

**From Getting in to Getting Out:
The Role of Pre-gang Context and Group Processes
in Analyzing Turning Points in Gang Trajectories**

by

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Abstract

Drawing from a mixed-methods approach, the current dissertation examines the sequential process of gang membership, from gang entry to gang disengagement. The dissertation is driven by three interrelated aims. First, the study aims to assess whether variations in opportunities for membership and the nature of gang entry are related to pre-membership factors. Second, it aims to investigate whether gangs' organizational structures and group processes are associated with the nature of their criminal opportunities. Third, it explores the relationship of both individual and group factors to the disengagement process. The study uses retrospective self-reported and official data gathered from a sample of 73 gang members involved in the Study on Incarcerated Serious and Violent Young Offender in Burnaby, British Columbia. Results suggest that being embedded in a criminal social environment facilitates early entry into gangs but not avoidance of an initiation in gangs that require them. A need for recognition and respect is associated with late entry and the occurrence of an initiation. A closer look into the initiation events described by participants revealed three general types: (1) the ego violent event, (2) the crime commission, and (3) the expressive violence towards others. An ego violent initiation was more frequent among younger prospective members and those who were coerced into joining. Individuals who were looking for respect were more likely to be required to perpetrate an act of violence toward someone in order to get in. No individual characteristics were associated with crime commission type. In terms of group characteristics, nature of initiation is not associated with any type of gang organizational structure: both organized and less organized gangs may initiate their members and do so in similar ways. Type of initiation, however, was found to reflect the nature of the criminal activities of the gangs. In terms of gang desistance, internal gang violence and pre-membership criminal social environment both facilitated the persistence of membership and delay in disengagement from gangs. The dissertation addresses the theoretical and policy implications of such findings.

Keywords: gangs; initiation, social capital, violence, group processes, desistance

For the one who inspires me every day

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Identity. This dissertation is who I am as a researcher, but also as a human being. I believe in people, I see hope where there is vulnerability.

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1. Introduction

Recent research on gangs clearly demonstrated that being a gang member has a direct effect on the increasing of individual delinquency (Curry & Spergel, 1992; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Gatti, Tremblay, Vitaro, & McDuff, 2005; McGloin, 2008; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, & Chard-Wierschme, 1993; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith, & Tobin, 2003) and that this effect is even more noticeable when it is compared to the effects of affiliation with other delinquent groups (Bouchard & Spindler, 2010). Prior research questioned whether or not membership in gangs accounted for this effect. Two different models attempted to explain this phenomenon: the *selection model* and the *facilitation model* (Thornberry et al., 1993).

The selection model stipulates that the relationship between those who join gangs and more profound delinquency exists because those who were selected for membership were already involved in serious delinquency and violence. Thus, it is argued, gangs do not cause delinquency but attract individuals who were already involved in delinquency (Thornberry, 1998). The selection explanation is based on control theories of crime and delinquency and suggests that individuals will offend only when social controls or self-control are weakened (Hirshi, 1969; Thornberry, 1998; Thornberry et al., 2003). The selection model does not identify specifically how the selection process occurs, especially in the gang context. This is a gap in knowledge that the current dissertation aims to fill. It has been hypothesized, in the current study, that there is still a pre-membership socialization effect that needs to be investigated. In fact, because criminal behaviours are learned in interaction with others, it follows that an individual's connections (e.g., criminal social capital) prior to gang membership should also be examined. In other words, recruitment should not be considered as occurring in a vacuum – there might be something in the social environment of future gang members that facilitates their being noticed by existing gang members in the first place.

Based on the principles of differential association and social learning theories, the facilitation model suggests that gangs create and sustain delinquents (Akers, 1998;

McGloin, 2008; Melde & Esbensen, 2011; Sutherland, 1947; Thornberry et al., 2003). Thornberry (1998) explained that gang members are not different from non-gang members in terms of propensity to delinquency; however, after they become affiliated with a gang, the normative structure and group processes of the gang are more likely to increase their delinquency rate. However, the group processes per se have not been thoroughly examined – we still do not know what it is about membership that causes this increase. Consequently the mechanisms underlying that facilitation model are not known.

Although several researchers have dedicated their work to finding support for one of these two causal models (or a combination of these two labelled as the enhancement model) (see, e.g., Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Duke, Martinez & Stein, 1997; Gordon et al., 2004; Melde & Esbensen, 2011; Thornberry et al., 1993; Thornberry et al., 2003), little attention has been paid to at least two main elements central to this dissertation: the importance of prospective members' pre-membership social environment and the influence of group processes on the different events and turning points in the gang membership trajectories. These two elements play a role in four different aspects of the dissertation.

First, regarding the pre-membership social environment of the prospective gang member, it is possible that aspects of that environment might influence the reasons for recruitment and, as well, the nature of the prospective member's first involvement in gang activities, the gang initiation. Second, if, then, the determination of the nature of this first initiation event is nested in the group's identity and dynamics, understanding how this determination comes about would need to be explored from a group process perspective. In addition, the nature of a gang initiation could be a key determinant of the kind of criminal opportunities the new member will be exposed to. For example, a gang that is heavily involved in selling drugs and similar economic activities may choose to design an initiation around money-generating activities. Conversely, a gang heavily involved in violent encounters with other gangs may choose to test a recruit by making him or her go through a beating. In that sense, the facilitation mechanisms would be also governed by the specific group identity of the gang. However, only one U.S. study has recently looked at the group characteristics and outcomes (Decker et al., 2008), and none have looked at the initiation as a gang outcome. Third, most prior research failed

to consider such group processes in the criminal trajectories of gang members and considered all memberships as “equal” and homogenous. As pointed out by Decker, Melde, and Pyrooz (2013), several gang studies have focussed on the individual-level correlates and risks, a little less on the macro-level information about gangs, and even fewer on the group processes. It was more than 25 years ago that Short (1985) argued that to uncover the dynamics and complexity of a gang, both theory and empirical research needed to tackle more than one level of explanation (which could include: sociological variables, individual psychological variables, and group process variables). Finally, the desistance process from gangs has rarely been the object of study in gang research (Klein & Maxson, 2006; Pyrooz, & Decker, 2011). Given the strong facilitation effect of gang involvement on delinquency, it is imperative to observe the group processes that could influence gang desistance.

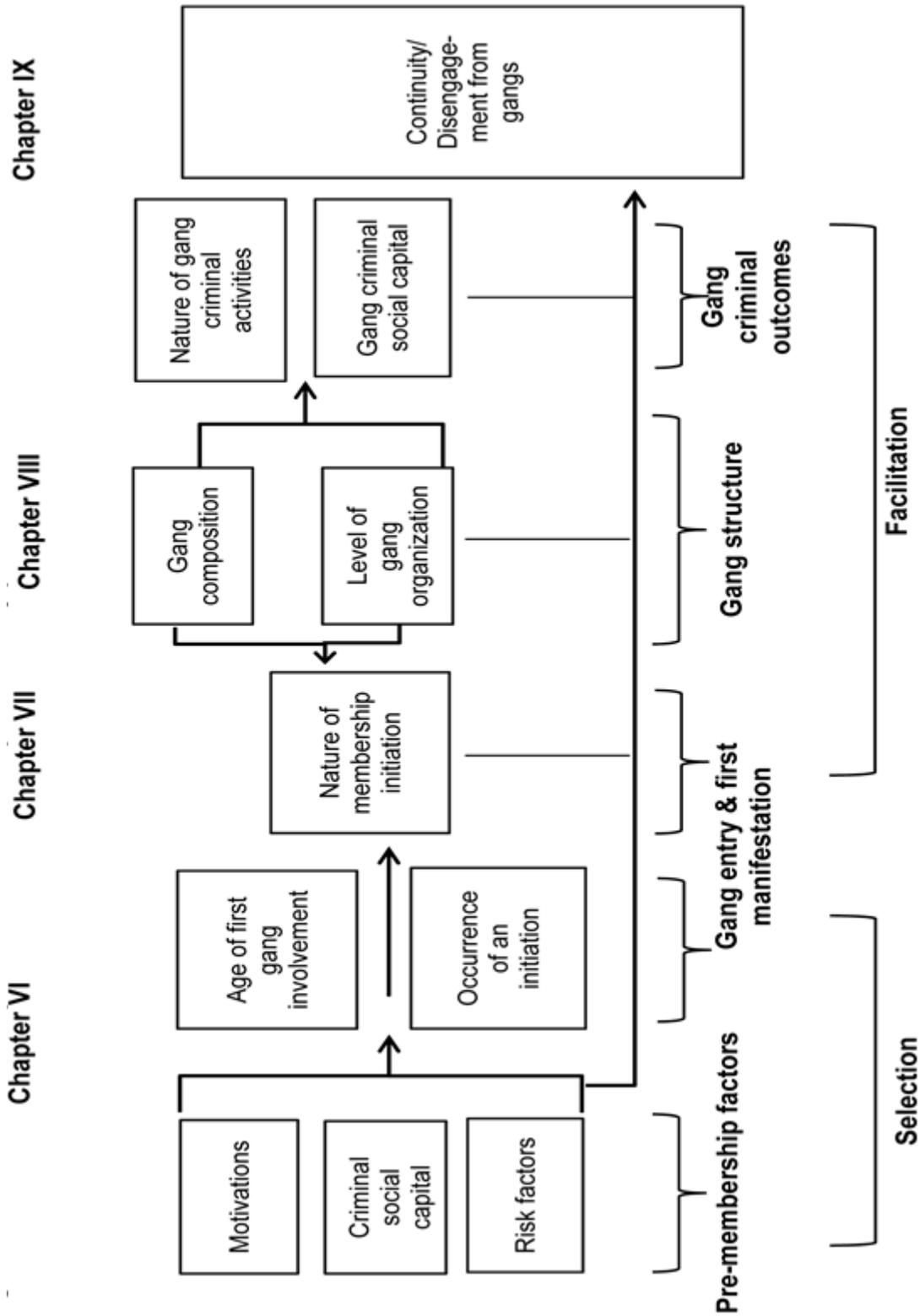
The objective of the current study is to contribute to filling those gaps in the literature on gangs. The main focus is on the individuals as they interact in the group in the sequential process associated with gang membership. But contrary to many purely individual-level studies, this current study remains sensitive to the specific nature of the group in which the gang members are embedded. This will be done mainly by integrating the characteristics of the individuals (individual-level explanation) and the gangs and their processes (micro-level of explanation; i.e., the dynamic processes in social interaction) in the analyses.

Chapter 1 examines the theoretical background used to design the current study. First, to illustrate the sequential process of gang membership, a group socialization theoretical model developed by Moreland and Levine (1982) is presented. Their model contributes to the design of the general group membership framework in the current study by (a) considering the temporal perspective of the socialization process (i.e., that any group membership goes through phases, starting with entry into the group and usually ending with exit from it) and (b) including both the group and the individuals’ points of view and reciprocal influences from a social perspective. Second, the two explanatory models (e.g., the selection and facilitation models) presented in the introduction were the starting points in the development of hypotheses in regards to the mechanisms triggering gang membership and its effects. Given the limitations identified in these two models and then echoed in the most recent gang research, the integration

of compatible perspectives are included to further investigate the sequential gang membership process and its effects. The selection model is enriched by the criminal social capital perspective. The second model is the facilitation model and is enhanced by the group process perspective in gang settings. Then, a review of the risk factors and motivations to join gangs will be presented. Subsequently, the extant literature on gang initiation, group structure and crimes, and gang disengagement is reviewed and presented.

The current dissertation examines the sequential process of gang membership, from gang entry to the gang disengagement by analyzing the pre-gang context, gang experience, and group processes of gangs. Figure 1 illustrates the design of the dissertation. The dissertation includes four main results chapters (Chapter 6, 7, 8, and 9). The first results chapter, "*The drive to get in: Gang entry opportunity*", examines the gang entry process by looking at the pre-membership factors that could influence the selection process. The second results chapter titled, "*The right to belong: Youth gang initiations*", examines gang initiations and whether the initiations are associated with the prospective members' pre-membership factors. The third results chapter, "*The art of hustling: The importance of group processes*", proposes a gang classification as an initial conceptual basis from which to explore the collective facilitation effect in terms of variations in the gang behavioural outcomes (e.g., gang initiation, gang criminal activities, and gang criminal social capital). The last results chapter, "*Can't leave the game alone: The gang disengagement process*", examines the disengagement process from gangs.

Figure 1. Schematic representation of the sequential entry process and its effects



2. Theoretical Background

2.1. The theory of group socialization

The criminological literature has demonstrated the importance of the socialization principle in the process by which individuals learn deviant attitudes, motives, and criminal behaviours (see Akers, 1998; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Pratt & Cullen, 2000; Sutherland, 1947). The exposure to delinquent peers is at the core of the explanation of the link between gang membership and the learning process, resulting in an increased likelihood of offending (Battin et al., 1998; Thornberry et al., 2003). At a collective level, a similar explanation has yet to be applied. It has been shown that gangs define their identity and activities in interaction with other groups and evolve continually in a wide inter-gang social structure (see Descormiers & Morselli, 2011; Fleisher, 2005; Kennedy et al., 1997; McGloin, 2005; Papachristos, 2009; Tita et al., 2003). Altogether, the socialization of individuals through their passage into gangs that are also connected to other gangs and groups has rarely been empirically examined and its influence on gang criminal offending is unknown.

The main focus of the dissertation is the passage of individuals through gangs, a process that can be described as occurring in a sequence that includes gang entry, gang initiation, gang criminal activities, and finally gang desistance. Each part of this sequence can be described as an event, or turning point – the nature of which has an influence on the rest of the sequence or trajectory (e.g. a violent initiation may signal the importance of violence in that particular gang). The current dissertation takes into consideration the influence of the group processes that govern gangs and of the criminal social capital (both at the individual and collective levels) that surrounded the individuals from the pre-membership to post-membership context. This dissertation has been designed within a general framework inspired by group socialization model, which takes into account the different phases of membership and role transitions that occur over time between a group and its members (Levine & Moreland, 1994).

2.1.1. Psychological processes of group socialization

Moreland and Levine (1982) developed a model of group socialization to describe and explain the passage of individuals through groups. Their model takes into account that (a) changes (affective, cognitive, and behavioural) occur from the beginning (the entry) to the end of the relationship (the exit) and (b) both the group and the individuals are potential influence agents (i.e., the group can affect changes in newcomers and the individuals who join the group can also influence the group).

