Maybe if I was a police officer I would act the same way (17-year-old Haitian born, interviewee 30).

None of the ten Haitians interviewed wanted to deal with black or Haitian police officers. They felt that police officers from their own ethnic background were likely to be more demanding, treat the youths more severely and be more judgmental, ultimately treating the youth as though he were a disappointment to the Haitian heritage, as we see in these evaluations by several Haitian youths.

They are sell-outs man, it don't matter from what race they are from they are all freaken sell outs. I knew this guy where his older brother was a cop and he caught his brother in the metro with other gang members, he arrested his own brother can you believe it... they are all sell-outs. Police officers who are Black are more brutal towards their own kind. They are even racist against their own kind because we are in gangs. We gang members (that are Black) are perceived as destroying what the cops (that are Black) have tried to get away from by becoming cops in the first place. The Black cops see us as a disgrace to their community, they ashamed of us. So they want us to change and be good citizens like them, we good but society ain't no good to us, that is what these sell-outs forgot to understand, so they become more White and forgot about their Black roots, and we (the gang) are a reminder to them of what society made us become (interviewee 5, a 17-year-old Haitian-Canadian).

Oh, no way man. They are freaken worse when they come from the same culture let me tell you. They are more like dogs and full of shit and they are harder on you and they act like they know you. They do this because they happen to be from the same culture, but they are not really like you because take me for example, I am from the streets and they want to protect the streets from people like me. So,

because they are from the same culture they should be protecting us. They should stop trying to go against their own kind in the name of justice (interviewee 7, a 15-year-old Haitian born).

No, I would not necessarily prefer to deal with police officers that come from the same ethnic background. Sometimes the Haitian police officers could be worst dogs because all they see is little Haitians that they stop and they have to be tougher on us because we are like a disgrace to the Haitian community, so they will treat us that way (interviewee 9, a 15-year-old Haitian Canadian).

Police officers that are Haitian are crazier. There was my friend and we were in Cartier Ville just chilling and waiting for a bus, and while we were chilling, a policeman, this Haitian guy, he came towards us and acted like he wanted to arrest somebody. And after because I said why are you arresting my friend? Why are you doing that? The police officer responded by saying to shut the fuck up and he took my friend, handcuffed him, and shot him in the car for nothing. The police officer that did this was Haitian! In Haiti country they learned a different kind of justice. They don't mess around! But to act like that in front of your own kind that screams injustice man! (interviewee 20, a 16-year-old Haitian Canadian).

Haitian youths felt that Haitian police officers should be aware of the racism black youth experience in Montreal society and therefore should be kinder to Haitian youth, more sensitive and understanding. These youths felt that the more severe and authoritarian the action taken against youth, the more likely the youth would be to rebel and resent interventions by the police.

Once I was stopped by these two cops and one of them was Haitian. I didn't do nothing and they kept harassing me and so I got really mad, and I had my two fists [he made two fists] *like that and they told me to stop making a fist and I said no because I was too mad. I will remain like this. The Haitian cop took me by the neck and I couldn't even breathe and I couldn't even talk to say yo, I can't breathe. Both cops then* [the other was a French cop] *they put me on the floor and they kicked me and they had the handcuffs on me and I had my wrists placed on my back. I couldn't even breathe while they were doing that. I was just choking, fuck! After when they finished putting the handcuffs on me, and they let me breathe and I was choking, man, I didn't do nothing because I didn't want to show my hands I was keeping my fists. As I told the police and even the intervention workers over here, it only creates "more hate in my heart." More hate, in my heart, and they just put more hate in your heart, so when you come out you still do bad things (interviewee 30, a 17-year-old Haitian immigrant).*

In terms of general advice for the police, Haitian youths felt they were under too much observation and that police were too quick to chastise them or harass them for what they perceived as fairly minor activities (hanging out on the street). As well, youths felt that police were definitely in need of racial sensitivity training.

> *Stop harassing us and assuming we committed a crime while we are just chilling outside on the streets because we look bad don't mean we doing anything bad (like commit a crime) and sometimes they give us a fine for just hanging out on the street or what they say is they give us the ticket because they might think we in the gang, man that pisses me off. They show us no respect they treat us like animals I had friends of mine just for hanging around on the streets were hand cuffed and forced to go in the cop car. Just for hanging around they should show us some respect (interviewee 5, a 17-year-old Haitian-Canadian).*

> *I don't know. If I was a police officer I wouldn't be racist that is for sure. They should stop being racist (interviewee 9, a 15-year-old Haitian Canadian).*

Jamaican youths echoed the feelings of other youths interviewed: most felt that police treated them unfairly and connected this directly to race in a rather contradictory fashion. Most youth felt that police officers were more lenient towards white youth and tougher on black youth. However, one individual suggested that white officers are more likely to be intimidated by black teenagers but that a black officer is more likely to be confrontational because he is black and is perceived to understand how black youths think. A 16-year-old Jamaican-born individual (interviewee 23) and a 17-year-old Jamaican-Canadian (interviewee 27) offer assessments of how they are treated:

> *The police is another thing. I don't have anything against the police but sometimes you know they harass you for anything. If you are a White guy they don't tell you nothing, but if you are a Black guy they always harass you, you know what I mean (interviewee 23).*

> *I don't know man. I am not telling them not to do their job, their job is to protect society or whatever. Stop violence and crime and shit like that you know. Me I am not telling them not to do their job like you know or whatever. But when they come and when they confront you and shit. Some of them are aggressive like you*

> *know, some of them are violent or whatever and they try to rough you up and shit [take their marijuana and smoke it in front of the youth]. Some of them are crooked and they take your shit, I don't know man, they do things that I know they are not supposed to do, but you can't really say shit about it because it is your word over the cop's word like you know. Obviously the cop is going to win over you like you know. They are going to see you and they are going to say ah, he is a criminal and this and that like you know (interviewee 27).*

In terms of preferring to deal with white rather than black police officers, one youth notes:

> *I think it is worse actually to be dealing with Jamaican police officers. To deal with a Black cop it is worst than dealing with a White cop. Because basically the White cop, whatever. They see Black kids and they say it is bad this and that. So, whatever the White cops they see you whatever they see Black kids and think they get into trouble and shit like that. But some of them are scared like you know. One White off duty cop or whatever you call it, like off duty or undercover, whatever you call it. They are not going to come up to a bunch of Black kids cause you know, they are just scared they are by themselves they are a White cop on top of that like you know. They are scared. With a Black cop he feel no shame because he is Black you know and he is the authority and whatever. He is going to come and he is going to try to fuck with you like you know. He is going to be like what are you doing here re, re, re. He will be trying to rough you up and shit like that. You can't do nothing about it like you know (17-year-old Jamaican born individual, interviewee 14).*

Finally, like all the youths before them, these young Jamaican men do not want to be pestered by the police:

> *Leave us alone, let us walk the streets in peace and let us be, stop harassing us for no reason (interviewee 1, a 16-year-old Jamaican born,).*

Nine of the ten Latino youths interviewed felt they were treated unfairly by the police and all ten preferred to deal with, given the chance Latino police officers. Assessment of Latino youths' negative treatment by the police is provided by three youths: a 17-year-old El Salvadorian (interviewee 3), a 17-year-old Chilean-Canadian (interviewee 29) and a 17 year-old individual born in the Dominican Republic (interviewee 41). Youths particularly felt that police were racist, targeted youths

aggressively and behaved in a demeaning manner towards youth and their family members. The youth from the Dominican Republic also commented that he felt that when a Latino officer was paired with a white officer, that Latino officer emulated the behavior of his white partner rather than being closer to the Latino youth, who shared his ethnicity.

> *In my experience though I have been treated badly by the cops. For example, let's say I got stopped they will start telling us, hey you little gang members, you are the smallest gang here. They recognize us by the neighborhood we live in and the colors we wear (interviewee 3).*
>
> *I understand that they have their jobs to do and they have to maintain society, and authority within society, and of course without this, society would go just crazy. But sometimes there are some officers that abuse their power. I have witnessed how the officers have abused their power, for example, they commit aggressive arrests on people that I have seen get caught. I have also seen police officers beat on my friends, because I guess they got tired of telling my friends to stop hanging around at a particular spot. Some have made a few racist remarks against Latinos. They asked me if I spoke French, this happened on my second charge. I told them no, I don't speak French, which I do and I admit I was acting stupid by saying that I didn't speak the French language. In the car on the way to the station, the cops were speaking amongst themselves and they started saying something like "ah, these fuckin' Latinos they are always getting into trouble." I am not surprised but, I didn't think that they were like that. They can be very stubborn and narrow-minded (interviewee 29).*
>
> *I hate their guts. I have seen Black cops and I have seen Latino cops and you can tell that they don't want to do nothing like criminal, but if their partners are White or whatever than they will act stupid like the White partner. I don't like cops, I hate cops. I had problems in the past with the cops because in the past I got charged for beating a cop. His background was French Canadian. This is what happened: they came to the door at my house and they knocked and I was with my mom and we opened it and they walked in with their boots you know and they said where is it* [drugs], *and my mom tried to talk and they told her to "shut up! We are not talking to you, we are talking to your son!" I said what the hell! No one talks to my mother like that, and my mother wanted to sit down and the cop told my mother to stand up. They are telling us what to do in our own house. They weren't even looking for me they were looking for someone else and when my mom was talking, they said things like my God "elle parle come un chien* ["she speaks like a dog"]*" like we don't understand French. Just because we were talking to them in English, but me I understand French even though I am not fluent in it I understand though they were calling her a Chihuahua, like a dog you know and even my mom understood that you know, even if she don't speak French, she understood the Chihuahua comment. Then one of the cops said, okay,*

calm down, my partner is not making fun of you, when we knew damn well he was making fun of us. Or at least I knew that that he was making fun of my mother. After that cop made that comment I attacked his partner and I bit him and I tried to strangle him, and they beat me up and everything got dropped because they had no search warrant on them so they entered my house illegally. Some of the cops are real losers and I mean look at the cops I encountered they were real losers. They had no problems making faces at my mom, laughing at her in her face, and making comments like that when she speaks she reminds them of a Chihuahua. My mom is Spanish and she has an accent when she speaks. The other guy who is telling my mom not to sit down, but that same cop is sitting on our couch like this. She talks like a dog and even my mom understood that and she said what? Like tell him something like to the cop that was taking down the information. The cop raised his voice to my mom and he said "madame! Hey, hey, Madame, relaxe!" I freaked when I heard his comment and the way he spoke to my mother. I got real pissed off so I grabbed him and I wanted to hurt him. He had me on the floor and then before I knew it both cops had me on the floor (interviewee 41).

Latino youths offered similar advice as those youth of other ethnic groups. Police should stop harassing the youth for trivial reasons; the police should encourage ethnic diversity within the police force; and police should attempt to relate to youth on a more personal and human level, as we see in comments from several of the respondents.

If they see us all hanging out together, three or four of us at a time, the police officers will approach us, they will start asking us what we did and will start to harass us for no reason (interviewee 8, 17-year-old immigrant from El Salvador).

Have different ethnic backgrounds in the police force, because I see a lot of people from Quebec. I don't see enough variety with regards to ethnic backgrounds (interviewee 29, 17-year-old Chilean Canadian).

Like I said, instead of treating us like human beings they treat us like animals. Don't get me wrong, I know I have committed a crime and obviously they are not going to shake my hand and say good job. But I can do without the insults I have been called a no good Spic, I have been told that I should go back to my country, and at another time a police officer told me that he saw my mother...and when I asked him where, I was kind of worried, the police officer replied that he saw her being a whore at the corner of my street. And all his buddy cops were laughing at his stupid joke thinking it was funny (interviewee 22, a 20-year-old Immigrant from Ecuador).

Just one Latino youth, a 17-year-old El Salvadorian felt that police officers had always treated him fairly. He said he understood that police were just doing their jobs and that if he were in a similar position, he would likely do the same thing; however, he did feel that officers were often excessively aggressive.