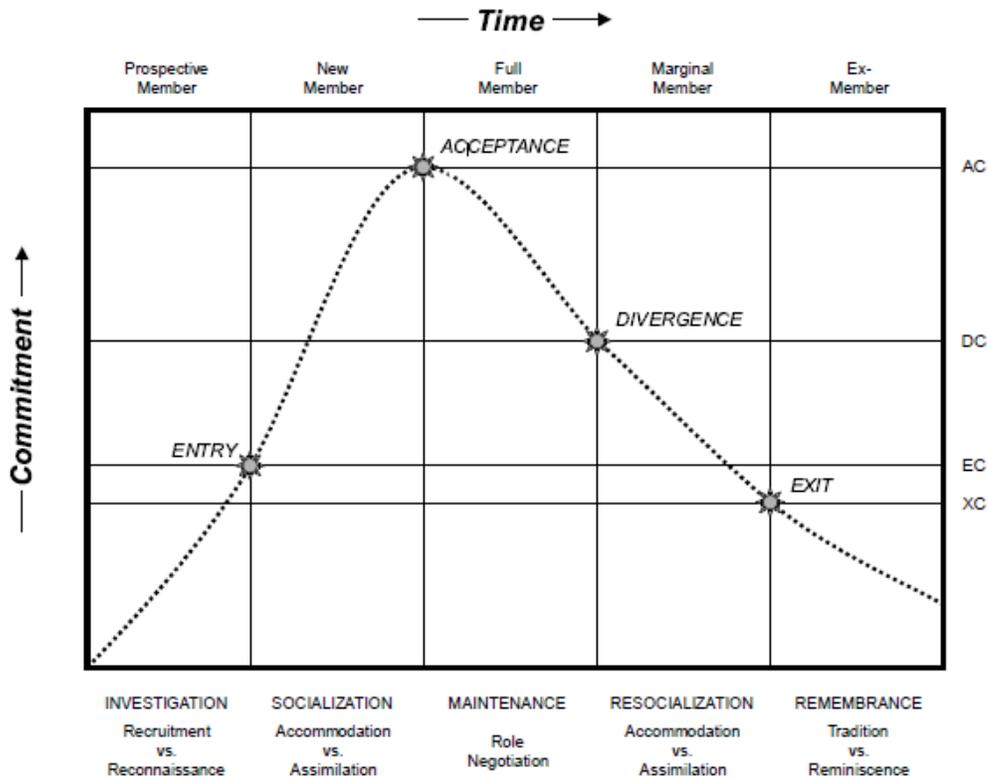
The model is applicable to small groups that are defined as “small, autonomous, voluntary groups, whose members interact on a regular basis, have affective ties with one another, share a common frame of reference, and are behaviourally interdependent” (Levine & Moreland, 1994, p.306). A broader application of the model is relevant to many different kinds of groups (e.g., sports teams, work units, social clubs, religious sects, and youth gangs) by considering the possible differences across groups (Emler, 1990, Levine & Moreland, 1994; Moreland, & Levine, 2002).

The model is based on three psychological processes: evaluation, commitment, and role transition. Moreland and Levine (1982) defined the first process (*the evaluation*) as the assessment made, by both the group and the individuals, of the rewards associated of each party (the group vs. the individuals, and vice versa). An evaluation is made about the benefit the newcomer will contribute to the gang and its achievements, and from the newcomers’ point of view, the evaluation is made about whether or not the group will meet the individuals’ needs. Following the evaluation process, is *commitment*, when both parties agree on the terms of the membership. According to the authors, the commitment phase has important consequences for both the group and the individual. When commitment occurs, both the group and the individual agree to work hard to satisfy expectations and try to maintain the membership. Note that the different membership roles that a person could play in the group are associated with specific levels of commitment. The third process is *role transitions*. Once both parties have agreed to commit and meet the decision criteria they have set, role transition occurs. The role transitions could be seen as turning points marked by different phases of the membership. The role transitions might involve special ceremonies or rites of passage to symbolise that an important change has occurred (Levine & Moreland, 1994).

2.1.2. Different phases of group membership and role transitions

Moreland and Levine's model (1982) also suggests that individuals may go through five phases of group membership: (1) *investigation*, (2) *socialization*, (3) *maintenance*, (4) *resocialization*, and (5) *remembrance*. In addition, these five phases are separated into four specific role transitions (entry, acceptance, divergence, and exit). This model is particularly helpful for the purpose of this dissertation because it takes into account the recruitment process that occurs before entry into a group. This echoes also the central role given to gang initiations in this study. Figure 2 illustrates the changes that occur between individuals and groups within the four role-transitions timeframe.

Figure 2. A general model of group socialization (Moreland and Levine, 1982)



The first phase of membership is the *investigation period*. This period refers to recruitment, when both groups and individuals are searching for the other that will contribute to their respective achievement goals and needs. At that time, if both parties agree on the level of commitment (entry criteria), the **entry** occurs and the prospective

member becomes a group member. In the gang context, the investigation period would occur during the recruitment process, when gangs are looking for new members or when prospective members themselves are seeking for opportunities to join gangs. Once both parties agree on the level of commitment required, gang entry occurs, and the prospective gang member is granted membership. As mentioned by Moreland and Levine (1982), the role transition may involve a rite of passage to formalize the change in membership status, which is often the case for prospective gang members (including those analyzed in the sample in this study) when they join a gang (Best & Hutchinson, 1996; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Huff, 1998; Jankowski, 1991; Spergel, 1995; Vigil, 1988, 1996).

The second phase of membership is the *socialization* period. Moreland and Levine (1982) described this phase as the period when the group and the individuals are trying to change one another to make the relationship more gratifying. The authors gave the example of a group wanting individuals to do more for the sake of the group, and, similarly, of individuals expecting more from the group to benefit their own needs and achievements. If the two are able to reach agreement, regarding the commitment of the acceptance criteria, the **acceptance** role transition will occur, and the individual will become a full member. In the gang context, this phase could be seen as a “probation period” when individuals have joined the group, but are not yet fully accepted as members. The new members now try to fit in and to understand how to gain respect from other members, whereas the gang members challenge the newcomers and establish rules and performance standards. This phase allows both the group and the individuals to reach the balance necessary for full acceptance into membership. To illustrate this process: a perspective member may be expected to bring a certain amount of money for the benefit of the gang, a process that may be challenging to the more criminally inexperienced new member. In contrast, a more experienced new recruit who already earns money from crime will use this period to assess whether his new status has been good or not for his own business. Similarly, a new member who joined seeking protection will assess, during this socialization period, whether his situation has changed for the better or for the worse. The gang could, in turn, “test” the new recruit for reactions in violent altercations with other gangs.

The third phase of the membership is the *maintenance period*. Moreland and Levine (1982) described this phase as the negotiation period when the group and the individuals are discussing what the roles the individuals will perform that will ensure both the achievement of group goals and the satisfaction of personal needs. If both agree, the commitment levels of both parties rise, and the maintenance of membership can be pursued, sometimes for many years. If they disagree and the negotiation fails, they will face a divergence in their commitment level. Changes and imbalance in the commitment level from one or the other party may be influenced by the cohesion of the group, the composition of the group, and any events that could alter the current relationship (Levine & Moreland, 1994). The authors specified that if **divergence** occurs, the individual becomes a marginal member of the group. The occurrence of a divergence in commitment ends the maintenance phase and marks the beginning of the resocialization phase. In the gang context, the divergence is the starting point of members' disengagement from gangs. Although this process has rarely been researched directly, there are numerous signs in the literature that divergence occurs, from one side or the other. For example, the average gang member in Melde and Esbensen's (2011) sample lasted 1 year or less as gang members before desisting. Similar findings were also found in prior studies (Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Gatti et al., 2005; Hill et al., 2001; Peterson et al., 2004; Thornberry et al., 2003).

The fourth phase of membership is the *resocialization period*. During this phase, both the group and the individual try one more time to change each other in order to meet their respective expectations in terms of achievement and satisfaction. If there is enough assimilation and accommodation, the commitment level may be strengthened, and the individual may regain full membership. However, if the commitment continues to weaken, then the exit criteria will be reached. At this point, the **exit** occurs, and the individual becomes an ex-member of the group. In the gang context, this phase refers to the last phase of the decision-making process regarding quitting a gang. Individuals are confronting the idea about disengagement, and may try one more time to test out whether the time has come to leave gang life. During this same time, the group might try to deter members from leaving the gang by encouraging the belief that gang membership is permanent and that the only way to quit a gang is to be "beaten-out" or to "shoot a close relative" (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). The gang might also promote gang life over what would really be their new life without their membership identity. As

Decker and Lauritsen (2002) found, quitting a gang may also require rejecting ones' friends and peers. In the opposite situation, the gang may want the individual to leave, but the individual may try to convince them that he or she still belongs in the gang by taking more initiative and, consequently, more risks.

Finally, the last phase of membership is the *remembrance period*, when both parties recall their relationship – the individual's contributions to the achievement of the group's goals and the satisfaction of the individual's needs the group provided. As mentioned by the authors, these memories may become part of the groups' traditions or the individual's nostalgia. More importantly, the authors added, both parties need to continue to be engaged in an ongoing evaluation of their relationship, especially if they continue to influence each other's outcomes. This situation is probable in the gang setting. Pyrooz and Decker (2011) mentioned that, in some cases, gang ties remain so strong that despite an individual's decision to leave, the individual remains socially or criminally involved with the gang. According to these authors, the on-going influence that the group has on the desisted member could be due to the intensity and durability of the network.

Although the current study does not examine these psychological processes and membership phases per se, identifying these elements in the chronological sequence of the group membership provides a general understanding of the on-going socialization processes at work. The group processes underlying the different role transitions of group socialization in the gang context is reviewed in the following section.

2.2. The group process perspective in gang research

In the current study, a group process perspective is used to shed some light on the processes that are at play once individuals join gangs and, more specifically, that contribute to an explanation of gang behaviours. Though group process is usually included as a key element in the definition of a gang (Maxson, 2011),¹ little research has

¹ "A street gang is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose own identity includes involvement in illegal activity" (Maxson, 2011), where the group process and identity is associated with the involvement in illegal activity (Decker, Melde, & Pyrooz, 2013).

been conducted on group process in gangs (Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Decker, Katz, & Webb, 2008; Decker, Melde, & Pyrooz, 2013; Hughes, 2013; Matsuda, Melde, Taylor, Freng & Esbensen, 2013). In fact, information about the social dynamic between gangs and their members has relied mostly on ethnographic studies (mostly from the U.S.), and the need for empirical research on the topic is evident.

The group process perspective stipulates that an individual is a creature of a group, a group composed of individuals and their influences (Rice, 1969). This perspective emphasizes that any group has properties that influence the behaviour of its members (see Klein & Crawford, 1967; Sherif & Sherif, 1964; Short & Strodtbeck, 1965). These properties result from interactions between individuals and the group and should be understood accordingly, that is, in a group dynamics form (Klein, 1969; Sherif & Sherif, 1964; Short & Strodtbeck, 1965). In the gang context especially, individuals not only interact socially with other members of the gang, but also do so within a wider, inter-gang structure (Descormiers & Morselli, 2011; Fleisher, 2005; Klein & Crawford, 1967; Morselli, 2009).

In gang research, this perspective is a useful aid for understanding some aspects of the behaviours present during gang events, episodes, or processes (e.g., joining the gang, leaving the gang, becoming involved in a gang role, or taking part in gang crime) (Decker, Melde, & Pyrooz, 2013). There are at least five types of important mechanisms and group properties that are most likely to affect gang behaviours. First, *group cohesiveness*, “the degree to which members are attracted to other group members, and to the group as a whole” (Hughes, 2013, p. 3), has been demonstrated to be a strong predictor of members’ high delinquency levels (Fleisher, 1998; Klein, 1971; Klein & Crawford, 2003). As observed by Decker (1996), there is a reciprocal interaction between the cohesion of the group and members’ involvement in delinquency. One example is the retaliatory nature of gang violence. When a gang threat or attack is directed toward one member, it is seen as an attack against all members (Decker, Melde, & Pyrooz, 2013). Such threats of violence strengthen ties among gang members.

A second mechanism is associated with the organizational structure of the gang (see Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Decker, Katz, & Webb, 2008; Fagan, 1989; Jankowski, 1991, Klein & Maxson, 2006). Recent research has clearly demonstrated the

association between the level of gang organization and gang's ability to coordinate and carry out their gang criminal activities (Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Decker, Katz, & Webb, 2008) and increase the productivity of members. For example, Decker, Katz, and Webb (2008) found that the organizational and structural characteristics of gangs (even a low level of organization) were positively associated with the number of different violent crimes and drug crimes members engaged in.

Third, the normative side of gangs (belief systems, affective ties, and symbolic aspects of membership), the foundation of which is rooted in gang organizational structure, is another important element that has a potential influence on gang behaviours (see Decker, 1996; Matsuda et al., 2013; Pyrooz & Decker, 2011; Pyrooz, Decker, & Webb, 2010; Pyrooz, Sweeten, & Piquero, 2013). For example, the normative aspect of gangs plays an important role in initiation, which marks the formalization of new membership and sets the tone and the collective beliefs established in the gang (Vigil, 1988). Matsuda et al. (2013) also demonstrated that joining a gang facilitates an adherence to the "code of the street". This concept is defined by Anderson (1999) as a set of informal rules that governs interpersonal public behavior, particularly violence. The rules emphasize that the threat and use of violence are means to achieve and maintain respect. Matsuda et al.'s (2013) findings suggested that a greater ascription to notions of violence to maintain respect is amplified as youths join gangs, and seemed to be associated with a greater involvement in violent crimes than their non-gang member peers. In addition, recent research on gang desistance demonstrated the role of symbolic gang ties, especially in the methods and speed of leaving gangs (see Pyrooz & Decker, 2011; Pyrooz, Decker, & Webb, 2010; Pyrooz, Sweeten, & Piquero, 2013). More specifically, the more individuals are embedded in gang structure and culture, the longer it takes them to leave their gang.

The fourth mechanism refers to the exposure of individuals to collective violence (Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Decker, 1996; Decker, Bynum, & Weisel, 1998; Decker, Katz, & Webb, 2008). As mentioned by Bouchard and Spindler (2010), gang members are exposed to violence through their gang membership, not necessarily because of their own individual actions. A gang is involved in different conflicts that increase opportunities for collective violence and victimization. Though collective violence is seen as part of the group identity (Thrasher, 1927), violence also acts as a catalyst, uniting

members of a gang against a common enemy (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). This mechanism is associated with an increase in violence and victimization (Decker, 1996; Thornberry et al., 2003; Miller & Decker, 2001; Peterson, Talor, & Esbensen, 2004). According to Decker, Melde, and Pyrooz (2013), the influence of the gangs compels individuals to engage in violent or criminal acts that they would not normally, as an individual, commit.

The last mechanism is related to the exposure to and interactions with highly delinquent peers – the most robust predictor of delinquency (Agnew, 1991; Haynie, 2001; Thornberry et al., 1994; Warr, 2002). Recent research has shown that interactions with other delinquent peers increase criminal opportunity and criminal success (Bouchard & Nguyen, 2010; Descormiers, Bouchard, & Corrado, 2011; Morselli & Tremblay, 2004; Piquero, Farrington, & Blumstein, 2007; Tremblay, 1993). Given that gangs expose their members to a larger pool of potential associates, it can be hypothesized that gang members have access to more criminal opportunities.

2.3. The social capital perspective

Although Moreland and Levine's (1982) group socialization model is useful because (a) it highlights the membership sequence at different stages and (b) considers the reciprocal effects at play between a gang and its individual members, it does not go far enough in specifying the mechanisms at play in key gang events, especially those involving criminal behaviour. Nor is this part of the aim of this model. In order to get at those mechanisms or processes specific to gangs, this dissertation relies on the group process perspective.

Yet, there are still two elements that neither the group socialization model nor the group process perspective address. First, though the group socialization model emphasizes the process of recruitment in general groups, it does not account for the very specific social opportunity structure that gangs represent. In other words, not everyone can be a gang member and not everyone can be invited to become a gang member. To understand the recruitment process, very specific to gangs and secret societies in general (e.g. Simmel, 1906), a third perspective is needed, the *social capital theory*. More specifically, the "criminal" social capital version of the perspective as it

applies to gangs and illegal groups in general (Descormiers et al., 2011; McCarthy & Hagan, 2001). Second, even though the group process perspective helps us understand the interplay between individuals and their groups and how this interplay may change individuals, at least temporarily, it does not provide insight into how the group itself may be embedded in a larger social structure. Connections within that larger social structure, or criminal scene, may help us understand the behaviour of individual gang members just as much as internal gang characteristics, such as group cohesion. For example, Descormiers and Morselli (2011) showed that some gangs were much more likely to be in conflict than others and that that condition had an impact on the frequency with which individual members were involved in fights. Some gangs in their sample reported positive ties with the Hells Angels, ties that impacted the nature of illegal dealings. A social capital perspective is also useful in interpreting the impact of those types of gang connections on individual members. Social capital theory is flexible in that it can be used not only at the individual level, to understand resources in the network of individuals, but also at the macro or group level to understand the social resource of group entities (Lin, 2001).

Coleman (1994) defined *social capital* as “any aspect of informal social organization that constitutes a productive resource for one or more actors” (p. 170). Lin (2001) suggested that social capital can be seen as an investment by individuals in interpersonal relationships useful for achievement of various goals and valued outcomes. Social capital does not only include the exposure to others (e.g., deviant peers), but also how these relationships are being used for the achievement of various goals (Lin, 2001). Social capital is cumulative in the sense that individuals acquire social capital as they evolve over their lifetimes. According to Portes (1998), social capital is neither positive nor negative. However, McCarthy et al. (2002) clearly pointed out that “social capital may increase access to an array of normatively valued outcomes; it may also create inroads to disreputable or deviant ends” (p. 834). As such, *criminal social capital* refers to social relations that facilitate illegal behaviour. The primary assumption that social capital has the potential to impact on conventional behaviours could be expanded to criminal settings (McCarthy & Hagan, 1995).

According to Lin (2001, p. 20), four beneficial social capital elements contribute to the enhancement of outcomes of actions. First, social capital facilitates the flow of

information among individuals in a group and also among groups in a larger network. Second, some social ties carry more valued resources and exercise a greater power when it comes to decision-making processes regarding individuals. Third, an individual's social capital may be conceived of as an individual's social credentials, meaning that an individual has the potential to provide added resources that might be useful to an organization. Finally, social capital contributes to the reinforcement of the identity and recognition of the individuals among a group who share similar interests and resources. These four elements may explain why social capital enhances actions that are not entirely accounted for by other forms of capital (Lin, 2001). Social capital may be mobilized for two types of actions: *instrumental actions* aimed at acquiring valued resources not as yet at one's disposal and *expressive actions* aimed at preserving valued resources already at one's disposal (Lin, 2001, pp. 45-46). In the gang context, instrumental actions could lead to outcomes associated with earnings or criminal opportunities, whereas expected outcomes for expressive actions could include preserving a gang's reputation.

The profit of social capital can be used by and returned to the individual or the group. The first perspective of the social capital framework suggests that individuals access and use resources embedded in social networks to gain returns in instrumental actions or to preserve gain in expressive actions (Lin, 2011, p.21). In this perspective, the individual invests in the social network and gains the resources embedded in the relations he or she has generated. For example, Cloward and Ohlin (1960) specified that an ideal environment for successful criminals would provide integration of different age-levels of offenders, which is the case in gang settings. In this setting, tutelage of members encourages the acquisition of criminal values and skills (see also Cohen, 1955). Moreover, this tutelage relationship (new member and mentor association) is more likely to generate criminal opportunities that young offenders would not normally get (Descormiers et al., 2011; McCarthy, 1996; Morselli et al., 2006; Morselli, Tremblay, & McCarthy, 2006; Nguyen & Bouchard, 2013).

The second perspective of the social capital framework focuses on the group-level and suggests that groups develop and maintain social capital as a collective asset. This collective asset is also beneficial to individual members of the group who can access the collectively owned capital (Bourdieu, 1986). This perspective is particularly

relevant for the gang contexts, where the social resources of the group allow the collectivity to evolve within the wider structure and benefit from the profits of such wider connections. For example, Descormiers and Morselli (2011) demonstrated that gangs tend to create alliances with other gangs and other criminal organizations for criminal business purposes when each party perceives that cooperation is profitable for them. Not only do people use their resources to help gangs to achieve their goals, but a gang, as an entity, also interacts with other groups within the wider structure and can benefit of their resources as well.

For the purpose of this dissertation, social capital theory is used to understand (a) how a future gang member's social environment may facilitate his or her recruitment into a specific type of gang and (b) how a gang is embedded in a wider inter-gang structure that may also facilitate a group's criminal outcomes. No prior research has yet tested whether the criminal social capital acquired by an individual before joining a gang facilitates opportunities for gang membership, although qualitative research has shown that having friends and family involved in gangs, or being immersed in a gang neighborhood, tends to facilitate gang entry (Decker & Curry, 2000; Miller, 2001). In addition, the current study will look at the group-level criminal social capital that is acquired by gangs through their collective interactions with other gangs or organized crime groups in order to assess whether gang criminal social capital is a key determinant predictor in the creation of gang criminal opportunities.

3. Current Literature on Gang Membership

3.1. Gang entry

As Miller (2002) mentioned, gang membership does not occur over-night, there are factors and events, fostered in the pre-membership period, that trigger the commitment required to such membership. The following section presents the past research that aimed to uncover three important elements of the gang entry: (1) the age of the first gang involvement, (2) the motivations to join such group, and (3) the strongest predictors that are associated with the involvement in gangs.

3.1.1. Age of first gang involvement

Gang entry is a gradual process. It usually begins with a youth hanging out with gang members at an early age (12 to 13 years old) and then joining a gang (between 13 to 15 years old) (Howell, 2010). Studies from the U.S. suggested that this process takes 6 months to 1 or 2 years (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Gordon, 1994; Huff, 1996, 1998). In the Seattle Social Development Project, it was found that the presence of risk factors at ages 10 or 12 significantly predicted gang affiliation at ages 13 to 18 (Hill, Howell, Hawkins, & Battin-Pearson, 1999). Similarly, in the Rochester study, Thornberry et al. (2003) established gang entry to be between ages 14 to 17. Craig, Vitaro, Gagnon, and Tremblay (2002) found that age of onset may occur earlier (for example, at 11 or 12 years old), but their results showed that among their Montreal-based sample, the stability of gang membership occurred at age 13. The duration of gang membership is approximately estimated at a year or less (Gatti et al., 2005; Hill et al., 2001; Melde & Esbensen, 2011, 2013; Peterson et al., 2004; Thornberry et al., 2003). For the purpose of this dissertation, the cutting point between an early and a late entry was identified as age 14, once the membership appears to be stable based on prior literature.

3.1.2. Risk factors

Several longitudinal studies have investigated factors that may increase the risk of gang entry. These can be grouped into five main domains: (1) family (e.g., structure, poverty, attachment, management, antisocial behaviour) (Eitle, Gunkel, & Gundy, 2004; Hill, Howell, Hawkins, & Battin-Pearson, 1999; Lahey, Gordon, Loeber, Southamer-Loeber, & Farrington, 1999; Thornberry et al., 2003); (2) association with delinquent peers (Bjerregaard & Lizotte, 1995; Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Eitle et al., 2004; Lahey et al., 1999); (3) school (e.g., low achievement, attachment, learning disabilities) (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Craig, Vitaro, & Tremblay, 2002; Hill et al., 1999; Thornberry et al., 2003); (4) individual characteristics (e.g., delinquency and violence involvement, early dating, antisocial belief, alcohol and drug use, life stressor, depression) (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Craig, et al., 2002; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Hill et al., 1999; Lahey et al., 1999; Thornberry et al., 2003) and (5) community conditions (e.g., drug availability, firearm availability, attachment, neighbourhood disorganization, and drug use; Bjerregaard & Lizotte, 1995; Hill et al., 1999; Thornberry, 1998; Thornberry et al., 2003). Recent research highlighted three important findings: (1) these risk factors do not uniquely predict the probability of gang membership, but also other antisocial behaviours (Esbensen, Peterson, Taylor, & Freng, 2009); (2) the accumulation of risk factors is a more robust predictor of gang involvement (Esbensen et al., 2009; Maxson, 2011), and (3) predictors of first gang entry explained individual risk and might explain age of entry (Lahey et al., 1999) in the selection model, but do not explain how they influence the individual motivation to join and the entry process. Thornberry et al. (2003) emphasize this limitation of the risk factors approach and suggest that having a more qualitative complementary approach would help to identify some group processes at play that are not uncovered by those causal linkages. In the current study, both approaches are considered to properly portray the precursors to gang entry. For those at equal risk, how can we explain that some will have the opportunity to be recruited in gangs, when some will not? Is it a question of “drive”, of connections, or both?

3.1.3. Motivations to join

The motivations for joining a gang were mostly studied in the work of ethnographers in the 1990s. Although numerous motives may push individuals to join

gangs, there are six main reasons that have been consistently identified in the literature. First, the excitement aspect of gang life is often named as primary reason for joining a gang (Hochhaus & Sousa, 1988; Miller, 1958; Thornberry et al., 2003; Thrasher, 1927; Vigil, 1988). Vigil (1988) explained that members associate the “fun” of gangs with the expression of aggression and the sense of adventure, but also with the emotional support that gang companionship provides (p. 427). Thornberry et al. (2003) grouped the types of reasons identified by members into clusters. The fun and action cluster described the motivation to join for 17.6% of their male sample, compared to 11.8% of the girls. The second type of motivation regularly identified in prior studies is the search for protection (Decker & Curry, 2000; Hochhaus & Sousa, 1988; Jankowski, 1991; Melde, Taylor, & Esbensen, 2009; Thornberry et al., 2003; Vigil, 1988). Thornberry’s et al. (2003) protection cluster shows that 20.1% of males versus 16.7% of girls joined gangs for protection. According to Vigil (1988), the fear generated by the street environment makes gangs attractive for survival (p.423). Gangs provide protection from predatory elements active on the streets (Jankowski, 1991) or at school (Thornberry et al., 2003) and are seen as a survival asset. Managing threats is usual business for street offenders, but having more power (human, weapon, reputation, resources) may be attractive because it reduces problems and makes it possible to devote more time to making money from crime (Jankowski, 1991). In that regard, instrumental motives other than protection (e.g., drug dealing and making money) constitute a third motivation for gang entry identified by Jankowski (1991) and Skolnick, Correl, and Rabb (1988). These instrumental motives, however, was not reported in Thornberry et al. (2003). Fourth, gang entry could be motivated by the desire to fit in, to belong, to gain acceptance and respect from peers (Decker & Curry, 2000; Thornberry et al., 2003; Vigil, 1988). That category was included in the cluster identified as *other* by Thornberry and colleagues’ work. Only 13% of males and 11.8% of girls named that reason to justify their gang entry. Fifth, Decker and Curry (2000) and Thornberry et al. (2003) noticed that some motivations were friendship-based. For example, some individuals already had friends involved in gangs, and they wanted to join out of loyalty to that friendship or to impress girls as well. Interestingly, the sixth motivation is associated with family ties in gangs. Decker and Curry (2000) revealed that for some respondents, family members involved in gangs are role models, and they tend to generate membership (see also Miller, 2001). Thornberry et al. (2003) found that siblings or cousins who were already members usually encouraged other family members join. The

last cluster created in their study included both friends and family as a motive for joining. This cluster of motivations is the most prevalent in their sample (49.3% of males and 59.7% of girls).

The last two motivations identified parallel one of the most important predictors of gang entry: exposure to delinquent peers (Bjerregaard & Lizotte, 1993; Bjerregaard & Smith, 1995; Eitle et al., 2004; Hill et al., 1999; Lahey et al., 1999). Although the selection model suggests this is an indirect effect – that is, the delinquent peers association is primarily due to an already-present serious involvement in delinquency (Thornberry, 1998) – the differential association perspective stipulates that an environment of learning is required to acquire such behaviour (Sutherland, 1947). More specifically, Cloward and Ohlin (1960, p.147) specified that the “motivation and pressures toward deviance do not fully account for deviant behaviour...the individual must have access to a learning environment and, once having been trained, must be allowed to perform his role”. In that sense, Kleemans and de Poot (2008) would argue that having access to delinquent peers is not sufficient, a “social opportunity structure” is required. *Social opportunity structure* is defined as social ties that provide access to profitable criminal opportunities (p.71). This access to a learning environment is crucial in the trajectory of prospective members and uniquely possible through the exposure to other delinquents (family, friends, or acquaintances). This factor has been taken for granted, for the most part, by subsequent gang research.

Even though being motivated and having prior experience as young offenders account for some of the equation, being exposed to offenders is more likely to create the environment required to generate (a) the opportunity first to get introduced to a gang (to facilitate the entry process) or (b) to acquire the necessary skills to draw the attention of the gang and be asked to join (to facilitate the recruitment process).

3.2. Gang initiation rites

Once an opportunity to join gangs has been presented and taken, normally the next turning point is the official formalization of gang membership through a rite of passage. Most studies (although few in number) that have described the initiation process are based on U.S. data. However, a few Canadian gang studies did report the

initiation ceremony as being a part (or at least a possibility) of the gang trajectory (see Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Chettleburgh, 2007; Gordon, 1998; Mellor et al., 2005; Mourani, 2006; Totten, 2008, 2009). The following section presents the specific purposes and types of initiation in gang settings.

3.2.1. Purpose of gang initiation

Gangs are not the only social groups with initiation processes. They occur in sports teams, in university fraternities, or in the military in order to test the commitment of the individual who desires to join (Kanter, 1968). Moreland and Levine (1982) noted that almost any entry into a group is marked by a group response that takes the form of a ceremony or ritual, ranging from an informal warm welcome to an unpleasant experience. Anthropological literature on initiation rites emphasized the expressive symbolism and identity transformation of being initiated. Sanyika (1996) defined *initiation* as the “ritualization of the creation process, where a person is changed from one state of consciousness to another. Initiation re-created beings.” (p. 116).