> *For me it is not that I don't like police officers but, I find that they are in fact fair. The majority do their work. They are just doing their job and what is required of them to do. So I don't blame them if they have to arrest someone. If someone committed a crime it is their job and duty to arrest the person if I was in their place and that was my job, I would probably do the same thing. However, what I don't agree with or I don't necessarily like is when they impose the law or abuse their power, that I don't agree with at all. They catch you in the act of committing a crime and yeah sure they have to place the handcuffs on you. But is it really necessary to beat up the person you are arresting especially if that person is not resisting arrest, so that is what I mean by abusing or imposing the law, they may do this unfairly sometimes and that is what I can't accept (interviewee 48).*

Finally, all of the Latinos (N=10) would prefer to deal with police officers of the same ethnic origin. They believe that Latino officers are more likely to empathize with Latino youth. Furthermore, the youths believe that Latino officers have also experienced poverty and have also had exposure to family members and friends who belong to gangs or were criminals.

> *I have already had some run-ins with police officers that were Latino. Yes, they are nicer and they understand me much better. It is better because he probably lived the same experiences in the past, what I mean by that is that his environment where he came from and where he lived was similar to mine. He was probably brought up the same way as me and has the same values and morals and he understands me better and he would probably be the person to help me get out of the gang. All in all he would probably be the best person to give you pointers on how to get out of the gang. Why do I say this, well it is simple the reason why most Latinos become police officers and there is not that many in the police force that are Latinos I could tell you that. In my lifetime I have only met one so far. The reason why a Latino man would become a police officer is because he probably saw someone close to him die or get hurt because they were in the gang or involved in crime of some kind. Most of us come from poverty, especially if we were born in Latin America and we immigrated here or our parents immigrated here. Most of our parents (with the exception of my father God rest his soul) are*

not rich. They are working class and I guarantee you at least one of their sons and daughters are involved in some type of gang or criminal activity in order to make money. No I am not saying all Latinos are crooks, that would be against my own people. All I am saying is why would a Latino man become a cop, probably because he wants to help his own people get out of a life of crime because he probably had a brother or father that was involved in the gang and he saw what criminal life did to them. The police officer that I met who was El Salvadorian he had a brother that got killed while being in the gang and he told me when he was young he did a few things for the gang as well, in order to protect his brother from time to time. Like for example, to bring a package somewhere for his brother because his brother couldn't be in two places at the same time. Things like that, talking to the cop it made me think maybe I should quit too or not get myself deeper into it. So I guess to make a long story short this is why someone who is Latino would become a police officer, because let's face it I probably made more on the streets than the cop made on his weekly salary (interviewee 8, a 17 year-old immigrant from El Salvador).

Those in the 'other' ethnic category again reflected the feelings of the other youths. Clearly, there is no real differentiation among the youths of various ethnicities about how they perceive their treatment by police: police are not fair and are often racist. However, these youth do not believe ethnicity is particularly important, and do not have particularly strong feelings whether it would be better to deal with an officer of similar or different ethnic background. And again, like many of the youths interviewed, here two individuals have a great deal to say about how unfair police can be.

I can't stand any of them. They are all racist, I swear to God. Some Native guys are racist against French and this and that. The cops down here are really prejudiced. Especially where I live. That is where I heard the prairie Nigger stuff. Cops are out of their minds male or female doesn't make a difference. A racist incident that happened in school was that the cops pulled up and they were doing their routine check and something like that or they were called for some little conflict in the school yard and the White cop, he says what are you Niggers up to today. They just called us all Niggers, they called us Nigger lovers, Prairie Niggers and everything [all the colored kids were called Prairie Niggers]. So, one of the guys said fuck you too you know, then he said you are getting arrested. One of the Black kids ran behind him with a skate board smacked him on the back and there was a little conflict right there. Then all of the conflicts took place and all of the shots were fired and everything. It doesn't make a difference whether it is Cree or Black or anything the cops kept referring to us as Prairie Lovers (interviewee 28, an 18-year-old Cree).

No, I don't think they treat us fairly the reason is that they will see that you are a young person and they automatically think that you want to commit some crime. I do believe that some of these police officers are somewhat racist. For example, for whatever reason every time they stopped me they always made some remark about my culture. The first time I was called you stupid Spic, I am not Spanish, I am Portuguese. Then the second time they arrested me they said something like "you people are always the one's to make trouble, go back to your country." These remarks really got on my nerves because I was born here, my parents are from Portugal. Yes, I am Portuguese but I am also Canadian shit. If it wasn't for us immigrants than Canada wouldn't be what it is today. Immigrants built all our highways, the construction, the buildings we have. Then you get these freaken Peppers [Quebecois] *that every freaken chance they keep reminding us how we are not supposed to be here and that we are outsiders (interviewee 38, a 17-year-old Portuguese-Canadian).*

These youths, like those of other ethnic backgrounds, felt that Montreal police officers behaved in a racist and denigrating manner towards youth. As a result, youth perceived they were treated as second class citizens with no rights. Again, when it comes to how police could change their behavior to improve relations with youth, comments are remarkably similar to those already heard: be more respectful, stop harassing youth; address racism within the force.

They should be more respectful and they should stop harassing us for no reason. They will go up to someone who is an ethnic minority and I have heard the cops say things like: that fuckin' bastard of a Nigger, or say things like that prick of a Moroccan. They will talk in this way some of them and it can be very disrespectful. There are some that are very respectful, like we have played football with the cops and it was a lot of fun. We had played basketball with them when we were on the outside (interviewee 38, a 17-year-old Portuguese-Canadian).

Leave us alone, stop giving us tickets for nothing. When they find out that you are in the gang I think the police officers treat you worse. A couple of my friends got their asses kicked by police officers. They started beating up on the kids and they just jumped us. Even if I didn't do something they would pull me on the side and I would be harassed or hurt (interviewee 46, a 17-year-old German immigrant).

For these youths of varied ethnic backgrounds, it was not particularly important to

them if they dealt with police officers who shared their ethnicity or not – ultimately, all police officers were unfair, no matter what their ethnicity.

> *Fuck them too! Polish or not! I hate cops. I have been pepper sprayed and beaten, after the pepper spray. I hate cops. Downtown cops because when they know who you are and they know that you are selling firearms and possess firearms they don't like you cops. They pepper sprayed me and they have beaten me with the little batons they have there. You know they have a bigger one in their car, they have bigger ones like a baseball bat, and they beat me at the corner of St. Catherine and St. Laurent. I did provoke the fight. They pushed me against their car and said that I am under arrest and they didn't have shit on me. This was just harassment they knew me and this was just harassment! I had no firearms on me at the time of the arrest. They were going to bring me to Ile Bizard and they were going to get me out of the car and they would have driven off. I would have to find my own way back They have done things like this to me like ten times. It is fuckin' annoying! Or they will really get you scared. They would empty my money they would take it and they would say good for you and they would say get out of here you little fuckin' criminal. Every time they used to catch me I would have two or three guns on me you know you understand. They wouldn't make a report or anything like that. They just found some weed. They would tell me things like " Now you can't get no report against us!" I have been illegally searched and that is against the law, so many times I have been stopped for no reason (interviewee 25, an 18-year-old Polish-Canadian).*

> *Fuck that. Cops are cops. I don't like cops (interviewee 26, a 17-year-old Portuguese immigrant).*

> *I say that regardless of their nationality they are all pricks and some of them are very racist towards Italians, they will call us "Gino's" [means Italian Gangsters that like to show off their money] which means that we are all big show offs and that we think we are better than other people (interviewee 39, a 17 year-old Italian Canadian).*

Only one youth, a 17 year-old Portuguese-Canadian, said he would prefer to deal with police officers of Portuguese background.

> *I would prefer it, I would not feel denigrated (interviewee 38).*

Summary

Following the Birmingham perspective which drew on labeling theory, this chapter has examined how agents of social control perceive youth in gangs and how

youth are perceived by agents of social control.

A great deal of information about youths' perceptions of the various agents of social control that they come into contact with has been described here. In summarizing all this information, it is clear that ethnicity plays a less important role to race for these youth in their relationships with these adults in authoritative roles. When it came to intervention workers, the majority of French and Jamaican youth felt they were treated unfairly, while Haitian, Latino and 'other' youth felt they were treated fairly. Among these youth, there was an awareness of frequent racial bias on the part of intervention workers as well as a general attitude of authoritarian behavior. Youth felt that if authorities were to address both of these, conditions and behavior at detention centers would improve. None of these youth had any great exposure to social workers and thus expressed no opinions (obviously not having any basis for an opinion), although those who did focused on the actions of the social workers – not keeping youths informed about their situation – rather than the social workers' ethnicity. Teachers, too, were not subjects of strong derision; although some youths commented that it would be a benefit to be taught by individuals of similar ethnicity, for the most part, they focused on the fact that teachers should be open to discussing gang life and street life with them.

Unsurprisingly, it is police officers who come in for the lion's share of negative feeling and criticism. All youths clearly perceived police officers as being racist, overly aggressive in targeting youth, and unwilling to interact with youth on a personal, human level. However, we see differences in which ethnic groups feel that ethnicity is important. Most French youths interviewed said they would prefer to deal with French police officers; Latinos, also, said they would prefer, if possible, to deal with Latino officers.

Youths who felt this way clearly felt that police officers of the same ethnicity would be more sympathetic, more lenient and easier to deal with than those of a different ethnicity. Haitians adamantly stated that they would not prefer to deal with Haitian officers, as they believed Haitian officers would subject the youth to more stringent standards of behavior. Those in the 'other' ethnic category did not attribute great importance to the value to them of the ethnicity of the police officers they were dealing with. All these youths, no matter their ethnic background, emphasized that police officers needed to harass youth less, be less racist, and behave in a more humane manner towards youth. All youths, whether black or white, French or non-French, were aware of racism in society; even French youths recognized that French police officers behaved more harshly towards non-white youth.

The harsher treatment of non-white youth results from racial profiling (Wortley and Tanner, 2003; James, 1998). A recent survey of approximately 3, 400 Toronto high school found that "over 50% of the Black students in the study reported they had been stopped and questioned by the police on two or more occasions in the previous two years, compared to only 23% of Whites, 11% of Asians, and 8% of South Asians" (Wortley and Tanner, 2003, p. 371). James (1998) also found that young black youth in Southern Ontario frequently experienced routine stops by the police. James (1998) describes the process of racial profiling as "a process of 'Othering' where 'White' becomes the norm against which all other communities of color are judged (usually to be deviant)" (James, 1998, p. 158). Blacks in particular are socially constructed as posing "physical threats" or as "violent" and such negative depictions of blacks help to justify the ways in which they are socially controlled by law enforcement agents (James, 1998).

Discussion

Clearly all youth interviewed demonize the agents of social control with whom they come into contact. Their commentary, no matter what their ethnicity, demonstrates that they see themselves very much as outsiders when it comes to dealing with intervention workers, social workers, and police offers. Following the Birmingham School, which draws on labeling theory, one can see that through the youths' participation in deviant activities that those adult agents of social control object to and disapprove of, they have been subjected to powerful negative sanctions (e.g., detention in a maximum security juvenile facility). The subjects in this study were tired of being labeled and treated as deviant. Their response was self-destructive in many respects, because the more they were treated as deviants, the more frustrated they became, and the more likely they were to retaliate against these social agents, thus entering a vicious cycle (Lemert, 1951).[2] Some of these youth felt that they could not come out from under such labels, and might as well go along with it than change their behavior and thus were subject to further sanctions. Treated as outsiders, these youth created a deviant insider group and in turn identified the adults as outsiders.

The youths label all the adults they come into contact with as wrong, unfair and racist; they see themselves as victims of a racist, cold, unfeeling adults' society. These youths share anti-authority sentiments, and their gang subculture becomes the outlet for expression of these sentiments. Indeed, most of these youths are resisting the dominant normative order (e.g., police, employers, etc.), and they perceive anyone who opposes their beliefs as oppressive and unjust. The youths' gang subculture is a symbolic

[2] Lemert was a labeling theorist but not himself a Birmingham theorist, although his ideas have been adopted by Birmingham theorists.

resistance to this social order.