Initiations provide a new social identity; increase group social cohesion, and offer knowledge transmission from the elders (Sanyiaka, 1996). Decker (1996) observed that in gang settings, engaging members in a collective ritual increased the gang’s cohesion and level of solidarity. The author states that “the initiation reminds active members of their earlier status, and gives the new member something in common with other gang members” (p. 255). The initiation rites also symbolically help to enhance the survival and development of the collective (Sanykia, 1996). As for gang members, they will have to trust, to count on this future member for support in fights and shoot-outs (Decker, 1996). In the same vein, Walker (2010) states:

Gangs use the initiation rite as a means of determining if the inductee is mentally and physically strong enough to be worthy of membership. In other words they want members who have "heart" and who will not run at the first sign of trouble. (para. 4)

Furthermore, the rite of passage assures the transmission of a group’s purpose and meaning. For gang members, it reminds them “that violence lies at the core of life in the

gang” (Decker, 1996, p. 255). In that sense, gang initiations affect the group processes that govern the gang activities.

3.2.2. Types of initiation

Some prospective gang members are willing to do almost anything to be considered a formal or “solid member” (Jankowski, 1991, p. 48). The group witnesses the initiation, and the new members go through a kind of validation process in their new role as initiates (Vigil, 1988). Gang leaders have the authority to decide who will join and who will not, especially when the gang is well established in the neighbourhood (Jankowski, 1991).

Decker (1996) explored gang violence through its normative mechanisms and collective processes among active gang members in St. Louis. The majority of his participants reported being involved in a violent initiation. Decker (1996) reported that “usually they were ‘beaten in’ by members of the gang they were joining” (p. 252). Similar findings have been reported by others (Best & Hutchinson, 1996; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Huff, 1998; Jankowski, 1991; Spergel, 1995; Vigil, 1988, 1996). Essentially, prospective members must prove themselves by enduring a severe beating from a number of current members for a pre-determined number of minutes. “This is frequently called an ‘act of love.’ It is also, in many cases, an act of extreme violence” (Walker, 2010, para.8). According to Vigil (1996), who has gathered ethnographic data among several different neighborhoods in the greater Los Angeles area, the beat-in duration is approximately 30 seconds in length. This type of initiation also aims to test how well the newcomer would be able to fight to maintain the gang reputation (Jankowski, 1991). Having good fighters among a gang’s members, Jankowski pointed out, could reduce significantly the number of fights a gang would need to be involved in.

Although violence in gang initiations is often directed at prospective members, the process can vary from gang to gang (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Decker’s participants (1996) reported that they had had the choice of being beaten in or “going on a mission”. *Going on a mission* meant that the prospective members had “to engage in an act of violence, usually against rival gang members on rival turf” (Decker, 1996, p. 255). Gang members can be asked to commit an armed robbery, a drive-by shooting, an assault, a rape, or even murder (Spergel, 1995; Vigil, 1988; Walker, 2010), to transport drugs or

even to write gang graffiti on enemy turf (Chettleburgh, 2007). The victims of their initiation crimes can be rival members as well as innocent persons. This contradicts Best and Hutchinson's (1996) assertion that random violence towards non-gang members is an urban legend.

According to Chettleburgh (2007), who studied gangs in Canada, newcomers can also be asked to get gang tattoos, using either ink or "a makeshift branding iron to burn the skin and create a permanent scar" (p.43). Decker and Van Winkle (1996) also observed this type of initiation, being "tagged in", in 6 of the 92 gang members interviewed. Note that one element that is used to assess a gang's level of organization is the presence of symbols, including initiations (Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Decker, 2000; Decker, Katz, & Webb, 2008; Peterson et al., 2001). The initiation process is directly linked to the group process of the gang. Some prospective members may avoid gang initiation rites by being "blessed-in", that is, they are blessed to have older brothers, fathers, mothers, or other relatives who are already in a gang (Walker, 2010). In other words, their criminal social capital grants them an opportunity to avoid any harsh initiation.

Overall, there is a lack of systematic and empirical studies examining the process of gang initiations and, consequently, an absence of theoretical frameworks to explain such processes. For the purpose of this dissertation, the initiation event is considered to be embedded in the group process perspective where exposure to violence, and to delinquent peers is central to that event and to what happens afterward regarding the nature of criminal involvement.

3.3. Gang structure and crime

There is no universally accepted definition of what constitutes a gang, but there is a collective recognition that "no two gangs are just alike" (Thrasher, 1927, p. 36). A variety of gang structures exist, and it makes them qualitatively different from other groups (Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Maxson & Klein, 1995). The foundation for explaining gang criminal outcomes is an understanding of gang structure and group processes. However, very few studies have paid attention to the internal dynamics of gangs and their relationship to levels or types of crime (Bouchard & Spindler, 2010;

Decker, Bynum, & Weisel, 1998; Decker, Katz, & Webb, 2008; Hagedorn, 1994, 1998). Examining gang characteristics as an organizational unit has been done through (1) typologies and (2) gang organizational characteristics as an empirical measure.

3.3.1. *Elaboration of typologies*

To determine what differentiates one gang from another, typologies have been used to categorize different types of groups based on patterns of structures and criminal behaviours. Very few gang typologies drawn from Canadian data have been elaborated; the majority were designed in the United States (see Fagan, 1989; Klein & Maxson, 2006; Maxson & Klein, 1995; Thrasher, 1927). For the purpose of the current study, it seems important to review the typologies from Canadian gang research in order to reflect the Canadian reality.

Gordon and Foley (1998), in the Greater Vancouver Gang Study, utilized 128 probation offices case files and conducted interviews with 33 of these subjects in order to test six different categories of criminal groups found in British Columbia: youth movements; youth groups; criminal groups; wanna-be groups; street gangs; and criminal business organizations that were revealed in their preliminary study in 1994². The typology attempted to distinguish different types of groups according to their degrees of structure, organization, duration, and criminal activities. An effort at consensus and validation was also made by inviting practitioners to comment on the typology and to apply the typology to a research population in order to obtain a (certain) level of collective agreement.

Gordon's (2000) later research concentrated on the last three categories that were characterized by the following features³:

² Gordon's (1994) preliminary study examined the correctional centre files of 41 inmates identified as gang members by correction centre staff, and conducted interviews with 25 of them. Based on these data, the author distinguished 5 groupings (youth movements; youth groups; criminal groups; street gangs; and criminal business organizations). The author acknowledged a possible cross-fertilization between the different types, especially between the youth movements and youth group; and the youth groups, criminal groups and street gangs.

³ These three categories were found to be the most frequent among Gordon and Foley's (1998) study sample.

- 1) *Wanna-be groups*: Young people who band together in a loosely structured group primarily to engage in spontaneous social activity and exciting, impulsive criminal activity, including collective violence against other groups of youths. A wannabe group will be highly visible, and its members will boast about their gang involvement because they want to be seen by others as gang members.
- 2) *Street gangs*: Groups of young people and young adults who band together to form a semi-structured organization, the primary purpose of which is to engage in planned and profitable criminal behaviour or organized violence against rival street gangs.
- 3) *Criminal groups*: small clusters of friends who band together, usually for a short period of time (no more than a year), to commit crime primarily for financial gain. They can be composed of young people and/or young and not-so-young adults and may be mistakenly, or carelessly, referred to as a gang.

While this typology faces some cross-fertilization issues, according to Gordon (2000) a variety of criminal justice practitioners and policy-makers utilized and endorsed the typology and its associated definitions.

Second, Mellor, MacRae, Pauls, and Hornick (2005) developed a conceptual, five-part, multidimensional framework to depict the different types of gangs that youth may be involved with in Canada. Their model was based on five main characteristics: gang activity, organization, motivation to join, recruitment, and exit strategies. This typology is unique in its reference to the wider structure that the group may belong to.

A total of five types of gang were identified and described as the following:

- 1) *Type A (Group of Friends) groups* tend to be interest-based and usually do not involve criminal activity, thus pose no threat to a community's well-being and, in many situations, should be promoted.
- 2) *Type B (Spontaneous Criminal Activity Group/Gang) groups/gangs* are social in nature and derive their power and status from the size of their group. Criminal activity is situationally motivated and much of this type of gang/group activity can be categorized as gratuitous violence and bullying by misdirected

and unsupervised youth. Many of the members of Type B groups/gangs have other options in life and are less committed to the gang or its culture than more serious types of gangs.

- 3) *Type C (Purposive Group/Gang) gangs* come together for a specific purpose. Whether stealing cars, engaging in vigilante-type violence or spontaneous mob activity, these groups/gangs can emerge from within existing larger groups/gangs or may come about for a specific purpose and be disbanded once the activity or plan has been carried out.
- 4) *Type D (Youth Street Gang) gangs* are highly visible hardcore groups that come together primarily for profit-driven criminal activity. These street gangs identify themselves as such through the adoption of a gang name; common brands, styles, colours of clothing and/or jewellery; and tattoos to openly display gang membership to other gangs. These gangs do not seem to be part of a larger criminal organization and often have a definite territory or “turf” that they claim and defend as their own. Street gangs appear to be stand-alone organizations that have little connection to other gangs.
- 5) *Type E (Structured Criminal Organization) gangs* are highly structured criminal networks that tend to be led by criminally experienced adults for the purpose of economic or financial gain. The criminal activities of these types of gangs tend to be severe in nature and are generally premeditated. Youth are used for specific purposes to further the gang’s activities.

Third, more recently, Prowse (2012) also developed a Canadian gang typology based on interview data.⁴ His main postulate is that street gangs in the North American context are more loosely structured, and he referred to them as the “New-Age gangs”, mainly characterized by their organizational fluidity and membership mobility. The author suggested a definitional typology:

- 1) *Organized crime group*: A close-knit, geographically anchored group with enduring criminal associations, engaged in low-risk and high-gain criminal enterprises while also operating in the legal marketplace.

⁴ No further information is provided in regards to the nature of the data used to elaborate the typology.

- 2) *New-Age gang*: A loose-knit and fluid group of associates who comprise a subset of a street gang leader's enduring social network and who are preferentially activated in the commission of street-based criminal activity by that street gang leader. A gang identity need not form part of their collective self-identification.
- 3) *Action-set*: An unorganized and generally youthful (under age 18) collective of potential criminal participants, known to the street gang leader through a social network of relations. Street gang participation is peripheral and on an ad hoc basis; it does not form part of their self-identification.

The evolution from one typology to another is marked by a more pronounced interest in the criminal social structure in which a group of individuals is embedded. The durability and flexibility of the gang organizational structure is also more and more acknowledged and seems to provide a more accurate portrait of modern gangs. One limitation to these typologies is that they have yet to be tested as an empirical measure of gang behaviour. This limitation does not apply exclusively to Canadian research, but is also echoed in American gang research regarding gang typologies (see Decker et al., 2008).

One last Canadian typology that is worth presenting in the context of the current study is the one developed by Spindler and Bouchard (2011). They used a more systematic way to elaborate a classification system of gangs, drawing from a survey of high school students. Their sample comprised both self-identified gang members ($n = 44$) and delinquent group members ($n = 171$). The authors developed a structural and a behavioural typology based on a clustering technique to statistically classify their sample of gang members. The main objective was to examine the utility of classifying groups into a behavioural typology or a structural typology, or whether a mixed approach (combination of the two) would be useful. They used organizational items shown as reliable in previous gang research (e.g., name, leader, hierarchy, meeting, adoption of symbols, rules, initiation, protection of territory, and defense of honor/reputation). Their structural typology presented four types of gangs/delinquent groups: (1) low organization, (2) honor-based, (3) location-based, and (4) highly organized. Their behavioural typology was based on seven types of individual delinquent activities and drug use. The clustering solution revealed four types of gang/delinquent groups: (1)

minor, (2) market, (3) predatory, and (4) serious. Finally, their mixed approach merged the two four-cluster typologies, resulting in 16 possible combinations or types of gangs/groups. One main observation is that all 16 categories are represented in the sample, illustrating the difficulty of classifying groups and gangs. Although the mixed approach led to a more detailed (and complex) picture of gangs, it suggests that using only a structural or behavioural typology may lead to an oversimplification or misdirected interventions and policy development.

3.3.2. *Gang organizational characteristics as an empirical measure*

Another approach to examining the impact of gang structure on the level and nature of offending is the use of organizational characteristics as an empirical measure. As discussed in the introduction of the dissertation, most studies that have investigated gangs' impact were uniquely oriented toward the level and nature of individual offending, using strictly individual measurements before, during, and after gang membership. The absence of an integration of the group processes that govern the membership effect on delinquency constitutes the principal limitation of these studies. Moreover, almost all mentioned that normative and group processes should be looked at in order to understand fully the effect of gang membership on criminal outcome (see Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Decker, 1996; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Decker et al., 2008; Klein & Maxson, 2006; Matsuda et al., 2013; Vigil, 1988). Yet, only two studies have introduced and tested one component of the group processes (e.g., the gang level of organization).

Using a sample of 523 self-reported juvenile offenders from a high school survey in Québec, Bouchard and Spindler (2010) found that, at an individual level, gang organization level⁵ (a 9-item index that includes group name, leader, hierarchy, meetings, rules, symbols, initiation, specific territory, defense of honor/reputation) is an important predictor of individual involvement in general delinquency, violence, and drug supply offences. The authors reported that the effect of the gang *organization*

⁵ Research examining gang characteristics has identified nine main organizational features: (1) group name, (2) presence of leadership roles, (3) regular meetings, (4) specific rules, (5) enforcement of rules, (6) hierarchy, (7) gang initiation, (8) adoption of symbols or colors, and (9) specific territory (Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Decker, 2001; Decker & Van Winkle, 1995; Decker et al., 2008; Fagan, 1989; Peterson, Miller, & Esbensen, 2001; Spindler & Bouchard, 2011). Note that no studies used all these dimensions to measure the concept.

significantly reduced the effect of the *membership* when treated as an attribute. In other words, the increase in delinquency was small in disorganized gangs, compared to organized ones. Interestingly, they suggested that other group processes could be at play and that future research should look into other mechanisms that could affect criminal outcomes (for example, exposure to violence, cohesion, and influence of continual exposure to delinquent peers). Similar to other research cited, their study is limited to testing the effect at the individual level. Little is known about the effect of group processes on gang criminal activities (at the collective level).

In fact, Decker, Katz, and Webb (2008) conducted the only study that examines the influence of gang organization on individuals (e.g., victimization and number of arrests) and *gang behaviours* (e.g., number of involvements in violent crimes and drug sales). They used interview data, collected between 1999 and 2003, from juvenile detention facilities in three Arizona sites. The sample included a total of 156 current gang members and 85 former gang members. They created a 7-item index of gang structure including leaders, rules, punishments for violating rules, meetings, symbols of membership, responsibility, and giving money to the gang. Their findings revealed a significant positive relationship between the level of gang organization and the involvement of the gang in violence and drug sales. Note that even a low level of organization had a similar influence. The latter finding constitutes an important lesson that is taken into account in the design of the current study.

Everything considered, more studies need to be conducted to document the effect of membership processes (e.g., age of onset, motivation, and initiation events) compared to the sole effect of being a member. In the current study, it is hypothesized that the way prospective members are introduced to gangs (e.g., initiation process) should reflect, to some extent, gang composition, organization, and activities. The effect of the membership process should also be extended to a collective outcome, not only an individual outcome. The group process and social capital perspectives, from the desire to join to actual life in a gang, seem to be a promising approach to investigating other factors that could mediate the effect.

3.4. Disengagement from gangs

At the end of the sequential process of the gang trajectory, there is the ultimate turning point, the disengagement from gangs. Many studies conclude by recommending that future research should focus on the process of disengagement, but the fact is very few, up to now, have followed this recommendation. As stressed by Pyrooz and Decker (2011), the literature on gang desistance is limited to ethnographic observations, reviews of broader desistance literature, or the examination of the effect of the continuity or discontinuity of the membership on delinquency.

Recent studies first recognized that disengagement from gangs is a *process* and not an *event*. These studies then examined what happens and what changes once members leave gangs (see Decker & Lauritsen, 2002; Pyrooz & Decker, 2011; Pyrooz, Decker, & Webb, 2010; Sweeten, Pyrooz, & Piquero, 2013). Gang desistance has been shown to occur in two different ways: leaving abruptly or leaving gradually (Decker & Lauritsen, 2002; Pyrooz, Decker, & Webb, 2010). Most gang members reported having left their gangs without incident (Decker & Lauritsen, 2002; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996); however, a few former gang members reported a more structured and violent process of leaving. Pyrooz and Decker (2011) proposed a unique study that examined the internal (e.g., tired of the lifestyle, avoid violence) and external (e.g., girlfriend, job, children) individual motives and the modes of departure (hostile vs. non-hostile) among a sample of 84 desisted juvenile gang members. According to the authors, a hostile departure involved events or ceremonies such as being beaten-out or having to commit one last crime. A non-hostile departure simply referred to being able to walk away from the gang without any incident. A hostile mode of departure was found for 1 out of every 5 former gang members, and non-hostile methods were the modal response to leaving the gang. Their results showed that the method was conditional on the motive for departure; all the individuals who reported external reasons (such as family and employment) did not experience a hostile departure. This latter finding suggested that examining the motivation is crucial to understanding the desistance process.

One objective of the current study is to identify the factors that are associated with the disengagement process and what could influence in such process.

3.4.1. *Incentives to desist from gangs*

Gang members, more than any other young offenders, are actively engaged in violent conflicts, whether the issue is considered from an offending (Decker, 1996; Thornberry et al., 1993) or a victimization perspective (Melde, Taylor, & Esbensen, 2009; Miller & Decker, 2001; Peterson, Taylor, & Esbensen, 2004; Rosenfeld, Bray, & Egley, 1999). When the attraction to violence turns into an over-exposure to violent victimization, some members will prefer to leave a gang. Decker and Lauritsen (2002) examined the process of desistance by using data from a field study of 24 ex-gang members in St. Louis. The main reason for quitting the gang was associated directly with the level of violence (e.g., witnessing or personally experiencing violence). Some either had been threatened or feared being violently victimized, others had experienced serious violence (resulting in hospitalization), and some had family members who were victimized or threatened to be. In other words, when the lifestyle significantly impacted their own or family members' security, gang members reconsidered their membership.

The general desistance literature would also suggest that life turning points have the potential to create changes in the criminal pathway. Hughes (1998) identified the formation of social bonds/social capital, the age, employment, respect and concerns for children, fear of physical harm, incarceration, contemplation time and support/modelling as important factors that could have a positive influence on the desistance process (see also Pyrooz & Decker, 2011). Also, the role of interventions (programs and/or court sanction) is considered to have a positive effect on reaching the stability and support required in the process of desisting (Hasting, Dunbar, & Bania, 2011). Desistance scholars emphasize the importance of the interplay between the desister's thoughts, actions, and an environment that can be affected by some intervention (Farrall, 2002, 2004; Giordano et al., 2002; Hughes, 1998; Rex, 1999).

Knowing that most gang members have been confronted with many of these factors during their time in gangs and that many still do not leave, it is reasonable to also examine the factors that may keep members from desisting.

3.4.2. Factors affecting the desire to desist (*disincentives*)

The process of making a decision to quit is not an easy one. First, the major concern about leaving the gang can be associated with the gang culture itself; many gangs require permanent and lifetime memberships (Decker & Lauritsen, 2002). Wanting to join a gang also means wanting to die for it. The sense of belonging coveted at first complicates the process of withdrawal. It can be hypothesized that the more cohesive the group, the harder it is to quit. Violence has been used to keep order within a gang, strengthen cohesion, and punish violators (Decker, Bynum, & Weisel, 1998; Decker, Katz, & Webb, 2008; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Jeopardizing group cohesion and social capital is considered a punishable act (Fleisher & Decker, 2001). Both violence and fear of violence play a role in the desistance process (Decker, 1996). Klein (1971) identified the “mythic violence” that gang members could only leave gangs through violence (by being beaten out, fear of violence, suffering serious injury, or death) (see also Decker, 1996). Although this is relatively infrequent, some researchers have confirmed this myth. Vigil (1988) reported that getting out of a gang can be as violent as joining it. This process has also been recognized in a more recent study on desistance (Pyrooz & Decker, 2011), where 1 out of every 5 former gang members ($n = 84$) reported having undergone a violent method of departure, that is, being beaten out. Walker (2010) added that the beating is often more severe and more injurious to the member than the beating an individual may have endured at initiation (para.10). More extremely, for prison gangs, the penalty for quitting the gang is death. The process is called “blood out” (Fleisher & Decker, 2001). Though the threat of violence associated with leaving the gang is present, it does not always materialize (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Its purpose appears to be deterrence (from quitting) and enhancing collective solidarity. More empirical studies need to focus on that aspect in order to learn more about gang desistance processes.

Second, as argued by Decker and Lauritsen (2002), “the gang provides a source of support and friendship members do not leave until a suitable substitute has been found” (p. 61). For example, members who have re-established some ties with social institutions and/or have faced important life changes are likely to drift into desistance more easily. Note that sometimes the substitute still implies a certain level of involvement in the gang environment (e.g., living in the same neighbourhood, going to the same school, keeping ties with family members in gangs). These persistent gang

ties have also been described as a challenge in more recent studies (Pyrooz & Decker, 2011; Pyrooz, Decker, & Webb, 2010). Pyrooz, Decker, and Webb (2010) shed light on the desistance process by examining the social and emotional ties that 120 former gang members in Phoenix maintained from their previous network. Their results showed that desistance does not seem to eradicate totally the risk of victimization as long as the ties to the gangs are not sufficiently weakened. Knowing that gangs are often constituted of familial connections, when can it be assumed that the gang ties are completely attenuated? Decker and Lauritsen (2002) identified “the gray zone” as the gradual process of desisting from gangs where ties with the gangs are still present even though the desistance decision has occurred. The authors gave the example of youths hanging out, drinking, playing sports, and watching television with a cousin (who is a gang member), eating lunch in the high school cafeteria, etc. In Pyrooz and Decker’s (2011) study, former gang members reported at least two social and/or emotional attachments to the gang despite the fact they had quit their gang nearly 2 years earlier. More importantly, the authors mentioned that many former gang members in their sample stated that they would respond or retaliate if their gang was disrespected or if a member was attacked. This result illustrated how strong gang ties could remain even after desistance. These enduring ties complicate the process and should not be minimized.

4. Aim of the Dissertation

This dissertation examines the sequential processes of gang membership, from gang entry to gang disengagement, by analyzing the pre-gang context, gang experience, and group processes of gangs. The dissertation includes four main results chapters (see Chapter 6, 7, 8 and 9). The specific aim and working hypotheses of each of these chapters are presented below.

The first results chapter (Chapter 6), "*The drive to get in: Gang entry opportunity*", looks at the gang entry process with the objective of adding to the knowledge about this period in the overall gang experience. Past research has mainly focused on the pre-existing risk factors and on their relationship to the likelihood of individuals joining gangs. However, little is known about the actual process of gang entry opportunity. The pre-membership social environment has never been considered in the investigation of gang entry opportunity. This chapter proposes to fill this research gap by examining pre-membership factors (especially the pre-membership social environment) to understand the variations in (a) the timing of opportunities for gang membership (e.g., early age of gang entry) and (b) the nature of the gang entry process (e.g., being initiated or not). The theoretical objective of the first chapter is to explore whether an individual's pre-membership social environment is an important factor in the individual's seeking to join a gang or in the gang's recruiting an individual process. The focus of this first analytic chapter is essentially oriented toward individuals during their pre-membership period.

The second results chapter (Chapter 7), "*The right to belong: Youth gang initiations*" examines the occurrence of a gang initiation when prospective members first join their gangs. Canadian research acknowledges that such rituals occur (see, for example, Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Chettleburgh, 2007; Goodwill, 2009, Gordon, 2000), but no empirical studies have specifically examined this topic. This exploratory chapter aims to illustrate the gang initiation process based on information drawn from the narratives of the 54 participants who underwent initiation. This chapter proposes to

introduce concepts to better identify the main types of gang initiations. Second, it examines which pre-membership motivations and social environments may differentiate types of initiation. The hypothesis suggests that variations in the nature of gang initiations may be influenced by pre-membership factors (e.g., how criminally experienced prospective members are or how they were introduced to gangs could be two factors influencing the nature of the entry). The theoretical objective of the chapter is to explore how the initiation event is at the beginning of the group process, by bringing the concept of group symbols, conformity and norms in the first gang experience of the newcomers. The focus of this chapter is on the individuals and their first group experiences as gang members.

The third results chapter (Chapter 8), "*The art of hustling: The importance of group processes*", proposes a classification of gang types found in the sample by grouping participants on various dimensions of their gangs' organization and composition. The typology becomes an initial conceptual basis from which to explore variations in gang behavioural outcomes (e.g., gang initiation, gang criminal activities, and gang criminal social capital). The working hypothesis stipulates that gangs' organizational structures and their group processes may be associated with the nature of their criminal opportunities. The more developed a gang's organizational structure, the more criminally active and versatile (in range of activities) the gang should be. The focus of the third chapter shifts from individuals to the nature of the group in which individual gang members are embedded during their gang involvement.

The fourth results chapter (Chapter 9), "*Can't leave the game alone: The gang disengagement process*", examines the process of disengaging from gangs. Gang researchers acknowledge the lack of research on this topic in both the American and Canadian literature. First, this chapter examines whether termination of membership is associated with characteristics of the individuals or if group characteristics and processes are more influential in the desisting process. The working hypothesis suggests that desistance may result from a combination of both sources of factors. A second objective of this chapter is to provide context to the desistance process by examining triggering events that may have occurred in participants' trajectories and that should be considered in explanations of the desisting process. Conceptually, this chapter aims to identify the primary incentives that participants described in their

narratives as the reasons for their leaving their gangs. A policy implication of the chapter is to determine whether pre-membership factors and gang characteristics and group processes should be taken into account when designing intervention programs.

In sum, these four analytic chapters are designed to provide a basis for increasing Canadian knowledge about the sequential gang membership process by (a) examining the gang entry process, (b) exploring gang initiation events, (c) classifying gang members into gang structural types and examining their behavioural outcomes, and (d) investigating the disengagement process.

5. Data and Methodology

5.1. Participants and procedures

The current study is drawn from the ongoing study on Incarcerated Serious and Violent Young Offenders (ISVYO) conducted in Victoria and Burnaby, British Columbia, and directed by Dr. Raymond Corrado. The ISVYO project was initiated in 1998, and since was awarded by four consecutive Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded grants. The main purpose of the ISVYO study is to identify the different risk factor profiles, or offending pathways, associated with serious and violent offending. For this dissertation, a sub-study on gang members exclusively was initiated in 2009. The Youth Group Activities questionnaire was developed by the author, and was then implemented in November 2009, in the Burnaby facility only, during the fourth wave of data collection of the ongoing ISVYO study (see Appendix). All offenders serving a custody disposition at three open and six secure custody units were approached to participate in the ISVYO. Participation was voluntary and participants were required to sign a Simon Fraser University Research Ethics approved informed consent prior to participating in the study. The confidentiality was guaranteed with the exception that all disclosures of child abuse, intent to engage in self-harm, or threats against others would be reported to the case management staff at the respective custody centre or the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD).

The data collection first included coding the key offences and other variables from official data in the custody centre files and the British Columbia provincial CORNET records. Second, self-reported data were collected during one-on-one interviews conducted by a trained graduate or undergraduate student. These first interviews took approximately 90 min to complete (sometimes involved more than one session). The interviewer was instructed to read aloud the questions, and the participants were required to verbally provide their responses. This procedure allowed the interviewer to assess whether or not the participants correctly understand the questions, and it was

then possible to provide additional clarification. It was also possible for the interviewers to identify and address any inconsistencies among participants' responses. As an incentive, participants were given one snack item and beverage at the start of the interview. The information collected included demographic factors; educational history; family history of antisocial behaviours, academic achievement, substance use and dependence; mental health issues; the expression of delinquency at home, school, and in the community; and interviewees' own perceptions of the factors leading to their criminal justice involvement and their experiences in custody.

Once the first interview was completed, all participants of the ISVYO study were then asked to complete the Youth Group Activities questionnaire. The gang sample data were collected from November 2009 to December 2011. Of the 161 gang screening interviews conducted, 80 participants reported recent or current gang involvement, and 73 of these participants completed the entire Youth Group Activities questionnaire⁶. Each gang interview took approximately 45 to 60 min. The self-report method has been validated in previous studies involving gang members (Bjerregaard, 2002; Curry, 2000; Curry & Decker, 1998; Esbensen et al., 2009; Esbensen, Winfree, He, & Taylor, 2001). In addition, official youth criminal justice files were used to triangulate the gang membership information whenever possible. The information collected with the Youth Group Activities questionnaire included age of onset of membership, motivations for joining a gang, by whom they were introduced, description of gang initiation, gang composition, level of gang organization (gang criminal activities and criminal connexions, e.g., with other gangs, bikers, or other organized groups); and gangs' conflicts. Only the demographics, individual delinquency involvement, and official criminal history were pulled from the first interview in the ISVYO study.

⁶ Some participants were reluctant to divulge sensitive information; in such cases, they were asked to answer only the questions with which they felt the most comfortable ($n = 4$). In addition, three cases were removed; they had confirmed their gang membership but did not want to discuss their involvement in detail.

5.2. Measures

5.2.1. *Dependent variables*⁷

Age of first gang involvement

The first dependent variable explores at how early an age a prospective gang member was exposed to an opportunity to join a gang. Participants were asked to specify how old they were when they first joined a gang. On average, the sample participants ($N = 73$) were 13.3 years old when they first joined a gang ($SD = 1.9$). This is consistent with prior U.S. gang studies (Craig et al., 2002; Hill et al., 1999; Thornberry et al., 2003) The distribution of the age of first gang involvement was clearly divided; (53.4% first joined before 14 years old and 46.6% first joined after 14 years old), the first gang involvement variable was coded dichotomously (0 = ≤ 13 years old; 1 = ≥ 14 years old),⁸ This allowed for this study's measure of an early versus later late entry into gang involvement.