This study too showed inconsistent findings, as has other research (e.g., Bortolussi, 1999; Couton, 1999; Weinfeld, 1999) when it came to the benefits of ethnic matching. I found that the French, Haitian, and "Other" subjects exercise symbolic allegiance to their culture. Some prefer to deal with agents of social control that come from the same ethnic culture when it suits their personal needs and is convenient, therefore in this instance, some of these youth allude to fact that being culturally matched is relevant and may be circumstantially dictated. These individuals perceive that a shared culture is beneficial and advantageous, and they may share a part-time commitment to the idea of value of ethnic belonging with reference to their social interactions when dealing with agents of authority. However, as with other findings, some see a disadvantage. For example, for some French youths, shared culture did not offer an advantage, and these youths said that they thought that French police officers treated them more severely (although many of other ethnic groups felt that French police officers treated French youths more favorably). Haitians also reported that in some instances, with teachers, social workers and police officers, shared culture did not appear to confer any advantage; indeed, being Haitian and dealing with a Haitian agent of social control they felt often led to higher demands being placed on them. For those in the category of "other", a shared cultural background was not considered particularly advantageous. As a result some of these subjects may culturally affiliate or disaffiliate from such agents depending on whether or not they are treated more leniently.

French youth perceived their disciplining by White French agents of social control to be too authoritarian, and this was something they resented. Additionally, some

of these French youth were ethnocentric, and perceived themselves superior to non-French, and expected to be treated by all accordingly. Thus, the youths labeled ethnic minority agents as inferior and did not take them seriously.

Haitians tend to be more integrative compared to Jamaicans. This may explain why they perceive agents of social control as less racist than do Jamaicans. Haitians are French-speaking and therefore interacting with a French agent of social control is perceived as less problematic for them. However, some felt that being black, they are often discriminated against by some White social control agents. Furthermore, some believed that Haitian social control agents would be more judgmental, severe and punitive towards them.

Those youth in the category of Other had mixed feelings about interacting with agents of the same ethnic backgrounds. Some felt that agents who were of the same ethnic background owed it to them to be lenient, and they felt betrayed when this did not happen.

Jamaican and Latino respondents tended to associate themselves with agents of social control at a more collective level and emphasized that shared ethnic roots were advantageous in interactions with agents of social control. This means that there exists a collective expression of ethnic identity; that is, these youth may collectively pledge to in-group preferences at the exclusion of all those who do not fit the chosen criteria and its importance is relevant within their social interactions with agents of social control. However, in one aspect, they differed; Jamaican youth felt that black or Jamaican police officers held them to a higher standard, while Latino youths felt that Latino police officers treated them more sympathetically. Such perceptions have been shaped by their

respective contact with police.

Jamaicans feel they are treated unfairly by social agents of non-Jamaican origins and especially felt discriminated against with reference to language. Even if the social control agent spoke English, some of those agents' first language was French. This was particularly evident within the Centre Jeunesse closed custody youth centers that had English units that dealt with English speaking youth. This created a language barrier in the Jamaican youths' minds. The other factor was race: these youth were less integrative than their Haitian counterparts and wished to remain distinctive from other ethnic groups. They labeled themselves as different, but at the same time felt they were being labeled as un-Canadian by wider society. Their behaviour created barriers in social interactions with society in general. Thus, most said they would prefer to deal with social control agents of Jamaican origin because they felt they would be less racist and more sympathetic. However, Jamaican respondents found White police officers to be racist, but they found Jamaican police officers to be more strict. Thus, they resented them: they expected black officers to be more sympathetic because of their shared similar ethnic and racial heritage, and when this did not occur, they were frustrated.

What has been consistent throughout this study is that Latinos make the strongest case for ethnic allegiance; this is evidence with their cultural repertoire and is also apparent in their preferences for dealing with agents of social control of similar cultural backgrounds.

The findings around ethnic matching, then, are inconclusive. However, there was little exposure of these youths to non-French, non-White agents of social control. Given the advantages of ethnic matching found by others (e.g., Bortolussi, 1999; Couton, 1999;

Weinfeld, 1999), it would be interesting to see the effects of true ethnic matching for these youths in their many encounters with the youth detention system and police.

CHAPTER 8: SUMMARY

To date, most sociological research about gangs has focused on gangs as social problems, gangs as a 'job' for the poor, and the criminality of gangs. Although gang composition is described in terms of age, race and/or ethnicity, little information is available about the interaction of ethnic identity and culture and gang life. The ethno-cultural aspects of gangs, particularly youth gangs, have not been investigated to a great degree. This points to a gap in the existing data given that gangs today are often organized along racial and ethnic lines. The research conducted on youth gang members in Montreal and presented here attempts to address this gap; to this end, it opens new avenues of thinking about youth gang life in an ethnically diverse city.

Youth gang affiliation has significant importance for society as a whole. Not only are there direct social costs associated with youth detention, the costs of crime, costs to the criminal justice system, and costs to the health care system as a result of injuries to youths (and others), there are indirect costs too. For some of these youths, joining a youth gang begets a long-term criminal lifestyle. While some youths leave gangs as they grow older, others use the youth gang as a stepping-stone to a life of criminal. Indirect costs, unmeasurable and perhaps infinitely more important than the direct costs, relate to these youths' loss of potential. Youths who drop out of school and engage in petty criminal activity, if not dissuaded from this lifestyle, will never achieve their full potential: they will never have the opportunity to become firemen, doctors, teachers, police officers, or even accountants, among many things. They will be condemned to a life of low-paying, high-risk activities, which seems a high price to pay for teenage activities. Research into why youths belong to gangs can lead to solutions and thus reduce these significant social

costs.

The objectives of the research (albeit exploratory) have been 1) to understand the life of gang members, and 2) to explain the importance of particular sets of ethno-cultural symbols and behaviors in defining a gang and gang life. Through interviews with gang members of a variety of different ethnic backgrounds, it was possible to extract information about the degree of importance gang members place on their ethnic backgrounds, and how this influences or does not influence their gang participation. In a broader context of juvenile deviance, I have examined what gang life in and of itself symbolizes for these youth. Understanding the influence of ethnic identity and culture on these youths and their gang involvement provides insight into whether ethnic identity protects these youths from [perceived] racism and also whether ethnic identity plays a role in the lives of these young men in gangs.

The data for this study were obtained from interviews and participatory observation. Fifty male youth gang members were interviewed: 10 French; 10 Haitians; 10 Jamaicans; 10 Latinos; and 10 youths of various ethnic backgrounds. All youths were aged between 14 and 20 and were resident in maximum-security closed custody centers in Montreal, Canada. Participant observation of these youths in the closed custody centers was also conducted.

The Chicago School perspective has been used to briefly explain what social forces define gang affiliation. A review of the literature examined ethnicity and race, cultural features of gangs, economic and political factors, and the pull and lure of gangs, all factors which in the past have been used to explain youth gangs. One thing that became clear is that many gangs organize on the basis of ethnicity, yet the role of ethnic

culture in gangs has not received much consideration. The Birmingham School perspective and the theory of symbolic ethnicity were used to explore in detail the role of ethnic culture and identity and its relevance in gang life. The Birmingham school perspective was used to explore the symbolic meaning behind specific styles [e.g., hairstyles, image, demeanor, language] and the degree to which they are linked with these young men's ethnic culture and ethnic identity. This theoretical approach allowed me to show how these styles are perceived as signifiers of resistance to the social structure and how they are also signifiers of belonging to their ethnic gangs. The concept of symbolic ethnicity was used to explore what ethnic culture and identity symbolize in the lives of these young male gang members and to further illustrate how ethno-cultural identity can be understood to ground gang culture.

After analysis of the interviews according to elements of gang life as well as ethnic background, it can be concluded that some issues (but not all) are explicitly connected to ethnicity for some groups, but not all. Indeed, across the board, it seems that Latinos explicitly connect ethnic identity and culture to all aspects of their lives, while Haitians and Jamaicans often focus more on issues of race (white versus black). However, it must be remembered that with 50 interview subjects spread across five analytic ethnic categories, it is difficult to generalize findings to each individual ethnic group.

Summary of Research Findings

In ***Chapter Three*** I reviewed major elements related to gang life: gang definition, initiation rights, recruitment, maintenance of gang membership, advantages of gang membership, and quitting the gang. I noted here a similarity among all gangs relating to

these elements, no matter what the ethnicity of the youth and his gang. The major difference seen was that French youths often associated with gangs that were connected to organized biker gangs, such as the Hell's Angels and the Rock Machine, to which family members often belonged.

Few of the research subjects, apart from the Latino youths, explicitly referred to ethnicity, particularly with respect to components of language and culture. Nevertheless, it is clear that many of the subjects affiliated not just along racial lines, but also along broad ethnic groupings. The French youth accepted white, French speaking members; Haitians considered themselves separate from Jamaicans and vice versa; and Latinos emphasized the importance of Spanish language skills for membership in their gangs. Other gang members tended to align themselves along racial lines: whites belonged to white gangs, blacks belonged to black gangs, an Algerian individual belonged to an Arabic gang, and an Italian-Canadian youth belonged to a gang that was strongly affiliated with other Italian-Canadians. Ethnic homogeneity and shared language were recurrent themes for many interviewees, whether they emphasized the importance of ethnicity overtly or not. Some among those in the 'other' ethnicity category stated that their gangs were ethnically heterogeneous, but that even so, all members shared the same language for communication: English. These youths pointed out that speaking a language other than English while hanging out with the gang could lead to conflict.

Ethnicity, then, is important for these youths, whether they see it themselves or not as it is the basis for the composition of their gangs, even though they do not all emphasize the importance of preserving ethnic traditions.

In ***Chapter Four***, I examined the concept of ethnic identity, including the idea of

majority and minority group membership. This chapter explored whether these youth identified themselves to be Canadian, members of an ethnic group, or "hyphenated" Canadian, or in some other way. Related to this is the question of against whom these youths are rebelling: mainstream society, their own ethnic group, or other ethnic groups.

In broad strokes, among the French one could identify a divide between those who self-identified as Quebecois, who were anti-English and anti-non-white immigrants and for whom gang membership could be seen to be an affirmation of ethnic identity. In contrast, those French youths who did not self-identify as Quebecois often explicitly rejected Quebecois culture, which they perceived as racist. For these youths, gang participation was a 'job' or often a family choice.

Among Haitian youths, there was a strong identification with Haitian ethnic identity and a desire to retain cultural heritage. However, these youths were aware of significant racism in Quebec culture towards them. Their association with other Haitian youths can be seen as a way to reinforce their Haitian identity, and their gang life may be seen as a way to be protected against racist attitudes and behaviors of whites.

Jamaican youths also pointed to similar issues as Haitians: racism and rejection of white society (for these youths, often explicitly identified as 'white' Babylon). However, these youths also defined themselves as Jamaican rather than Black and often rejected Haitian youth who were seen as too willing to assimilate to mainstream culture.

Among Latino youths, one sees a strong affirmation of Latino culture and a desire to conserve that culture in their individual lives and also in their lives as gang members. Darker-skinned Latinos report experiencing more discrimination than lighter-skinned Latinos. The interview findings suggest that Latino youth rebel against mainstream

(white) society and that for them, gang membership is a way to deal with that racism, reinforce their own ethnic identity and perhaps also cope with the poverty so many Latino immigrants face.

Those youths among the 'other' ethnic category did not show any strong leanings one way or another. Some strongly identified with their ethnic backgrounds; others did not. Some experienced racism, others were racist. For these youths, gang life was not strongly associated with ethnicity but seemed rather to be the result of a desire to rebel against the norm.

The investigation of gang symbolism across the various groups (***Chapters Five)*** relied on a Birmingham School Perspective to explore youths' specific styles [e.g., hairstyles, image, demeanor], the degree to which they interrelate with these young men's ethnic culture and ethnic identity, and how these styles are signifiers of resistance to society's norms or social structure while also promoting belonging to their respective ethnic gangs. This chapter also incorporates factors previous gang research (connected to the Chicago School perspective) has used to explain gang membership, especially social forces including social ecology, politics, economics, territoriality and ethnicity.

French youths join gangs as a result of cultural transmission of criminal values (it's the family business). For Haitian youths territoriality is an important aspect of gang membership, as cultural and ethnic identity and the opportunity to gain power and privilege within society (Shaw & McKay, 1969; Pinderhughes, 1997). Jamaican youths are motivated by economics – they want the flashy clothes, the expensive jewelry and expensive cars, all of which requires having cash and lots of it (Fleisher, 1998; Hazlehurst & Hazlehurst, 1998; Dukes, et. al., 1997; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Huff,

1996; Sheley, 1995; The Canadian Street Children Project, 1993; Chesney-Lind & Karen, 1995; Lasley, 1992; Moore, et. al., 1983). For Latino youths, shared culture and a shared sense of alienation and isolation from mainstream society are driving forces behind their gang membership, including territoriality (Spergel, 1995). Again, those of the 'other' ethnic category tended to align along racial and ethnic lines, a common presentation of group deviant behavior (Goldstein & Huff, 1993; Huff, 1990; Vigil & Yun, 1990; Chin, 1990a, 1990b, 1986; Joe & Robinson, 1980; Miller, 1975). And for many, this deviant alignment gives to economic benefits through criminal activity (Fleisher; Hazlehurst & Hazlehurst, 1998; Dukes, et. al., 1997; Decker & Van Winkle; Huff, 1996; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Sheley, 1995; The Canadian Street Children Project, 1993; Lasley, 1992; Moore, et. al., 1983).

The physical expression of gang membership, from tattoos, jewelry, clothing, bandanas, etc., can generally be understood for all groups through the Birmingham School perspective of youth group membership. Although the French claimed that they did not wear a 'gang' uniform, they made sure they did not dress like black youths; however, once French youths graduated into biker gangs, adornments (clothing, tattoos, jewelry etc.) become important metaphorical traits that are used to define this culture. For many black youths (Haitian and Jamaican), clothing and specific colors of clothing were chosen to make them symbolically feared and respected by rival gang members while also personifying Black cultural resistance towards White authority (Brake, 1985). Among Latino gang members, youths adopted a style of dress, talk, walk and demeanor that were designed to reflect a 'tough male identity" symbolic of their social marginalization resulting from their immigrant and in-between status (Marger, 2003).

Those in the category of "other" did not wear specific gang clothing but did carry bandannas, the color of which denoted a particular gang that set them apart from mainstream society and other ethnic gangs (Brake, 1985). What appears to be common among all ethnic gangs under study is that their choice of attire, gestures, and vocabulary signify in-group recognition as well as rebellion against adult society. Whatever style these youth adopted clearly indicated to which gang they belonged and the ethno-cultural composition of their respective street gangs.

Ultimately, one must ask whether the feeling of "ethnicness" is symbolic, collective or external among these gang members, and whether it plays an important role in their gang life. To recap, the expression of ethnic identity at the collective level means that all members of a respective ethnic group frequently participate in shared culturally significant activities (e.g., food, religion, language and sports) and that these activities are regularly encouraged within their designated ethnic gangs.

When ethnic identity is expressed symbolically, youths' commitment to the ethnic group is not expressed on a regular basis, but their ethnic allegiance is more personalized and expressed on an individual, part-time basis. Ethnic allegiance may be demonstrated on a contextual and situational basis. In other words there is a symbolic connection to ethnic heritage, and thus, ethnic allegiance may be expressed solely through a shared language or simply through a shared philosophy of life without fully embracing all the cultural traditions of the ethnic culture.

External identity has also been considered within this chapter which encompasses the particular external characteristics, such as skin color, facial features, accent, tattoos, and clothing (such attributes are assumed within the identity of the group) that some gang

participants display. The external definition focuses on the consequences of being labeled "outsider," or "non-Canadian."

Among the French youths, I have found that ethnicity is identified collectively and symbolically through *language* and *sports,* the cultural practices that are most emphasized within the gang subculture and therefore meet the criteria of "ethnic belongingness."

Those youths in non-majority ethnic groups (Haitians, Latinos, and Jamaicans) tended to emphasize cultural signifiers such as language, food, music and even religion, as important to them. These signifiers emphasized ethnic group cohesion and collective belonging.

The Latino subjects explicitly identified ethnicity and preserving cultural signifiers (such as language) as important. These youths experience their ethnicity collectively and frequently, and often point to factors such as *language, religion, music, sports, food, and politics* which are associated with their countries of origin and which are strongly celebrated and emphasized within their gangs. These youth share a strong sense of "peoplehood", comprising the core of their shared definition of Latinness.

Individuals in the "other" ethnic category practice *language* at the symbolic and collective level, while *religion* and *food* were merely symbolic. *Music* and *sports* were not linked to their ethnic cultures, and *politics* were not important at all to these youths.

What appears to be similar across all ethnic groups was the importance of language and the ability to collectively communicate in their language of choice. However, what allows these youth to also have an external and symbolic identity is the argot and slang adopted by gang members that personify an underground culture. This

special code language communicates and symbolizes anti-authority sentiments.

Among the non-white youths, Latino, Haitian, and Jamaican youths share an external ethnic identity resulting from their skin color, facial features and accents. They are "visible minorities" and as such are often negatively labeled as outsiders and, on occasion, have been perceived as not Canadian enough. Gang membership, therefore, provides them a safe haven from such labeling. Expanding on this idea of 'external ethnic identity', some Latinos claimed to be in-between "two worlds/two cultures": they still claim ethnic allegiance to their country of origin but have not quite integrated themselves within Canadian society. Their values, beliefs and ideas are strongly influenced by their traditional cultural heritage and most feel comfortable around other individuals who share similar sentiments, all of which explains why Latin culture is so important to Latino gang members.

The choice of girlfriend/partner/mother of child for these youths (discussed in ***Chapter Six***) can also offer insight into the importance they place on their ethnic identity and their openness to other cultures. Among French-Canadians, Latinos, and Jamaicans, it is considered important to choose a mate (for a long-term relationship or marriage and certainly as a mother of a child) from within their own ethnic group and to educate children about their roots.

The French, Jamaican, and Latinos' choice in personal intimate relationships are more likely to be collective and frequent. Gang affiliates within these ethnic groups share similar collective sentiments with reference to the willingness to participate in endogamous gender relations and desire to have future offspring acknowledge and understand their ethnic roots. However, one cannot deny the fact that even within the area

of gender relations Latinos make the strongest case in reference to wanting to date and marry within their ethnic culture and also express the desire to bring up future children to acknowledge and be proud of their Latino heritage.

For Haitians, personal relationship choices are more external. Gang members encourage dating and marrying outside their group. Haitians see themselves as Haitian-Canadians first and foremost; one can conclude that this is related to their experience of racism in Canadian society. Nevertheless, they do ascribe some importance to the Canadian component of their lives (viz., their self-definition as "Haitian-Canadian"), and their openness to dating and/or marrying outside the group or having future children being brought up as Haitian-Canadian may offer a way of assimilating to the broader, multicultural Canadian society.

Those youths who were willing to pursue long-term relationships with girls of a different ethnicity to their own were equally willing for their children to stay in touch with the ethnic roots of both parents. Such an attitude may be connected to the fact that for these youths, particularly of the 'other ethnic group' category, gang membership may not be solely based on specific race and/or ethnicity because of their diverse backgrounds. In addition, most refer to themselves as "Hyphenated Canadians" and are first or second generation Canadians; they are therefore more likely to be open to marry outside their ethnic group.

The youths within the category of *other* base their personal intimate relationships on symbolic criteria. For these youth in particular, their marital and dating patterns are based on a more emotional and cognitive attachment. Their choices are individual – voluntary and situational, dependent on the particular context they find themselves in.

Shared ethnic culture was considered advantageous (sharing both language and culture) but not necessary for a relationship.

French girls carried a particularly bad reputation among Haitian, Jamaican, and Latino youths, all of whom agreed that they had no problems having sexual relations with French girls but considered them unsuitable candidates for long-term romantic or even marital partners, and definitely unsuitable as mothers. This is because these young men found French girls to have more open attitudes toward sex, which appeared to go against their traditional cultural beliefs – how they expect their serious girlfriends to behave is very much influenced by their ethnic cultures.

An individual's choice of girlfriend, etc., does not seem to be driven by gang mores, although gang members do tend to share similar views about potential girlfriends and sexual partners. In sum, though, one can say that ethnicity does play a role in the personal relationships of these youths, being an important consideration for some (particularly the Latinos) and a minor consideration for others (particularly the Haitian).

Finally, this research (see ***Chapter Seven)*** has explored how racial identities may be socially constructed with agents of social control, and how these youth react to such external stimuli. I have investigated their perceptions of how agents of social control (intervention workers, social workers, teachers – both at the centers and at regular schools – and police offers) in turn perceive them. This is important because it has allowed me to assess how some of these young men react to racism or perceived racism, and how such social relationships have been meaningful in symbolically shaping these young men's ethnic identities.

One discovers that these youths, who share anti-authority sentiments, use their

gang subculture as an outlet for expression of these sentiments, a reflection of the Birmingham School of thought on youth culture. Indeed, most of these youths are resisting against the dominant normative order (e.g., police, employers, etc.) and consider anyone who opposes their beliefs as oppressive and unjust.

Addressing these perceptions through ethnic match might be considered one approach to deal with the recidivism, rehabilitation, and social reintegration of these youth. Ethnic match is a process by which youths are paired with agents (teachers, social workers, intervention workers, police officers, etc.) of the same ethnic background. 'Ethnic match' might be thought to be positive for these youths as it will allow them to bond with these agents and be more willing to trust them (Weinfeld, 1999). And indeed, results from this research show that ethnic matching would work for Jamaican and Latino youths, who have said that they would prefer to deal with social agents of the same ethnicity because they feel this would provide some empathy or understanding between the two parties. However, it does not appear that ethnic matching would be appropriate for French, Haitian, and youths of the "other" category for three reasons. The first is that these youths believed that agents of social control of the same ethnic background would be more demanding; some even considered themselves betrayed by individuals who were more rigorous and more demanding of them. Second, these youths sometimes felt more ashamed of their deviant activities when dealing with ethnically matched agents of social control (that they had 'let their side down') and thus might be reluctant to deal with individuals of a similar ethnicity. Third, these subjects had expressed anti-authority sentiments, and one might hypothesize that authority imposed on them by ethnically matched agents of social control might trigger greater anger and resentment on their part,

leading to a greater probability of recidivism and failure of rehabilitation.

Jamaican and Latino respondents tended to associate themselves with agents of social control at a more collective level and emphasized that shared ethnic roots were advantageous in interactions with agents of social control. This means that there exists a collective expression of ethnic identity. That is, these youth may collectively pledge to in-group preferences at the exclusion of all those who do not fit the chosen criteria, and the collective expression of ethnic identity is relevant within their social interactions with agents of social control.

I found that the French, Haitian, and "Other" subjects exercise what has been referred to as symbolic allegiance to culture. Some prefer to deal with agents of social control of the same ethnic culture when it suits their personal needs and is convenient. In this instance, then, some of these youth allude to fact that being culturally matched is relevant and may be circumstantially dictated. As a result some of these subjects may culturally affiliate or disaffiliate from such agents depending on whether or not they are treated more leniently. Such ethnic matching and mismatching has an effect in shaping their ethnic identity.