Gang initiation rites

Two questions of the Youth Group Activities questionnaire explored the initiation rites concept so central to gang recruitment. First, participants were asked if their gang initiated them before becoming a member (*yes* or *no*). For those who answered positively (54 participants; 74%), the second, open-ended question was *how were you initiated?* This allowed participants to express themselves in their own words. However, if a participant was uncomfortable or struggled to answer, prompts from the literature on gangs were provided concerning general types of initiation practices such as committing a crime and taking a beating (Chettleburgh, 2007; Decker, 1996; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Jankowski, 1991; Vigil, 1996; Walker, 2010). Based on an analysis on the content of participants' responses, four main groups were identified: (1) crime commission (for example, some had to complete a drug deal; steal something specific; bring back in one

⁷ Note that some of the dependent variables are also used as independent variables in subsequent models.

⁸ The author also ran the analysis on the continuous variable form, by using an OLS regression to compare the solution revealed with the dichotomous variable and the logistic regression. The logistic regression models provide more information on the factors that affect the age of first gang involvement among the gang members.

week \$5000 obtained from criminal activity); (2) ego violence initiation (e.g., the prospective member was beaten by other members); (3) commit violence against others (e.g., the prospective member had to either shoot/stab someone randomly selected such as a drug user in debt or rival gang member); and (4) other (e.g., statement that participant had been “blessed-in”).

Gang criminal activities

In the current study, all respondents were asked to identify whether their gang was involved in one or more of the following criminal activities: (1) drug selling; (2) marijuana growing; (3) robbery; (4) assault; (5) other violence (e.g., drive-by shooting); (6) break-and-enter for drugs; (7) break-and-enter for other reasons; (8) fraud; (9) pimping; (10) motor vehicle theft; (11) graffiti; (12) vandalism (other than graffiti); (13) kidnapping; and (14) extortion. A gang criminal diversity index was then created based on numbers of different gang criminal activities (range 1 to 14) that a participant mentioned. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale ($\alpha = 0.78$) indicated a good reliability level. Second, the gang criminal activities were also grouped according to specific types of crime according to the following respective indices. The drug crimes index ($\alpha = 0.42$), which included drug selling, marijuana growing, and break-and-enter for drugs (0 to 3.) The violent crimes index ($\alpha = 0.67$) is a count of the number of violent offences that the gang committed including robbery, assaults, other violence, and kidnapping (0 to 4). The third category regroups monetary-generating crimes ($\alpha = 0.45$) including break-and-enter, fraud, pimping, motor vehicle theft, and extortion (0 to 5). The last category included the two other property crimes ($\alpha = 0.72$), graffiti and vandalism (0 to 2).⁹

Gang criminal social capital

Based on the long-standing social capital literature, two indices of gang criminal social capital (GCSC) created in this study are (1) the positive GCSC and (2) the negative GCSC. Positive GCSC includes the number of instrumental (e.g., business and friendship) contacts that the gang have with biker gangs and other organized crime

⁹ The Cronbach’s alpha for the drug crimes index and the money-generating crimes indicate a poor fit (respectively, $\alpha = 0.42$, and 0.45). However, based on the parsimony principle (i.e., when large indicator data sets are involved in a study, it is important to reduce the number of common variables to enhance conceptual focus, statistical power, and theoretical understanding), these indices are retained for this study’s analyses.

groups (e.g., Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, Eastern European, Italian, Hispanic, Aboriginal, Indo-Canadian, Japanese, other) (0 to 11) ($\alpha = 0.77$). This index provides a broader measure of the pool of potential associates regarding crime opportunities, and, therefore, a source of positive GCSC, which has been identified as a robust predictor of an active and successful criminal career (Bouchard & Nguyen, 2010; Descormiers et al., 2011; Morselli & Tremblay, 2004; Tremblay, 1993). In contrast, the negative GCSC includes the number of negative contacts (i.e., adversarial) that the gang has with biker gangs and 10 identified organized crime groups (0 to 11) ($\alpha = 0.77$).

Gang disengagement

All the participants were asked if they had left their gang. Those who answered positively (22 participants; 30.14%) were then asked why they left their gangs. This open-ended question, again, allowed participants to express their reasons without being restricted to predetermined or superimposed terminology and concepts. In addition, they were asked to specify if they had to undergo any exit ritual such as the commonly held assertion that gang members have to “get jump out” to desist from their gangs (Decker & Lauritsen, 2002; Pyrooz & Decker, 2011). In the U.S. gang literature, it has been hypothesized that those who had undergone a gang initiation were the most likely to experience a similar ritual on their exit.

5.2.2. Independent variables

Control variables

The three demographic variables examined in the current study include age (in years), gender (0 = *male*, 1 = *female*), and ethnicity (1 = *Aboriginal*; 0 = *others*).¹⁰ Given that several U.S. studies found that youths who were already involved in deviant behaviour (e.g., alcohol and drug use) (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Thornberry et al., 1993) and general delinquency (Curry & Spergel, 1992; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993;

¹⁰ In British Columbia both government and Aboriginal political policy have increasingly reflected concerns over the dramatic increase in the number Aboriginal gangs and numbers of their members, especially adolescents. In addition, it has been asserted that these gangs represent a distinctive historical phenomenon that requires a unique gang theoretical perspective (see Grekul & Laboucane-Benson, 2008; Totten, 2009). In this study, therefore, Aboriginal identity is an important control variable in the analyses.

Thornberry et al., 2004) were more likely to join a gang, a drug-use exposure index prior to gang involvement was created. This index is based on the self-report of the total number of different drugs participants were exposed to before their gang involvement (e.g., alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, crack, heroin, and ecstasy) (0 to 6) ($\alpha = 0.63$). A general delinquency index (0 to 9) ($\alpha = 0.81$) also is a control variable. All respondents were asked to identify whether they were involved (as individuals) in one or more of the following nine delinquent activities prior to their gang involvement: (1) drug possession or trafficking; (2) theft, (3) break-and-enter; (4) motor vehicle theft; (5) threats or intimidation; (6) assault; (7) assault with a weapon; (8) robbery; and (9) manslaughter. In addition, a variable was created to control for the total time spent in custody during their membership period.

Motivations for membership and motivation index

The respondents were asked to specify why they decided to join a gang. Based on the extensive gang literature, 6 options were provided: (1) for money, (2) for respect, (3) for protection, (4) to make friends, (5) to deal drugs, and (6) was forced to join by others. Multiple motives were allowed and recorded because a key gang hypothesis is that there is likely an association between the motivational factors in joining gangs and the type of initiation experienced. In other words, the pattern of motivational factors is important in understanding the relevance of the type of initiating that occurs (see Decker & Curry, 2000; Jankowski, 1991; Thornberry et al., 2003, Thrasher, 1927; Vigil, 1988). For this reason, a summary index was calculated to profile the number of different motivations reported by the participants (0 to 6).

Criminal social capital

Participants were asked to identify specific factors related to how they were introduced to gangs. These factors included (1) friends, (2) siblings, (3) parents, (4) cousins, (5) neighbourhood, (6) school, (7) jail, and (8) other. Also a summary index was calculated to profile the number of different sources that facilitated gang affiliation (0 to 8). As well, given the emphasis in the gang literature on family and friends as key recruitment factors, an additional variable was created: (1) by friends and (2) by family. This involved regrouping the siblings and parents variables into one variable titled "introduced by immediate family". It should not be assumed, however, that where this factor obtains that either the friends or the family were themselves gang involved. There

is another question that explored whether any family members were also involved in gangs (0 = *no*; 1 = *yes*). Approximately two thirds (68.5%) or 50 participants answered positively.

This familial pattern has been central to theories of gang recruitment in part because from the theoretical perspective, it is the families that are the key social capital component for most youth when they make many life choices, whether antisocial or conventional. Still there is limited research concerning the criminal structure of this form of social capital. Among the most important studies, Decker and Curry (2000) and Miller (2001) found a strong intra-family pattern of gang membership among the family members of their respondents in the United States. It is necessary to explore further the relationship of different forms of social capital and decisions to enter a gang in the Canadian context, particularly regarding Aboriginal youth, because it has been argued that gang recruitment for them is based on a particular form of social capital – that is, joining a gang provides a sense of belonging to a family, status, and employment (Spergel, 1992; Totten, 2008).

Participants were also asked to identify in the past 12 months how often did they commit crimes with people who are not members of their gang: never, once or twice, several times, or often. This variable was recoded into frequent co-offending (= 1) with non-gang members by merging the several times or often responses, and infrequent co-offending (= 0) by merging never and once or twice responses. Although Hagedorn (1998) argued that over time the gang social structure tends to be exclusively composed by gang members, Decker and Curry (2000) found that gangs of their sample did not exclude their members from maintaining relationships with non-gang friends. It is important to verify whether or not the structure of the gang to which belong the participants of the study allows such relationships, it can have an important influence in the disengagement process.

Gang composition items

Klein (1971) asserted early that gangs vary along several compositional, geographic, and activity dimensions including size, age range, duration, territoriality, and versatility. In this study, gang composition is assessed through four self-report variables. First, gang size was based on answers provided by simply asking participants

“Approximately how many members belong to your gang?” The distribution of this variable is enormously skewed. The minimum value was 5 and the maximum was 5000; for example, at least 5 individuals reported being in a gang larger than 1,000. Because this variable is log normally distributed, a natural log transformation was applied. Second, gang duration was determined through the answer to the question *“How long has your gang been active (in months)?”*. Third, the average age of gang members was determined by asking participants *“What is the average age of the members in your gang?”* Fourth, gang ethnicity involved the question *“What is the major ethnic background of your gang?”* In the Canadian context of this study, there are seven main categories: Caucasian, Aboriginal, African-Canadian, Asian, South Asian/East Indian, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern. However, even though the questions prompted them to identify a primary ethnic group belonging to their gangs, most participants identified more than one ethnicity to describe their gangs. Accordingly, the four subsequent gang membership categories created were (1) exclusively composed of Caucasian gang members, (2) exclusively composed of aboriginal gang members, (3) exclusively composed of one ethnicity other than Caucasian and Aboriginal, and (4) mixed ethnicities. The latter categories are particularly important in British Columbia because adult criminal gangs in this province are typically composed of mixed ethnicities and also recruit adolescent members. As well, Aboriginal adult gangs particularly include adolescents and are also more ethnically homogeneous than non-Aboriginal-dominated gangs (Cohen & Corrado, 2011; Totten, 2009).

Gang organization items

Based on previous research on gang organization (Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Decker, 2001; Decker, Bynum & Weisel, 1998; Decker & Curry, 2000; Decker et al., 2008; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Peterson et al., 2001; Vigil, 1988), eight gang organization characteristics are utilized in the current study. Respondents were, therefore, asked whether their gang had any or all of these characteristics: (1) gang name; (2) established leaders; (3) adopted specific gang symbols; (4) regular meetings; (5) specific territory; (6) hierarchy (e.g., positions/status within the organization); (7) rules of conduct (e.g., no drug use, no snitching); and (8) hierarchy (e.g., positions/status within the organization). An additional characteristic assessed is whether a gang uses violence to enforce its rules and maintain order. This characteristic has been identified

as central to establishing a more organized gang (Decker et al., 1998; Decker et al., 2008; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996).

5.3. Data screening

A missing value analysis was run to determine the patterns of missing values. Little's MCAR test reveals that the missing data is completely random ($p > .05$). The modal response (for dichotomous variables) is used to impute the missing value, and the expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm is used to impute the only variable that has more than 8% missing values (e.g., the gang duration). For the EM imputation, two variables are used: the gang size and the territory scale (i.e., the number of geographic areas where their gang activities occurred, 0 to 7). These two variables do not have missing values. However, the territory scale variable is not used in any of the analyses in this study. The method of imputation for each of the variables that contained missing values is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Original data screening and modal imputations of the missing values

	n	%	Mode		n	%	Mode
Age of gang involvement	73	-	-	Manslaughter	71	2.7	0
Initiation	73	-	-	Motivations to join gangs	73	-	-
Types of initiation	73	-	-	Introduced by friends	73	-	-
Drug crimes				Introduced by family	73	-	-
Drug selling	70	4.1	1	Introduced by multiple sources	73	-	-
Marijuana growing	69	5.5	1	Family members in gangs	71	2.7	1
Break & enters for drugs	68	6.8	1	Gang name	73	-	-
Violent crimes	69	5.5	3	Gang leaders	73	-	-
Assault	68	6.8	1	Gang symbols	73	-	-
Robbery	69	5.5	1	Gang regular meetings	72	1.4	1
Kidnapping	68	6.8	0	Specific territory	72	1.4	1
Other violence	68	6.8	1	Hierarchy	72	1.4	1
Money generating crimes	69	5.5	2	Rules of conduct	72	1.4	1
Pimping	68	6.8	0	Violent rules enforcement	72	1.4	1
Fraud	68	6.8	0	Gang size	73	-	-
Motor vehicle theft	68	6.8	1	Members average age	73	-	-
Break and enters	69	5.5	1	Duration in months	62	15	
Extortion	68	6.8	0	Gang ethnicity	72	1.4	Caucasian
Other crimes				Positive criminal social capital			
Graffiti	68	6.8	1	Chinese	73	-	-
Vandalism	68	6.8	0	Vietnamese	73	-	-
Gang disengagement	73	-	-	Russian	72	1.4	0
Total incarceration time	73	-	-	Eastern European	71	2.7	0
Co-offending (non-gang)	73	-	-	Italian	73	-	-
Female	73	-	-	Aboriginal	73	-	-
Aboriginal	73	-	-	Indo Canadian	73	-	-
Drug use exposure				Japanese	73	-	-
Alcohol	71	2.7	1	Hispanic	73	-	-
Cannabis	71	2.7	1	Other organized group	73	-	-
Heroin	71	2.7	0	Bikers	73	-	-
Cocaine	71	2.7	1	Negative criminal social capital			
Crack	71	2.7	0	Chinese	70	4.1	0
Ecstasy	71	2.7	1	Vietnamese	70	4.1	0
General delinquency				Russian	67	8.2	0
Drug offence	71	2.7	1	Eastern European	70	4.1	0
Motor vehicle theft	71	2.7	1	Italian	71	2.7	0
Threats	71	2.7	1	Aboriginal	70	4.1	0
Theft	71	2.7	1	Indo Canadian	70	4.1	0
Break and enter	71	2.7	1	Japanese	70	4.1	0
Robbery	71	2.7	1	Hispanic	71	2.7	0
Assault	71	2.7	1	Other organized group	70	4.1	0
Assault with a weapon	71	2.7	1	Bikers	71	2.7	0

5.4. Analytic strategy

The following section describes the four results chapters that are the core of the dissertation. Each chapter examines two specific research questions raised in the literature review chapter. Different methods are used to address these research questions.