Conclusion

This research shows that ethnic identity and ethnic culture can play different roles in youth gang life. For some youth gangs (e.g., Latinos), ethnicity is highly important as a basis for gang membership, while for others shared ethnicity is an attractive side benefit but is not the driving force behind youths remaining in a gang. Understanding this interrelationship between ethnicity and gang life, as well as the other circumstances and factors surrounding gang involvement, will provide researchers with a means to explain

gang participation and thus develop methods to address gang membership in these youth. This will be a difficult task, given that all the respondents of this study have indicated that gang affiliation acts as a badge of honor even though they simultaneously understand that having a future means quitting the gang. Recidivism is a significant problem among this population. Among these respondents, six French, eight Haitians, nine Jamaicans and nine Latinos are on their second or third visit to a detention center, while eight individuals in the category of "other" were serving their third or fourth sentence.

For many of these youths, racism within the police force was a significant issue. Police officers were the most strongly and negatively criticized by the respondents, and future research should explore the value and effectiveness of sensitivity training about race and ethnicity; clearly in Montreal, police racism is still perceived to be a significant problem.

I found that the relevance of ethnic culture within the gang did not come about by accident but is a conscious choice decided by many of these youth, a choice dictated by their common experiences, which are also linked to a certain degree to their ethnic and racial group. Why they choose to maintain endogamous relations has also been shaped by the wider society's perception of these youth. As has been shown throughout this dissertation, most of these ethnic gangs under study are formed along racial and ethnic lines, and this seems to have been the case with most gangs in the past too. If such a cultural pattern continues, this means that individuals still tend to feel more comfortable around those who are more like themselves – who share similar sentiments, values, and experiences. These youth choose to be in gangs because they want to bond with others who resemble their life patterns and cultural and racial experiences. The patterns are

clear: French youth are in French gangs, Haitians in Haitian gangs, Jamaicans in Jamaican gangs, Latinos in Latino gangs, and those in the 'other' ethnic category bond either on the basis of race or ethnic culture.

Latinos, because of their later immigration status, felt stigmatized and faced a language and cultural barrier. As a result, they felt safer around others who shared their cultural and social experiences. These youth feel it is important to maintain their ethnic culture because they have had a more difficult time adapting to Canadian culture as their values, belief system are still very much influenced by their home countries, which they have only recently left. Latino youths were torn between two cultural realities: the one they left behind and the one they had to adapt to.

Jamaican and Haitians tend to live within neighborhoods that are gang affiliated, and some felt that they had no choice but to join gangs because of such environmental factors. Jamaicans speak English and Haitians speak French, thus a language barrier is created among the two groups. Both ethnic groups make a conscious effort to remain separate from one another because of language and cultural differences.

French youths are also influenced by culture; they tend to affiliate with other French youth and are adamant about remaining separate from Blacks and other ethnic groups in order to maintain their perceived position of societal superiority.

Youth in the category of other were interesting because they either affiliated with others on the basis of race or on the basis of ethnic culture, but the common bond that appeared to be important within their gangs was the sharing of a common language (most often English).

What appears to be questionable is whether a common culture creates gangs or

gangs create a common culture. One argument towards answering this question would be that gangs are shaped by both their social and cultural experiences, which later become a justification for who they are and why they identify with a particular life-style. Many of these youth, then, did not come by their respective ethnic gangs by accident – gang membership was a conscious choice that allowed these youth to bond on the basis of race and ethnic culture.

Unique to French youth gangs is the role of cultural transmission of criminal behavior. As I have indicated, family members of French youth gang members are often also members of biker gangs or other criminal groups. Gang membership and criminal activity on the part of the youths is often valued or, at the very mildest, not considered a serious problem by parents and other senior family members. It is difficult for some youth to see the gravity of such a life-style when they are consistently encouraged to be deviant and criminal from their family and friends.

Future research on youth gangs should also address female youth gangs. This is a somewhat newer phenomenon which is growing in importance in schools and youth culture. Understanding issues behind female youth gang membership and criminal activity and the interrelationship between race, gender and ethnicity and criminal and violent activity would be valuable. Do these young women, like their male counterparts, experience racism? How do they address it? Is it as significant an issue?

From the point of view of ethnic culture it would be interesting to conduct research that would compare groups of youths who feel a strong affinity to their ethnicity, but do not belong to gangs, to those who share a strong affinity but do belong to gangs (as we have seen with the Latino sample from this study). A wider cultural issue is the

prevalence and popularity of gangster rap music among these youths. Often this music has strong racist, misogynistic and violent overtones: it glorifies and glamorizes violent and gang lifestyles, and is valorized by the youths interviewed here. Investigating the relationship between music and gang life might be of considerable value, if only to educate youths that the lifestyles promoted by the lyrics of these songs do not lead to wealth and fame but rather to culturally, socially, emotionally, psychologically and financially impoverished lives.

This research did not develop strategies to provide youths alternatives to a criminal life-style. Clearly, it will be a social policy challenge to do so, and listening to youth gang members will be an important tool in achieving this.

Although the research presented here can only be considered exploratory and preliminary given the small sample size, it does suggest that gangs are present in urban youths' lives. In addition, we lack substantive quantitative data from across the country about youth involvement in gangs. Ethnicity is a mainstay of the Canadian sociological literature; this research broadens the scope of ethnicity from the usual cultural activities and social implications to the underground world of marginalized youth in a major Canadian city. Although ethnicity is seen by these youths as a less important part of their lives, it is, nonetheless, present in their day-to-day dealings with their fellow gang members. Understanding these connections, and exploring the wider social ramifications of youth gang membership, have the potential to lead to effective ways of addressing youth gang membership and thus to positive outcomes for the youths themselves and Canadian society.

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule (English and French) and Ethics Certificate.

Interview Schedule Questions: The Ethnic Identity of Juvenile Street Gangs

Section A: Motivations to become a gang member [I am attempting to develop a rapport with respondent, by asking them questions about themselves]

Background Information of Youth in Gang:

1. Tell me a bit about your background
   a) Where were you born?
   b) Did you grow up in Montreal?
   c) Where did you grow up?
   d) Are your parents from this area?
   e) Where are they from?

2. Where did you go to school before coming here?

   a) What grade are you in now?
   b) Did you graduate from high school?
   c) What was it like for you in school? Did you like it? Why or why not?
   d) Who did you hang out with?

Gang knowledge information

3. What is a gang?

4. How can we distinguish someone who is a member of a (Haitian, Latino, Quebecois, and French Canadian) gang? Is there a specific type of clothing you and members of your gang wear? What about tattoos or graffiti? Where do you and members of your gang do the graffiti?

   a) Are the kinds of (clothes, tattoo, colors) you wear the same as the members of your gang?
   b) What do the clothes, tattoos, colors you wear and graffiti you do symbolize for you and the members of your gang?
   c) Why are these things important for you?

5. Tell me how you became a member of the _____ (gang).

   a) How old were you when you became a member of the gang?
   b) What does one have to do to become a member?

c) Do individuals have to be initiated into the gang? Are there any particular rituals? Explain...
d) In your case, what did the gang members oblige you to do to become a member? How did you prove yourself?

6. Is there anything special one has to do in order to maintain one's membership?

7. What would you say is the average number of years most individuals remain as a member of the _____ (gang)?

a) How about you?
b) Have you ever thought about how long you plan to remain with the (gang) _____ ?

8. What are the ages of the youngest and oldest members of your gang?

9. What advantages are there for being a member?

10. Is it necessary to be a (1) Latino, (2) Haitian, (3) Quebecois, (4) French Canadian in order to become a member of your gang? Why is this necessary or not necessary?

11. In general do you prefer to associate with people who are from the same ethnic background as you or that isn't a big issue for you?

a) What are the ethnic origins of your gang members?
b) Has it ever happened that some gangs have members from different ethnic origins? Why does this happen?

Section B: Experience of Gang Members

12. What does the gang symbolize for you?

13. Why is it important for you to be in a gang?

14. Are the individuals free to leave the gang if they wish? How does one go about leaving?

15. Do you think it is more difficult/easier for individuals who come from (French Canadian, Quebecois, Latino, or Haitian) background to quit the gang and why?

16. Do conflicts ever arise between gang members from the same ethnic background? What are the reasons for these conflicts?

a) Do other types of conflicts arise? If yes, what kind of conflicts?

b) Do conflicts ever arise between gang members from different ethnic backgrounds? For instance, conflicts arising between French Canadians and English Canadians or Haitians against Latinos. What are the reasons for these conflicts?

Section C. Personal and background information, cultural identity of street gangs.

17. How old are you?

18. Why are you here at the center?

    a) Is it your first time here? You have been here for how long?
    b) How much longer do you have to stay?

19. Tell me about your family: Father living? Mother? Are they employed? In what occupations?

20. Do you have sisters and brothers?

    a) How old are they?
    b) What do they do?
    c) Do they go to school? Do they have jobs?
    d) Are they gang members as well?

21. What language do you usually speak at home?

    a) Do you expect to maintain this practice in your own home?

22. What language do you speak with members of your gang?

23. What does it mean for you to be Quebecois, Latino, Haitian and/or Canadian?

24. How important are the ties which you maintain with other ethnic groups in Canada? Why?

25. How important are the ties which you maintain with your own ethnic group in Canada? Why?

26. Do you feel it is difficult (or is a problem) to be both a (specific ethnic group) and a Canadian at the same time? Please explain...

Section D. Residence

27. How would you describe the people who live in your neighborhood?

28. Is their ethnic or cultural background mostly the same as your own?

29. Of your neighbors, how many would you say you would know well?

30. How many years have you lived in this neighborhood?

31. Are gangs prevalent in your neighborhood?

Section E: Ethnic/Cultural Retention by specific foods, music, clubs, and restaurants

32. What types of food do you like to eat and why?

    a) What types of food do members of your gang like to eat the most and why?

33. What type of music do you like to listen to and why?

    a) What type of music do members of your gang like to listen to the most and why?

34. Do you like going to clubs or bars?

35. Do you like going to clubs or bars with members of your gang? If yes, what types of clubs or bars do you and members of your gang go to?

    a) Why do you like (or don't like) going to these types of clubs?

36. Do you go to restaurants?

    a) What types of restaurants do you and members of your gang go to?
    b) What restaurants do you and members of your gang prefer to go to and why?

37. Do you participate in any sports?

38. What kinds of sports do you participate in?

    a) Why do you like participating in these kinds of sports?
    b) Do members of your gang participate in any sports?
    c) Why do they like participating in these kinds of sports?

39. Are you religious? Do you practice the same religion as your parents?

    a) Has it been imposed by your parents or is it voluntary?
    b) What is the ethnic make-up of the congregation? Is it important that members of a congregation have the same ethnic background as yourself – why or why not?

40. Are members of your gang religious? What type of religion do they practice? Is it obligatory or voluntary for them?

41. What do you understand about politics in Haiti, Quebec, and Latin America?

a) Are you politically active?
b) Are members of your gang politically active?
c) Why are politics important for you/ or not important for you?

42. Do you have a girlfriend?

a) What is the ethnic background of your girlfriend?
b) Do you prefer to date girls from your own ethnic background or is this not a big deal with you?

43. If you had [or have] a child, would you want to raise your child as Quebecois, French Canadian, Latino, Haitian, or other? Please explain…

Section F. Gang members and Reintegration into Society

44. Do you think that the intervention workers treat you fairly? Why or why not?

a) How do you think intervention workers could better treat you or members of your gang?
b) Do you prefer to deal with intervention workers that come from the same ethnic background, why or why not?
c) How about police officers? Do you prefer to deal with police officers from the same ethnic background? Why or why not?

45. Do you feel police officers treat you fairly?

a) How do you feel that police officers treat you and members of your gang?
b) In what ways do you think police officers could better treat you or members of your gang?

46. Do you think that social workers treat you fairly? Why or why not?

a) How do you think social workers could better treat you or members of your gang?
b) Do you prefer to deal with social workers that come from the same ethnic background. Why or why not?

47. Do (or did) the teachers at your school (outside/ youth center) treat you fairly?
    a) In what ways do you think teachers could better treat you or could better treat members of your gang?
    b) Do (or did) you prefer teachers from the same ethnic background why or why not?

48. What occupation would you like to be doing?

    a) Will you need to get more training or spend more time in school to get into that occupation?

49. How do you really think of yourself: as a (ethnic group), or a (ethnic group)-Canadian, or Canadian or what?

50. Do you ever think about what you would like to be doing 5 years from now? 10 years from now? What would you like to be doing then? Do you think this is a realistic goal?

51. How can we stop teenagers from getting into gangs?

    a) How can we help teenagers to leave the gangs?

Questionnaire d'Entrevue

Section A : Raisons de se joindre à un gang

1. Raconte-moi un peu ton histoire.

    a. Es-tu né à Montréal? Où es-tu né ? au Québec ou ailleurs?
    b. Tes parents sont-ils nés ici? (sont-ils nés à Montréal/ au Québec ou ailleurs)?
    c. Sinon, d'où viennent-ils, dans quel pays sont-ils nés?

2. Quelle école fréquentais-tu avant d'arriver ici?

    a. En quelle année es-tu?
    b. As-tu ton diplôme du secondaire? (quelle est la dernière année que tu as complétée ?)
    c. Comment c'était pour toi à l'école? Est-ce que tu aimais y aller et pourquoi?
    d. Qui étaient tes amis, les personnes que tu fréquentais et avec lesquelles tu as développé des liens ?

3. Qu'est-ce qu'un gang pour toi?

4. Comment peut-on distinguer quelqu'un qui est membre d'un gang (Haïtiens, Latino, Québécois)?

    a. Les Haïtiens, les Latinos ou les Québécois portent-ils des vêtements spécifiques qui les distinguent en tant que membre de gang?
    b. Est-ce qu'on porte des couleurs ou des tatouages spécifiques quand on est membre de ta gang (Haïtiens, Latino, Québécois)? Pourquoi est-ce important ou pas important?
    c. Décris-moi ta façon de t'habiller, celle qui te permet de te distinguer en tant que membre de gang?
    d. Est-ce qu'on fait des graffiti dans ton gang? À quels endroits? Qu'est-ce que symbolisent les graffiti?

5. Peux-tu me raconter comment tu es devenu membre de gang? (Ou raconte-moi comment les gens deviennent membres de gang ?)

    a. Quel âge avais-tu lorsque tu es devenu membre?
    b. Que faut-il faire pour devenir membre d'un gang?
    c. Est-ce que les gens doivent-ils être initiés? Dans ton cas, qu'as-tu été obligé de faire, quelle épreuve t'a-t-on demandé de faire?

6. Faut-il faire quelque chose de spécial pour rester membre de gang?

7. En général, combien de temps les gens restent-il dans les gangs?

a. Et toi, combien de temps penses-tu rester dans ton gang ou combien de temps y es-tu resté?

8. Quel est l'âge du plus jeune et de plus vieux membre de ton gang?

9. Quels sont les avantages d'être membre d'un gang?

10. Est-il nécessaire que tous les membres du gang soient (1) Haïtiens, (2) Latinos, (3) Québécois (4) Français Canadien et pourquoi?

11. En général, préfères-tu t'associer à des gens de la même origine ethnique que toi? Pourquoi?

a. Quelles sont les origines ethniques des membres de ton gang? (Ou est-ce qu'il peut-il arriver qu'un gang soit composé de membres d'origines ethniques diverses ?) Pourquoi ?

Section B : Membres de gang et leur expérience

12. Comment tu est entré dans ton gang?

13. Qu'est-ce que ton gang représente pour toi? Qu'est-ce que ça t'apporte?

14. Pourquoi est-ce important pour toi de faire partie d'un gang? (Ou pourquoi est-ce important de faire partie d'un gang?)

15. Est-ce que les membres de gang sont libres de quitter quand ils veulent?

16. Que doit-on faire pour quitter un gang?

a. Pense-tu que c'est plus difficile/facile pour les personnes qui sont d'origine (Québécois, Canadien Français, Latino, ou Haïtien) de quitter un gang?

17. Peut-il parfois y avoir des conflits entre des membres de gang provenant de la même origine ethnique? Quelles sont habituellement les raisons de ces conflits?

a. Peut-il y avoir aussi d'autres formes de conflits? Si oui, lesquelles ?
b. Peut-il y avoir aussi des conflits entre membres de gangs provenant

d'origine ethnique différente? Par exemple, les Canadiens français contre les Anglais ou les Haïtien contre les Latinos. Quelles sont les raisons de ces conflits?

Section C: Informations personelles, identité culturelle et gangs de rue.

18. Quel âge as-tu?

19. Pour quelle raison es-tu ici (centre jeunesse)

    a. Est-ce la première fois que tu te retrouves en centre jeunesse?
    b. Combien de temps dois-tu encore rester?

20. Parle-moi un peu de ta famille. Ton père est-l vivant? Ta mère est-elle vivante? Que font-ils dans la vie?

21. As-tu des frères et des soeurs?

    a. Quel âge ont-ils?
    b. Que font-ils? Vont-il à l'école ou est-ce qu'ils travaillent?
    c. Sont-ils aussi membres de gang?

22. Quelle langue parlez-vous à la maison?

    a. Prévois-tu continuer de parler cette même langue chez toi, dans ta propre famille ou continuer de parler cette langue dans le futur?

23. Quelle langue parles-tu avec les autres membres de ton gang?

24. Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire pour toi être Québécois ou Canadien français, Latinos, Haïtien?

25. Est-ce important pour toi d'entretenir des relations avec des gens provenant de la même origine ethnique que toi? Pourquoi?

26. Est-ce important pour toi d'entretenir des relations avec d'autres personnes d'origine ethnique au Canada? Pourquoi?

27. Trouve-tu cela difficile/facile de faire partie d'une minorité ethnique ou d'être Canadien-Français (Québécois)?

28. Tu considères-tu comme quelqu'un faisant partie d'une minorité ethnique ou simplement Canadien, où quoi?

Section D : Résidence

29. Comment décrirais-tu les gens qui vivent dans ton quartier?

30. Y retrouve-t-on des gens qui sont de la même origine ethnique que la tienne?

31. Y a-t-il des gangs dans ton quartier?

32. Selon toi, quel quartier à Montréal comprend le plus de gangs?

33. Connais-tu bien tes voisins et si oui, combien d'entre eux?

34. Depuis combien de temps vis-tu dans ce quartier ?

Section E : La nourritur, la musique, les clubs et les restaurants

35. Qu'aimes-tu mieux manger et pourquoi?
    a. Qu'est-ce que les membre de ton gang aime le mieux manger et pourquoi?

36. Quel type de musique aimes-tu le plus écouter et pourquoi?

    a. Quel type de musique les membre de ton gang aiment-ils le plus écouter et pourquoi?

37. Fréquentes-tu les bars ou les clubs avec tes amis? (Ou l'as-tu déjà fait)

38. Les membres de ton gangs fréquentent-ils aussi les bars ou les clubs ?

    a. Pourquoi aimes-tu ou n'aimes-tu pas aller dans ce genre d'endroit?

39. Vas-tu dans les restaurants?

    a. Vas-tu dans les restaurants avec les membres de ton gang?
    b. Quels restaurants préfères-tu et pourquoi?

40. Fais-tu du sport?

    a. Quel genre de sport pratiques-tu?
    b. Pourquoi aimes-tu pratiquer ce genre de sport?
    c. Les membres de ton gang font-ils du sport?
    d. Quel genre de sport partiquent-ils? Et pourquoi aiment-ils pratiquer ce genre de sport?

41. Es-tu croyant? Ceci est-il obligatoire ou volontaire pour toi? Pratiques–tu la même

religion que tes parents?

a. Quelle est l'origine ethnique de ta religion?
b. Est-ce important que les personnes qui pratiquent ta religion soient de la même origine ethnique que toi? Pourquoi?

42. Les membre de ton gang sont-ils croyants? Quel type de religion partiquent-ils? Ceci est-il obligatoire ou volontaire pour eux?

43. Que comprends-tu des affaires politiques en Haiti, au Canada et en Amérique-Latine?T'informes-tu sur ce sujet?

a. Es-tu impliqué sur le plan politique? Est-ce que la politique est quelque chose d'important pour toi?
b. Les membres de ton gang sont-ils impliqués sur le plan politique?
c. Ton gang poursuit-il des buts politiques?

44. As-tu une blonde?

a. Quelle est son origine ethnique?
b. Préfères-tu sortir avec des filles qui sont de la même origine ethnique que toi, ou si cela n'est pas important pour toi?

45. Si tu avais un enfant, voudrais-tu l'élever comme un Canadien français, comme un Latino, comme un Haïtien, ou autrement?

Section F: La réintégration des jeunes dans la société.

46. Penses-tu que les intervenant(s) te traitent de façon juste? Et pourquoi?

a. De quelle façon penses-tu que les intervenant(s) pourraient le mieux de traiter ou traiter les membres de gang?
b. Préfères-tu avoir affaire à des intervenant(s) qui sont de la même origine ethnique que toi? Et pourquoi?

47. Et les policiers? Préfères-tu avoir affaire à les policiers qui sont de la même origine ethnique que toi? Et pourquoi?

a. De quelle façon penses-tu que les policiers peuvent le mieux te traiter ou traiter les membres de gang?

48. Tes professeurs (ici ou à l'extérieur) te traitent-ils de façon juste?

a. De quelle façon penses-tu que les professeurs peuvent le mieux te traiter ou traiter les membres de gang?

b. Préfères-tu que tes professeurs soient de la même origine ethnique que toi? Et pourquoi?

49. Quel métier aimerais-tu faire plus tard?

a. Que dois-tu faire, selon toi, pour arriver à faire ce métier?

50. Te vois-tu comme quelqu'un qui appartient à une minorité ethnique ou simplement comme un Canadien ou un Québécois?

51. Qu'aimerais-tu faire dans cinq ans? Dans dix ans? Penses-tu que cet objectif est réaliste?

52. Comment peut-on éviter que les jeunes n'entrent dans les gangs?

a. Comment peut-on aider les jeunes à sortir des gangs?

McGill

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Research Ethics Board I
Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans

Project Title: The Ethnic Identity of Juvenile Street Gangs

Applicant's Name: Gena DeIaco Department: Sociology

Undergraduate Student ( ) Master's Student ( ) Ph.D. student (x)

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Morton Weinfeld

This project was approved on 18/09/2001

Expedited Review _____ Full Review ✓

Departmental Level Review : For research projects that are carried out by undergraduate or graduate students as part of their course work – course number:

_____
(Signature of departmental designate/ date)

J. M. Galaty 18/09/2001
Signature/Date

John Galaty, Ph.D.
Chair, REB I

This approval is valid for a period of one year.
REB File#: 51-0901

Appendix B: Consent Letter (English and French)

Identification Number:

Consent Form to Participate in Research
"The Ethnic Identity of Juvenile Street Gangs"

I understand that the research on "The Ethnic Identity of Juvenile Street Gangs" is being conducted by Gina De Iaco as part of her doctoral research under the supervision of Dr. Morton Weinfeld, professor of the department of Sociology at McGill University and with the collaboration of Sylvie Hamel researcher of l'institut de recherche pour le développement social des jeunes des Centres jeunesse de Montréal.

I understand that this research attempts to provide a better understanding of how ethnicity plays a role in defining a gang and its membership, and how this impacts on adolescents remaining in gangs as well as leaving gang life behind. This research will attempt to find various solutions as to how adolescents can be better reintegrated into society.

I understand that my participation in this research requires that I will be interviewed to answer questions pertaining to the research being conducted on the "Ethnic Identity of Juvenile Street Gangs." I will be required to answer questions on the following issues: the reasons adolescents join gangs, remain members, and the reasons why adolescents may want to leave a gang and how these reasons might differ by age and ethnic identity. I have been informed that this interview will last between one hour to an hour and a half, and will be recorded with my consent and will be transcribed in order to facilitate the work of the student.