5.4.1. Chapter 6: *The drive to get in: Gang entry opportunity*

This chapter proposes to examine whether variations in opportunities for membership (e.g., early vs. late onset) and the nature of the gang entry (e.g., being initiated or not) are associated with pre-membership factors.

(a) What pre-membership factors help distinguish early from late onset of gang membership? One hypothesis related to the above question is that individual gang members primarily decide their own entry patterns in gangs. Related hypotheses involve concepts such as selection or facilitation models as discussed above. More generally, youth must have a certain number of individual assets in order, first, to seek membership and, second, to be considered a suitable candidate. It has been hypothesized that certain combinations of pre-membership factors are predictive of the age of first gang involvement.

Three main sets of factors are considered in this study: one, individual motivations, (e.g., money, respect, protection, making friends, dealing drugs, and being forced to join); two, individual prior delinquency (i.e., drug use exposure, and general delinquency index prior to gang involvement), third, the individual's criminal social capital prior to gang involvement (e.g., introduced by friend, family, and having family members in gangs). Most of the U.S. gang literature focuses on the pre-teen period (prior to age 13) versus the teenage period. The general debate centers on whether gang members already had criminal life styles before joining gangs or engaged in this lifestyle after joining them, that is, simply drifted into gang criminality. In this study, the dependent variable, age of first gang involvement, is dichotomized using a 14-year-old cutting point.

Methods: First, bivariate analyses are utilized to examine the relationship between each set of independent and the dependent variable. The particular bivariate statistic employed varies according to the structure of the assessed variables (i.e., chi-square test for dichotomous variables, *t* tests between continuous and nominal variables, Pearson correlations between continuous variables, etc.). There are no multicollinearity issues between the sets of variables.

Second, logistic regression is utilized for relationships involving the dichotomous age of first gang involvement variable. Very importantly, logistic regression does not require normality distributed independent variables; does not assume the linearity of the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables; and does not assume homoscedasticity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The first model is the baseline model including only the control variables (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, drug use index, and delinquency index). The second model adds the motivation factors, and the third model includes the control variables and the two sources of pre-membership criminal social capital.

Third, a chi-square automatic interaction detector (CHAID), specifically the exhaustive CHAID growing method, is also used to develop classification tree models with the CHAID SPSS statistical package. This method reveals complex interaction patterns between predictors not easily uncovered using traditional multivariate techniques (Lewis, 2000). Initially, the CHAID algorithm splits the sample into groups by first selecting the predictor that has the strongest interaction with the dependent variable. This step is applied iteratively until the most significant predictor is found for each partition to construct the classification tree. The non-parametric CHAID method, therefore, does not require a particular distribution of values of the predictor variables and examines multiple variables, numerical and skewed data, or multi-modal, as well as categorical predictors (ordinal or non-ordinal). In this study, the CHAID analysis utilizes the automatic detection of maximum tree depth, and, given the small study sample size, the minimum number of cases was fixed at 15 for parent nodes and 5 for child nodes. The statistical significance for CHAID analyses is the 0.10 level. These parameters allow the creation of a more complex tree and maximize the effect of each independent variable on dependent variable (Lewis, 2000).

b) *What pre-membership factors predict whether a member has been initiated or not?* At the individual level, it is important to understand which pre-membership factors influenced whether the respondents had been initiated or not. Criminal social capital may, again, be an important predictor. Walker (2010), for example, described the “blessing-in” process as the mechanism by which an individual does not get initiated because of his connection in the gang (for example, having a sibling already involved in the gang). The multiple criminal social capital measures allow for a more theoretical complex assessment of their importance in understanding the gang entry process.

Methods: Given the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable (i.e., being initiated or not), logistic regression is used. Logistic regression assesses the relationship between the pre-membership factors and whether or not an individual had to undergo an initiation when entering a gang, while controlling for other possible effects. The first model is the baseline model including only the control variables (i.e., age, gender, drug use index, and delinquency index). The second model adds the motivation factors. The third model includes the control variables and the two sources of pre-membership criminal social capital to examine if they are related to being initiated. An exhaustive CHAID analysis was also performed for the occurrence of the initiation, with the automatic detection of maximum tree depth. Again, the minimum number of cases was fixed at 15 for parent nodes and 5 for child nodes as determined at the statistical significance 0.10 level.

5.4.2. Chapter 7: The right to belong: Youth gang initiations

The analysis in chapter 7 had two primary objectives: (1) to understand, within a Canadian context, the mechanisms that formalize entry into membership (as perceived by gang members) and (2) the relationship between varying initiation practices and individuals’ pre-membership motivations and social environments.

a) *What are the different types of initiations that occur in gangs in British Columbia?* No prior studies have extensively attended to the gang initiation process, especially in Canada. Although several studies mentioned the initiation phenomenon (see, e.g., Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Chettleburgh, 2007; Goodwill, 2009; Gordon, 2000), detailed descriptive types have not been presented.

Methods: The gang initiation process among the sample of incarcerated juvenile gang members is qualitatively described. The content of the 54 narratives of initiated participants is analyzed in order to summarize and describe the gang initiation event. This both allows respondents to express their own experienced-based concepts and facilitates identifying a gang initiation typology, since no prior Canadian studies have examined the nature of gang initiations. As mentioned by Hughes (2005), qualitative data are sometimes necessary “to enhance our understanding of gangs in ways that are not otherwise possible” (p. 108).

b) What role do pre-membership motivations and social environment of prospective members play in variations of types of the gang initiation? There are no prior studies on this topic. The analysis is exploratory, and, therefore, a formal hypothesis will not be provided. The objective is to examine which of the pre-membership motivations and social contexts may help us differentiate between the types of initiation undertaken by prospective members. This chapter has direct implications for Canadian gang research by providing a much-needed contemporary description of the characteristics of gangs in British Columbia.

Methods: This second research question is addressed by comparing the different types of initiations (revealed by the content analysis conducted in the first section of the chapter) based on the pre-membership factors (e.g., demographics, prior delinquency, motivations to join gangs, and the criminal social capital). This descriptive analysis reveals which pre-membership factors influence the nature of the gang initiation. *T* tests and chi-square tests are performed on the different pre-membership factors to identify the factors that differentiate them.

5.4.3. Chapter 8: The art of hustling: The importance of group processes

First, this chapter proposes a classification of gang types found in the sample by grouping participants on various dimensions of their gangs’ organization and composition. Second, this chapter aims to examine whether these different types of gangs were found to be similarly active and embedded in a comparable behavioural structure (e.g., the group’s criminal activities).

a) *What are the types of gangs found in the sample, based on their composition and organizational structure?* The purpose is to develop a gang structure typology by grouping the 73 participants of the study along similar group dimensions.

Methods: A two-step cluster strategy was employed to cluster participants of the study into various gang-related dimensions: (1) the organizational dimensions (e.g., gang name, leaders, symbols, meetings, specific territory, hierarchy, rules of conduct, and violent rules enforcement) and (2) the gang composition dimensions (e.g., gang size, average age, duration, and gang ethnicity). The two-step clustering method is specifically designed to handle categorical and continuous variables (Chiu et al., 2001). It is also possible to select the number of desired clusters and allows analyzing large data files. This method is based on a two-step approach: (1) cases are assigned to preclusters and (2) the preclusters are clustered using the hierarchical clustering algorithm.

b) *Are the three types of gangs revealed similarly active and embedded in a comparable behavioural structure?* The typology helps to portray gangs that were represented in the sample and is a starting point to explore variations in their behavioural outcomes (e.g., gang initiation and gang criminal activities) and their gang criminal social capital. It can be hypothesized that a highly organized group would tend to be more criminally active (Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Decker, Katz, & Webb, 2008). However, no study has yet investigated whether a specific gang structure prioritizes a particular type of gang initiation. For example, are the more loosely organized gangs initiating their members? In addition, it is important to verify whether the more organized gangs also differ in their criminal social capital.

Methods: The three types of gangs found in the sample will be compared on their criminal outcomes (e.g., type of gang initiation, criminal diversity, and area of criminal activities), and criminal social capital. Results of *t* tests and chi-square tests, performed on the different measures of the gang activities and criminal social capital, identify which ones are found to significantly differentiate between the types of gang structure.

5.4.4. Chapter 9: Can't leave the game alone: The gang disengagement process

The last results chapter aims to provide knowledge on the gang disengagement process and the major challenges that members face when they consider leaving the gang. More specifically, it investigates whether the termination of membership is associated with characteristics of the individuals or if the group characteristics and processes are more important in the desistance process. In addition, the chapter seeks to investigate (a) the role of potential triggering events on the decision making related to the gang disengagement and (b) the role of violence in discouraging membership.

(a) *What are the factors associated with the disengagement process?* Having access to a small sub-sample of desisted gang members ($n = 22$) provided an opportunity to examine whether these individuals were statistically different from those who were still active in their gangs at the time of the interviews. The two sub-groups were first compared on individual characteristics that included demographics (e.g., age of membership onset, gender, ethnicity, and time spent in custody during their membership period), pre-membership variables (e.g., motivations to join, and pre-membership criminal social capital), and membership variables that reflected (1) their frequency of co-offending with non-gang members, (2) the occurrence of a gang initiation, and (3) having undergone a violent initiation. Second, the two sub-samples were compared on their gang characteristics, including (1) gang composition (e.g., gang size, average age, duration, gang ethnicity), (2) gang organization (e.g., gang name, leaders, symbols, meetings, specific territory, hierarchy, rules of conduct, and violent rules enforcement), (3) gang criminal activities and gang criminal social capital. Finally, a prediction model was developed to investigate what factors best predict desistance from gangs.

Methods: First, the differences between the active and desisted subsamples of members were statistically compared using t tests and chi-square tests. Second, given the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable (e.g., desisted or not from gangs), logistic regression was used. Logistic regression allows us to assess the relationship between the individual characteristics, the gang variables, and having left the gang, while controlling for other possible effects. The first model is the baseline model including only the control variables. The second model adds two variables related to the

gang entry period (e.g., introduction by multiple sources, and the occurrence of a violent initiation). The third model includes the control variables and two gang-related variables (e.g., the violent rules enforcement, and the drug crimes index). An exhaustive CHAID analysis was also performed with the automatic detection of maximum tree depth. Again, the minimum number of cases was fixed at 15 for parent nodes and 5 for child nodes as determined at the statistical significance 0.10 level.

b) What are the main reasons and challenges for desisting from gangs? The idea is to identify what the incentives and disincentives are that gang members face in the desistance process. The working hypothesis is that triggering events might have occurred and they might be keys in explaining the desisting process.

Methods: The analysis of the narratives of the 22 desisted participants is presented. Themes related to the incentives and disincentives to quit gangs are identified and illustrated. The goal is to complement and provide more contexts to the quantitative results that could not capture the whole spectrum of the decision-making process.

6. The Drive to Get in: Gang Entry Opportunity

“Criminal minds thirsty for recognition mission”

– *Shook Ones Part I*, Mobb Deep, (1994).

This first results chapter examines the pre-membership portrait of the prospective members and their social environment. It has been hypothesized that those factors could (1) influence the selection mechanism that first encourages recruitment in gangs and (2) also influences the nature of an individual’s first involvement in gang activities (i.e., the gang initiation). The first section of this chapter describes the demographic variables and characteristics of the sample. Particular attention is paid to the differences between male and female gang members, as well as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal gang members. The second section compares the characteristics of early- and late-onset gang members, their motivations to join, and the way they were introduced to gangs. The same section also presents the regression results and the CHAID analysis results for the timing of entry (early or late). The third section compares participants who were initiated when they first got into gangs from those who were not. The regression results and the CHAID analysis results for the presence of an initiation when joining are also presented.

6.1. Sample description

6.1.1. *Demographic variables*

Table 2 shows the prevalence rates of demographic variables in the sample of 73 gang members. Participants are, on average, 16.42 years old ($SD = 1.21$). Second, the sample is composed mainly of males (87.7%) and is racially diverse. The highest proportions of the overall sample are Caucasian (42.5%), followed by Aboriginal (24.7%), Indo-Canadian (12.3%), and other ethnicities (20.4%). There was no

significant difference for males and females in terms of ethnic composition. For the purpose of the study, we distinguished the Aboriginal participants (24.7%) from the rest of our sample (75.4%) to examine specifics of this subgroup (see Table 3).

Table 2. Characteristics of gang members (N = 73)

	% / Mean
Sex	
Female	12.3%
Male	87.7%
Mean age (SD)	16.42 (1.21)
Race/Ethnicity	
Caucasian	42.5 %
Aboriginal	24.7%
East-Indian	12.3%
Afro-Canadian	6.8%
Arabic	6.8%
Asian	4.1%
Hispanic	2.7%
Delinquency prior to membership	
Drug use exposure index (0 to 6) (SD)	2.60 (1.37)
General delinquency index (0 to 9) (SD)	4.29 (2.56)
Age of gang involvement (SD)	13.25 (1.94)
Dichotomized age of gang involvement (≥ 14 years old =1)	46.6%
Being initiated	74%
Desistance from membership	30.1%
Motivations to join	
Money	74%
Respect	72.6%
To deal drugs	61.6%
Protection	53.4%
To make friends	34.2%
Forced in	6.8%
Motivation scale (0 to 6) (SD)	3.03 (1.38)
Criminal social capital	
Introduced by friends	61.6%
Introduced by family	30.1%
Introduced by multiple sources (0 to 8) (SD)	2.15 (1.40)
Family members in gang	68.5%

Table 3. Characteristics of two subsamples of gang members

	Non- Aboriginal gang members (<i>n</i> = 55)	Aboriginal gang members (<i>n</i> = 18)	<i>F</i> / χ^2	Phi/Eta	Male gang members (<i>n</i> = 64)	Female gang members (<i>n</i> = 9)	<i>F</i> / χ^2	Phi/Eta
Ethnicity (Aboriginal =1)	-	-	-	-	23.4%	33.3%	0.416	0.075
Gender (female=1)	10.9%	16.7%	0.416	0.075	-	-	-	-
Mean age (<i>SD</i>)	16.41 (1.18)	16.44 (1.34)	0.006	0.009	16.44 (1.17)	16.33(1.58)	0.057	0.028
Age of gang involvement	13.36 (1.96)	12.89 (1.84)	0.814	0.106	13.25 (1.98)	13.22 (1.64)	0.002	0.005
Being initiated	65.5%	100%	8.406**	0.339	75%	66.7%	0.285	-0.062
Desistance from membership	36.4%	11.1%	4.107*	0.237	25%	66.7%	6.506*	0.299
Prior delinquency								
Drug use exposure index	2.56 (1.27)	2.72 (1.67)	0.179	0.050	2.47 (1.30)	3.56 (1.59)	5.245*	0.262
General delinquency index	4.20 (2.52)	4.56 (2.73)	0.259	0.060	4.09 (2.44)	5.67 (3.08)	3.070†	0.204
Motivations to join								
Money	81.8%**	50%	7.131**	-0.313	78.1%	44.4%	4.649*	-0.252
Respect	70.9%	77.8%	0.322	0.066	73.4%	66.7%	0.182	-0.050
To deal drugs	56.4%	77.8%	2.630	0.190	60.9%	66.7%	0.110	0.039
Protection	52.7%	55.6%	0.044	0.024	53.1%	55.6%	0.019	0.016
To make friends	32.7%	38.9%	0.229	0.056	32.8%	44.4%	0.474	0.081
Forced in	3.6%†	16.7%†	3.609†	0.222	4.7%	22.2%	3.802*	0.228
Motivation scale (0-6)	2.98 (1.34)	3.17 (1.54)	0.239	0.058	3.03 (1.34)	3.00 (1.73)	0.004	0.007
Criminal social capital								
Introduction friends	63.6%	55.6%	0.375	-0.072	60.9%	66.7%	0.110	0.039
Introduction family	30.9%	27.8%	0.063	-0.029	31.3%	22.2%	0.305	-0.065
Introduction multiple sources	2.13 (1.44)	2.22 (1.30)	0.061	0.029	2.14 (1.31)	2.22 (2.05)	0.026	0.019
Family members in gang	65.5%	77.8%	.954	.114	68.8%	66.7%	0.016	-0.015

†*p* ≤ 0.10; **p* ≤ 0.05; ***p* ≤ 0.01; ****p* ≤ 0.00

6.1.2. Prior substance use exposure and general delinquency

Participants were asked to report their delinquency and drug use exposure prior to their gang membership. First, they reported having tried, prior to their gang memberships, an average of 2.60 ($SD = 1.37$) different types of substances that could include alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, crack, heroin, and amphetamines. This variable seems to differentiate female gang members from males, with a higher rate of different drugs exposure for female participants (3.56 vs. 2.47, $F = 5.25$, $p \leq 0.05$). Second, participants of the sample stated having been involved in an average of 4.29 ($SD = 2.56$) different criminal activities prior to their gang involvement including drug offences, theft, motor vehicle theft, break and enter, threats, robbery, assault, assault with a weapon, and murder. Note that a higher rate is also recorded for female participants (5.67 vs. 4.09). The difference observed is marginally significant ($F = 3.07$, $p \leq 0.10$).