I have been assured that my responses shall be kept confidential and anonymous. I also understand that my identity will remain confidential and my identity will not be revealed in the study results. The notes and the tape from the interview will be safely stored, whereby only the people in charge of this research will have access to its information. The tape will be destroyed after the research is complete, unless I give permission to the researcher not to destroy the tape, so it can be utilized for future research.

I understand that under no circumstances I am to reveal criminal and illegal acts committed, their times, dates, specific destinations and/or names of individuals committing such illegal actions. The interviewer would be obligated to report the name of the victim or persons in danger to the proper authorities.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.

I understand that my participation in this study is purely voluntary.

I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I understand the purpose of this study and know that there is no hidden motive of which I have not been informed. I have also been assured that proper precautions have been taken so that my participation in this research will not cause me any harm.

Identification Number:

I confirm that the interviewer has verbally provided all supplementary information that has permitted to allow me to clearly decide whether or not I want to participate in this research.

I accept to participate in this research Yes _____ No _____

I accept that the interview shall be tape recorded Yes _____ No _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

First Name (do not write your family name): _____

I accept that the recorded tape from the interview will be preserved for a year after the research has been completed for other studies and the anonymity and confidentiality of my responses shall also be respected. This tape cannot be kept for more than a year after this research is completed and after this date the tape shall be destroyed.

Yes _____ No_____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

First Name (do not write your family name): _____

Numéro d'identification:

Lettre de Consentement à participer à la recherche
"Identité culturelle et gangs de rue"

Je comprends que cette recherche est conduite par Gina De Iaco. Cette recherche fait partie de sa thèse de doctorat, dirigée par monsieur Morton Weinfeld (Ph.D.), professeur au département de Sociologie à l'Université de McGill et avec la collaboration de Sylvie Hamel (Ph.D.) chercheure à l'Institut de recherche pour le développement social des jeunes des Centres jeunesse de Montréal.

Je comprends que cette recherche vise à mieux comprendre les liens entre le phénomène des gangs et les dimensions ethnique et culturelle et à trouver des moyens pour aider les jeunes à réintégrer la société.

Je comprends que ma participation à cette recherche consiste à passer une entrevue qui portera sur les raisons pour lesquelles les jeunes forment des gangs ou deviennent membres d'un gang, comment certains s'en sortent et comment ces raisons se distinguent selon l'âge et l'identité culturelle des jeunes. Cette entrevue devrait durer 1h30 environ et sera enregistrée avec mon consentement puis retranscrite pour faciliter le travail de l'étudiante.

J'ai la garantie que mes réponses seront traitées de façon anonyme et confidentielle. Mon nom ne paraîtra sur aucun document de recherche. Le questionnaire, les notes et la cassette de l'entrevue seront conservées dans un classeur barré sous clé auquel n'auront accès que les personnes responsables de cette recherche. La cassette sera détruite après la recherche, sauf si j'autorise l'étudiante à la conserver pour d'autres recherches.

Je comprends que, pendant l'entrevue, je ne dois en aucun cas révéler des noms de personnes et indiquer des dates et des lieux précis liés à des faits illégaux ou criminels. Si cela se produisait, l'entrevue serait immédiatement interrompue par l'intervieweuse. En apprenant le nom d'une victime ou d'une personne qui est en danger, cette dernière serait dans l'obligation de faire un signalement ou d'avertir les autorités.

Je comprends également que je suis libre de répondre ou non aux questions qui me seront posées et de mettre fin à l'entrevue si je le désire. Je comprends que ma participation à cette recherche est volontaire. Je comprends que les résultats de cette recherche pourront faire l'objet de publications.

Je comprends bien les objectifs de cette recherche, en quoi consiste ma participation et dans quelles conditions se fait l'entrevue. Je suis également assuré que toutes les précautions ont été prises pour que ma participation à cette recherche ne me cause aucun préjudice.

Numéro d'identification:

Je certifie que l'intervieweuse m'a aussi donné de vive voix toutes les informations supplémentaires dont j'avais besoin pour me permettre de décider de façon éclairée de participer ou non a cette recherche.

J'accepte de participer a cette recherche Oui _____
Non _____

J'accepte que l'entrevue soit enregistrée Oui _____
Non _____

Signature: _____
Date: _____

Prénom (ne pas inscrire le nom de famille):
_____

J'accepte que la cassette de l'enregistrement de l'entrevue soit conservée après la durée de cette recherche en vue d'autres études ou l'anonymat et la confidentialité seront aussi respectés. Cette cassette ne devra pas toutefois être conservée plus d'un an après la fin de cette recherche et devra être détruite après cette période.

Oui _____ Non _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Prénom (ne pas inscrire le nom de famille):
_____

Appendix C: Summary of respondent demographic information

1. French subjects (all born in Canada)

Respondent No.	Age (years)	Education level	Attending school	Gang member	Class
4	17	Secondary 2	At detention center	Yes (core & peripheral)	Middle-income
6	20	Secondary 1	At detention center	Yes (core & peripheral)	Middle-income
15	20	Secondary 4	At detention center	Yes (core & peripheral)	Middle-income
11	16	Secondary 3	At detention center	Yes (core & peripheral)	Middle-income
2	18	Secondary 3	At detention center	Yes (core & peripheral)	Middle-income
10	15	Secondary 1	At detention center	Yes (core & peripheral)	Middle-income
13	17	Secondary 4	At detention center	Yes (core & peripheral)	Middle-income
16	19	Secondary 2	At detention center	Yes (core & peripheral)	Middle-income
18	19	Secondary 3	At detention center	Yes (core & peripheral)	Middle-income
21	19	Secondary 2	At detention center	Yes (core & peripheral)	Middle-income

2. Haitian Subjects

Respondent No.	Immigrant	Age (years)	Education level	Attending school	Gang member	Class
1	Yes	16	Secondary 2	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
5	No	17	Secondary 2	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
7	Yes	15	Secondary 1	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
9	No	15	Secondary 1	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
12	No	18	Secondary 3	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
14	Yes	17	Secondary 4	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
19	Yes	17	Secondary 4	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
20	No	16	Secondary 1	No	Yes (core)	Low-income
30	Yes	17	Secondary 3	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
40	Yes	14	Grade 6	No	Yes (core)	Low-income

3. Jamaican subjects

Respondent No.	Immigrant	Age (years)	Education level	Attending school	Gang member	Class
23	Yes	16	Secondary 1	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
24	No	16	Secondary 3	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
31	No	16	Secondary 3	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
27	No	17	Not available	No	Yes (core)	Low-income
37	No	17	Not available	No	Yes (core)	Low-income
44	Yes	17	Secondary 4	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
17	Yes	17	Secondary 4	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
45	No	17	Not available	No	Yes (core)	Low-income
32	No	17	Secondary 3	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
33	No	17	Secondary 3	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income

4. Latino subjects

Respondent No.	Immigrant	Age (years)	Education level	Attending school	Gang member	Class
3	Yes	17	Secondary 3	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
8	Yes	17	Secondary 2	At detention center	Yes (core)	Middle-income
22	Yes	20	Secondary 4	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
29	No	17	Secondary 3	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
41	Yes	17	Secondary 4	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
34	Yes	17	Secondary 4	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
35	No	17	Secondary 3	At detention center	Yes (core)	Middle-income
47	Yes	17	Secondary 3	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
48	Yes	17	Secondary 2	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
49	Yes	20	Secondary 4	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income

5. Other subjects

Respondent No.	Immigrant	Age (years)	Education level	Attending school	Gang member	Class
25	No	18	Secondary 4	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
26	Yes	17	Secondary 4	At detention center	Yes (core)	Middle-income
28	No	18	Secondary 5	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
36	Yes	15	Secondary 2	At detention center	Yes (core)	Middle-income
38	No	17	Secondary 1	At detention center	Yes (core)	Middle-income
39	No	17	Secondary 3	At detention center	Yes (core)	Middle-income
42	No	17	Secondary 4	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
43	No	17	Secondary 4	At detention center	Yes (core)	Low-income
46	Yes	17	Not available	No	Yes (core)	Low-income
50	No	18	Secondary 4	At detention center	Yes (core)	Middle-income

Appendix D: Future Aspirations

Given all youths were being held in detention centers, and given their commentary about their behavior and their views of police officers, social workers, gang life and so on it is interesting to see how they saw themselves five to ten years from now. Remarkably, the outlook was rosy. The majority of youths (except for Jamaican subjects) saw themselves as quitting the gang and having some form of a family (wife/partner, children). This applied to all the French and Haitian subjects, all of the Latino interviewees and six of the ten youths in the "other" category.

> *I would like to have a family, have a job and be the best that I can be. I would like to be out of the criminal life for good especially the gang life and even if it will be tough to get out of such a way of life (interviewee 6, a 20-year-old French youth).*

> *In five years I see myself, wow, I will be 21 years old. I see myself in good shape. I will be a famous rap star. Hopefully by then my album will be out and everyone will know who I am. My album is in French. In ten years maybe have my own house, car, family and kids. (interviewee 20, a 16-year-old Haitian-Canadian).*

Although all Latinos saw themselves as married with a family, six of the youths took care to emphasize that this could only happen if they left the gang and got a legitimate job.

> *In five years I see myself studying and then getting my own legitimate company. This has to happen before I get married. In ten years from now I see myself married with some more children being married to my present girlfriend and of course being my own boss and owning my own company (interviewee 22, a 20-year old immigrant from El Salvador).*

Similarly, most of the subjects in the category of "other" reported that in five to ten years they saw themselves married with children, and owning a car and house. However, two of these interviewees weren't sure what their future held, while two more were more concerned with their present life: remaining alive and surviving gang life. It

was not clear whether any of them wanted to quit the gang.

> *Yeah, I think about from time to time what I would be doing in five years from now. I would do anything. I have never been shot but I have been shot at. That is scary shit. I haven't shit in my pants yet, but I have been close to it. I don't know. I just don't want to get shot. I know it is painful, it is just the pain don't bother me. Dying is what bothers me. I guess what I am saying is that I hope to be alive to see another five to ten years go by (interviewee 25, an 18-year-old Polish Canadian).*

Two Jamaican respondents weren't sure where they would be but the other eight were quite convinced they would be wealthy – whether this entailed leaving the gang or not was not clear.

> *I just want to see myself with a lot of money, a nice house, a nice car, nice girlfriend or whatever like you know. I want to have kids. I want to be rich man. That is my goal, I want to be rich. Some people say whatever money doesn't buy happiness. I think those are the people that don't have money, and that is why they are not happy like you know. I just want to be rich and I want to have a lot of money because I was poor, my family and I we were poor and we had to struggle. My mom had one job, you know, two (interviewee 27, a 17-year-old Jamaican Canadian)*

The vast majority of these subjects understand that having a future means quitting the gang. However, most of the youths have a high likelihood of re-offending, and it is difficult to assess how serious they are about quitting the gang and 'going straight'. Indeed, among the respondents, six French, eight Haitians, nine Jamaicans and nine Latinos are on their second or third visit to their respective detention center, while eight individuals in the category of "other" were in the center for their third or fourth sentence.

Targeting youth and gang membership

If adolescents are not made aware of the repercussions a deviant gang lifestyle, they will be influenced by the desire to belong to something bigger than themselves. The gang becomes romanticized as a good thing: it gives a young teen friends, peer approval,

power, money, and girls, making him feel protected and strong. The challenge is in convincing these youth that behind all the glamour lurks a violent dark side with the risks of incarceration, danger and even death. Clearly, addressing gang membership has significant societal benefit.

Quitting the gang is not a readily available option for many youth, regardless of their race and ethnicity (see Chapter 3). Perhaps one way to avoid gang membership is to stop adolescents from joining gangs in the first place. The responses of youths to the question of how to prevent youths from joining gangs were both pessimistic and optimistic. In broad strokes, specific suggestions included getting parents more involved with their children, better funding for street workers, encouraging big brother and other organizations, hiring ex-gang members to go to schools and tell kids about their experiences in gangs, and funding more recreational activities for youth. Some youths suggested the reality shock of having a school field trip to jails or morgues, showing kids firsthand what happens to individuals who become heavily involved in gangs.

Pessimism was expressed by respondents from the "other" ethnic category. These youths believed that adolescents could never be deterred from joining gangs, and they offered no solutions, as we hear from an 18-year-old Polish-Canadian (interviewee 25) and a 17-year-old Portuguese immigrant (interviewee 26):

> *You can't. The kid can come from any background. My father came from a decent background. In my house I am not even allowed to smoke cigarettes. My house is strict okay. You can say cause you and your brothers rebelled because your parents were so strict. Or you can say oh you were brought up in a poor neighborhood so it is common that you come from that* [again he raises his voice slightly in exaggeration] *it is not common of anything. It is the kid who made the choice. You want to go for it, then go for it, then go for the gold. If you have violence within you, you can become violent. You can use it in your football or your hockey and you become a wicked defense player or you become one of the street fighters (interviewee 25).*

> *You can't really stop them. It all depends on your attitude. If you have a certain attitude since you were a kid, you had certain friends since you were a kid and things change. I never thought when I was five or six years old that I would be some guy who would be in the system. I was just chilling in the park with my innocent friends. First it started with smoking a joint and then as the years passed I don't know what happened exactly but it just got worst (interviewee 26).*

A 20-year-old French individual (interviewee 15) echoed this, explaining that the real test would be in trying to get through to the youth as it is impossible to stop someone from joining a gang if that is where that person wants to be. Two Haitian immigrants, a 17-year-old and a 15-year-old (interviewees 30 and 7) shared this view.

> *You can physically stop the kid* [through incarceration]. *But you can't stop what he is thinking though. You have to try to get into the kid's head first. If he wants to stay in there, he is going to stay whatever you do. You can't lock him up that won't change anything. You can even lock him in here for life. If it's in his head, he is really stubborn and he wants to be part of the gang and that's it and that's all then you can't stop him. The guy will continue being part of the gang and there is nothing to do with a guy who doesn't want to listen (interviewee 15).*

> *Talk to them I guess, but if someone really wants to get into the gang you can't really stop them. You really got to get in their heads and if they are stubborn, good luck! (interviewee 30).*

If someone wants to get in the gang there is no one that can stop this teenager or live in a neighborhood where there are no gangs if you live in a neighborhood where there are lots of gangs well then you are screwed because it is much easier to be tempted in this case. Have more street workers that explain to kids that gangs are no good and have some ex-members of gangs talk to the kids. Also have more big brother organizations so that kids could have someone to talk to when they want (interviewee 7, a 15-year-old Haitian immigrant).

Several French and Haitian youths also believed that it is not easy to stop someone from joining a gang and that once in, it is difficult to quit. For these youth, the

problem is that most teens are unaware of the ramifications of getting involved in gang life. These youths argue that before getting into things like a gang, the adolescent should be made aware of what really goes on in that subculture:

> *If you get into the gang it is because you really aren't aware of the dangers and there is something about the gang that may interest you to join. For example they will make you feel valued, special, and part of the group. Look at the HA's [Hells Angels] there are a lot of different people that are in it or have joined the gang. For people that join gangs there is a lack of understanding of exactly what goes on in the gang or what can happen to you once you are considered part of the gang. Easy money is also easily spent so it is not always worth the risks involved with such a way of life (interviewee 4, 17-year-old French adolescent).*

> *This is hard. You have to know who you are really hanging out with. If you go into the gang you know you run the risk of going to prison, or you may die, if you want to do crimes that is the type of life you should expect. It is important that the parents really get to know the friends of their children because it is usually the friends that will pressure them to join the gangs (interviewee 5.a 17-year-old Haitian-Canadian).*

A 19-year-old French respondent (interviewee 16) suggested that another way to reach the youth is by having school and neighborhood conferences about the dangers of gangs – even for kids in elementary school. A 17-year-old Canadian-born Haitian (interviewee 5) also suggested that getting information out to children and youth at a young age as well as providing other ways to spend their free time (such as recreational activities) would be useful ways of deterring kids from joining gangs.

> *That is a good question. I think there should be more conferences within the schools. I think we should educate the youth about the gangs and let them know exactly what they are all about. We should start educating kids as young as elementary school. People should really talk more and that there are more conferences and reunions done on such a topic. To talk about these things in the school that is for sure. Even to go and talk to kids in the neighborhood and when you see that these kids are just hanging around doing nothing. They should build more youth hostels. Especially during these times there are a lot of young kids that walk around with bandannas and with knives and they are only 8 to 12 years old. They walk around with bandannas because they see this on television or because they see their older brother doing the same thing. There are some young*

people that are a bit delinquent but it will continue even more later on. They will begin by breaking people's windows or breaking and entering and it continues and it gets worst believe me. The parents are not paying too much attention to these things. There must really be more conferences on this. We must talk about gangs more freely with these kids. The younger they are the better, you have to talk to them about gangs as soon as they can understand about gangs. So that it will have some form of impact on these kids and the kinds of choices they make for the future. There are people that get into gangs not really knowing or understanding what exactly they are getting into (interviewee 16).

You take these kids when they are very young like seven or eight years old and you keep them busy like getting them involved in other activities like sports and make them go camping I don't know... stuff like that (interviewee 5).

French and Haitian subjects suggest that parents should keep tabs on their children and make sure that they know who their children are hanging out with. Parents should not ignore their children but communicate their concerns about why they think their children's friends are not good for them. Parents should learn to be more of a friend to their own children.

Haitian and Latino respondents suggested increased government spending for street workers – and getting those street workers to be more visible on the streets – as well as big brother organizations and getting ex-gang members to talk to kids about gang life could help deter youths from joining gangs. Ex-gang members would add authenticity to their warnings to youth to stay away from gangs. Moving was also suggested as a good (although perhaps not always a viable or easy way of getting youth away from neighborhoods with high gang activity).

Have someone that has already been there and lived the experience and be able to tell teenagers how it is in the gang, and maybe make them realize that it is not such a glamorous life. They will be able to tell these teenagers that there are some good points to being in the gang, but there are also some bad points as well. The guys that will lose money are the ones that are making ten thousand dollars per week. It is not for one hundred dollars that you will find yourself in the hole, it will be usually for more than that. It will be for two to three thousand dollars. Then you can

go as high as one hundred thousand dollars. If you make about five hundred per week, when you will be in the hole it will be for probably 200 and 300 thousand dollars. The more money you make the more debts you accumulate. Just like millionaires that gamble and go to the races and if they don't get the number they bet on and you made the bet for ten thousand and then you lose it. It can be harsh right... So the more sums of money you have, the more you spend, the more you gamble, and the bigger the troubles. Look at me, I was making a fair amount of money, I started spending, or promising people that I would pay them back and never got to it because I became greedy, and because of this I am into all kinds of debts. I lived somewhere else for six months I started getting my second wind and making more money by selling more drugs, everything was going well. The deeper I got myself the worst it got and people started looking for me and threatening me if I did not pay off my debts. Sometimes I wish someone warned me about all this stuff before I got myself involved in the gang (interviewee 10, a 15 year-old French youth).

My opinion is that the government should invest more money in creating some kind of recreational activities that help in keeping young people busy and active. Not only to have more activities for them, but also have someone there for them to talk to, it is important that they have trust in this person and that this person does not criticize them in return. Someone that will offer them sincere advice and provide them with alternatives on how to better solve their problems, have someone there that they know could help them and know who they are because this person established some kind of rapport. To have more social workers on the streets and get to know who these kids are and be their friend, that's all it takes I would think. They help the kids because I know some guys on the outside who stopped being on the streets because of these street workers who stopped them and helped these guys. Some of these street workers got to them when they were very young and were successful in stopping these guys from getting into the gang. Have more youth centers available and have more street workers available. Have someone to talk to them and make them feel that they are not alone(interviewee 47, a 17-year-old El Salvadorian immigrant).

Targeting young children and young adolescents when they are more impressionable may be a way to deter gang membership. Keeping youths busy (recreational activities, school activities, hobbies) also is likely to keep teens out of the gang milieu and will also give them a sense of belonging, of having a group and of making friends, features of gang life which are often attractive to teens.

Some of the Latino respondents suggested a more aggressive approach: shock

therapy. In fact, most felt that altering the youth centers into something more like a boot camp, often seen in the United States and Ontario, would be a way of knocking sense into teens. The Latino respondents felt that the youth centers were not the best form of rehabilitation. For many, time here was considered a break from life on the streets to which they would return on completion of their sentence. Other suggested tactics include taking youths to visit a jail, showing them what happens to real-life drug addicts, or taking them to see a morgue to see the ultimate downside in gang membership.

> *Like here in the center. To place them here for a couple of weeks and show them this is what happens if you get caught and this will teach them that the price they have to pay for giving up their freedom is not worth the risks involved in being in the gang. This is what they do in the United States they shock the kids (who want to go in a life of crime) back to reality. Boot Camp would be the best solution. The system here just doesn't work it is not good. People come here just to pass the time and nobody learns anything of value here. They do nothing for you. There are kids here that boast about their crimes and everyone always talks about the same thing, what they did on the outside and who they were associated with. There are some guys here that are still carrying out their schemes, like letting drugs pass through the jails (interviewee 3, a 17-year-old El Salvadorian immigrant).*

> *Tell them that becoming involved in gangs bring you nowhere it only brings you trouble. Just because you own a pistol or a knife it still makes you a nobody. If it was my son and he wanted to join the gangs I would explain to him where the gang life brought me, which is nowhere. I ended up here and look at how much good it did me being in a gang. I would bring him where people drug themselves and show him how disgusting they look once they are hooked on drugs. I would bring him to jail and show him what happens to people that are in gangs and I would take him to visit a morgue and show him that's where you eventually end up if you join a gang ...dead because of the risks involved (interviewee 22 a 20-year-old Ecuadorian immigrant).*

The Jamaican subjects took a very different point of view; they could not grasp why individuals should be discouraged from joining a gang if that is what they wanted, as we hear from two respondents, a 16-year-old Jamaican immigrant (interviewee 23) and another 16-year-old Canadian-Jamaican (interviewee 24).

> *Why stop the kid? It is up to him. Let him be free you know what I mean. Like*

some moms they always want to keep their kids at home with them you know what I mean. I don't know, just let them live. You can't change the kid you know. Nobody could change somebody you know what I mean. They have to change themselves you know what I mean. You can't stop the kid from being in the gang, you know what I mean. Only if the kid sees something like seeing one of his friends dying. I think you can't stop somebody from being in the gang. If I had a son and he wanted to get in the gang I would tell him to hang around good people and stay away from the bad people. To stay away from bad company that's it. When you are in gang and you are in some kind of trouble, you know that your boys are there to back you up you know what I mean. Your boys are there to back you up and no one can tell you nothing. You aren't scared of nothing. You know you've got your back protected you know what I mean. I don't know it is about having friends that protect you and it don't make you a bad guy just cause you are part of the gang, you are just chilling with your boys. Chilling means you smoke some weed and you drink some alcohol, you know what I mean. You get to be with your boys man. You get to be with your homeboys. Like me, I don't trust nobody, you know what I mean (interviewee 23).

It is not a bad thing. They always think that gangs is guns, drugs, and all of that. It is more than that of course. Of course we will try to bring on our own justice which is wrong you know with the guns and everything but everyone protects themselves in a sense of how you deal with things and how you cope with things. Why should we get teenagers out of gangs, who is to say that they should get out! (interviewee 24).

For these youths, the difficulty in preventing youths from joining gangs is insurmountable, and prevention should not even be attempted.

Gang life has definite attractions for some youth and has an addictive quality to it; however, even these youths recognize that it is ultimately desirable to quit the gang. Giving youth tools to do so is an important part of the rehabilitative and youth development process.