6.1.3. Gang membership

On average, participants joined gangs when they were 13.25 years old ($SD = 1.94$). Moreover, 53.4% entered at age 13 or younger, and 46.6% at 14 years old and more. At the time of interview, participants, who were still active ($n = 51$), reported being in gangs for an average of 3 years ($SD = 2.02$). No significant differences were observed in our two subgroups of gang members. In terms of gang initiations, 74% of the sample had undergone one. This variable perfectly distinguishes the subgroup of Aboriginal gang members; in fact, 100% of the Aboriginal gang members were initiated when entering ($\chi^2 = 8.406$, $p \leq 0.01$). Among the 73 participants, 22 (30%) mentioned having recently left their gangs. Female gang members were more likely to have left their gangs at the time of the interview in comparison to male participants (66.7% vs. 25%; $\chi^2 = 6.506$, $p \leq 0.05$). In addition, at the time of the interview, Aboriginal members were less likely to have terminated their membership (11.1% vs. 36.4%; $\chi^2 = 4.11$, $p \leq 0.05$).

6.1.4. Motivations for membership

Gang members in our sample reported having joined their gang for various reasons. Twelve participants cited a unique reason whereas the rest said that more

than one reason motivated their affiliation. Table 2 presents the distribution of the motivations for the overall sample. Joining to make more money is the most prevalent motivation (74%), followed by the desire to get respect (72.6%), to deal drugs (61.6%), to get protection (53.4%), to make friends (34.2%), and, finally, 5 participants reported that they were forced to join (6.8%). The results reveal that both joining to get money and being forced to join distinguish significantly the two subsamples from the general sample. In fact, non-Aboriginal males tend to join gangs to make money, whereas female and Aboriginal participants less often identified this as a motivation to join. In addition, both female and Aboriginal participants were significantly more likely to be forced to join their gangs (respectively, $\chi^2 = 3.80$, $p \leq 0.05$; $\chi^2 = 3.61$, $p \leq 0.10$).

6.1.5. Criminal social capital

When examining gang entry, it is important to understand the social environment that surrounds the prospective member when the membership opportunity arises. Table 4 presents the prevalence of gang membership among family members of the participants, and the use of participants' criminal social capital in order to get membership. In the current sample, 50 respondents (68.5%) reported having family members who are involved in gangs as well. Among this subsample, only 7 participants specified that the family members involved in gangs were a two-degree kinship (i.e., a grandparent, a cousin, or an uncle or aunt). The rest of the subsample ($n = 43$) referred to parents and siblings (i.e., a one-degree of kinship). Second, when participants were asked to specify who introduced them to their gangs, 61.6% said they were introduced by at least one of their friends, whereas 30.1% stated they were introduced by parents or siblings. No significant differences were observed among the subgroups of female and Aboriginal gang members.

Table 4. Gang membership among family members and its use as criminal social capital

Source of social capital	n	(%)
Gang member(s) in family	50	(68.5%)
One degree of kinship	43	(58.9%)
More than two degree of kinship	7	(9.59%)
Introduced by family (parents and/or siblings) ¹¹	22	(30.1%)
Introduced exclusively by parents in gangs	10	(13.7%)
Introduced exclusively by siblings in gangs	17	(23.3%)

6.2. Age of first gang involvement

6.2.1. Bivariate results

The first dependent variable of interest is age of gang involvement. The primary objective of the current chapter is to understand which membership precursors may influence the age of onset. Table 5 presents the bivariate results. Those in the sample who were in the late-onset category were older at the time of their interview (16.7 vs. 16.17; $F = 3.55$, $p \leq 0.10$), which was to be expected given that they became gang members later on (see Table 5). Second, those in the sample who scored higher on the drug use exposure, that is, who had tried a greater number of different types of drugs prior to their gang memberships, had a late entry into gangs (3.00 vs. 2.25; $F = 5.685$, $p \leq 0.05$). In addition, members of the late-onset category were involved in a greater number of different criminal activities prior to their gang involvement compared to those who joined at an earlier age (5.24 vs. 3.46, $F = 9.805$, $p \leq 0.01$). Third, when considering the reasons motivating individuals to join gangs, only the drive to get respect appears to be significantly associated with a later age of onset (56.6% vs. 43.4%). This specific motivation significantly distinguished individuals who joined at 13 years old or less and those who joined at 14 years old or more. The chi-square test reveals that the association between these two variables is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 7.819$, $p \leq 0.05$). Fourth, among the three variables tapping into the ways individuals were introduced to their gangs, being introduced by family appears to significantly facilitates an early entry into gangs (72.7% vs. 27.3%, $\chi^2 = 4.715$, $p \leq 0.05$), compared to being introduced by a

¹¹ Note that 5 participants mentioned they were introduced by both parents and siblings.

friend, which does not significantly differentiate those who joined gang before age 14 from those who joined later. Note that participants introduced by more than one source are not significantly different from those who have been introduced by friends or family members. This result suggests that specific relationships are more likely to influence the age of onset than the actual number of overlapping sources. Finally, at a bivariate level, having a family member in a gang (but who did not necessarily introduce the participant to the gang) constituted a significant precipitating context for early gang membership (68% vs. 32%; $\chi^2 = 13.55$, $p \leq 0.00$).

Table 5. Characteristics of gang members along their age of first gang involvement

	Early Onset <i>n</i> = 39	Late onset <i>n</i> = 34	<i>F</i> / χ^2	Phi/Eta
Age	16.17 (1.23)	16.70 (1.14)	3.545†	0.218
Gender (Female = 1)	55.6%	44.4%	0.019	-0.016
Ethnicity (Aboriginal = 1)	55.6%	44.4%	0.044	-0.024
Age of gang involvement	-	-	-	-
Desistance (yes = 1)	63.6%	36.4%	1.320	-0.134
Prior delinquency				
Drug use exposure index	2.25 (1.37)	3.00 (1.28)	5.685*	0.272
General delinquency index	3.46 (2.78)	5.24 (1.90)	9.805**	0.348
Motivations to join gangs				
Money	55.6%	44.4%	0.379	-0.072
Respect	43.4%	56.6%	7.819*	.327
To deal drugs	55.6%	44.4%	0.214	-0.054
Protection	46.2%	53.8%	1.779	0.156
Friends	64%	36%	1.709	-0.153
Forced to	60%	40%	0.093	-0.036
Motivation scale	2.95 (1.43)	3.12 (1.34)	0.268	0.061
Criminal social capital				
Introduced by friends	48.9%	51.1%	0.970	.115
Introduced by family	72.7%	27.3%	4.715*	-.254
Introduced by multiple sources	2.28 (1.62)	2.00 (1.10)	0.733	0.101
Family members in gangs	68%	32%	13.549***	-.431

† $p \leq 0.10$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.00$

6.2.2. Multivariate results

The associations found in the bivariate results were then examined to see whether they are consistent at the multivariate level using a nested logistic regression model. The models included only the variables that were significant or close to

significant from the bivariate analyses. First, Table 6 presents the logistic regression models that predict the occurrence of the first gang involvement at 14 years old or more that is defined as a late entry in this study. The baseline model includes the five control variables (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, drug use exposure index, and general delinquency index). The model is non-significant as none of the variables are significant. Model 2 includes the control variables and three types of motivations to join gangs. The model is significant ($\chi^2 = 23.90, p \leq 0.01$). First, two motivations are significant predictors. The first one is the motivation to get respect ($\beta = 1.82, p \leq 0.05$), and it is associated with a late age of onset, while the motivation to make friends ($\beta = -1.44, p \leq 0.05$) predicts an early age of onset. Model 3 includes the control variables and the two social capital variables that describe the potential of individual criminal social capital. The model is still significant ($\chi^2 = 29.14, p \leq 0.01$). Two variables are significant in this model. First, the general delinquency index is associated with late entry ($\beta = 0.164, p \leq 0.05$), and having at least one family member in gangs increases the likelihood of early gang membership ($\beta = -2.095, p \leq 0.01$). Recall that being introduced by a family member is non-significant. This last result is interesting because it specifies that an early onset is not necessarily facilitated by the introduction to gang by a family member but, more generally, by having family members in gangs. The general social environment of the prospective gang members appears to be a more important predicting factor. In order to achieve the most parsimonious model, the significant predictors from the baseline model, Model 2 and 3 were entered into a final best model (e.g., Model 4). The best model is significant ($\chi^2 = 33.95, p \leq 0.00$). Three variables remain significant: the general delinquency index, the motivation to get respect, and, finally, having family members already in gangs.

Table 6. Logistic regression predicting age of first gang involvement

	Baseline		Model 2		Model 3		Best model	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Age	0.358†	0.219	0.319	0.242	0.384	0.247	0.258	0.243
Gender	-0.741	0.835	-0.490	0.887	-1.216	1.085	-	-
Ethnicity	-0.232	0.609	-0.392	0.669	0.084	0.688	-	-
Drug use exposure index	0.235	0.247	0.392	0.281	0.226	0.279	-	-
General delinquency index ^a	0.243†	0.137	0.177	0.156	0.320*	0.164	0.338*	0.137
Motivation to join: Respect ^b	-	-	1.821*	0.761	-	-	1.806*	0.772
Motivation to join: Protection	-	-	0.364	0.637	-	-	-	-
Motivation to join: Make friends	-	-	-1.439*	0.673	-	-	-1.080	0.684
Introduced by family	-	-	-	-	-0.701	0.745	-	-
Family members in gangs	-	-	-	-	-2.095**	4.04	-2.372**	0.757
Constant	-7.57*	0.368	-8.161*	4.10	-6.68†	0.745	-5.181	3.954
Overall % predicted	67.1%		71.2		69.90		78.1	
χ^2 (p)	13.57		23.90**		29.14***		33.95***	
Cox and Snell pseudo-R ²	0.17		0.28		0.33		0.37	

† $p \leq 0.10$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.00$

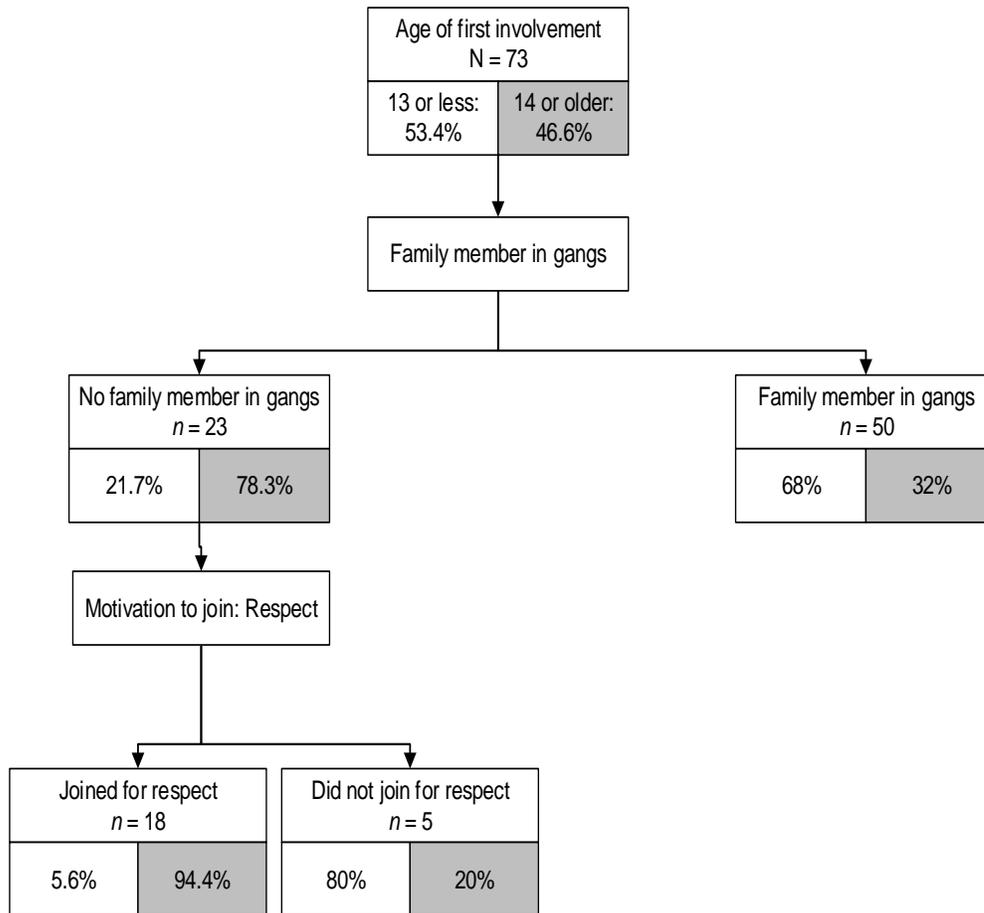
^a The general delinquency index was also tested by being decomposed in three different types of offences (e.g., drug, property, and violent related offences). None of these three categories seems to drive more than another; it has been decided to stay with the agglomeration of these three types.

^b Note that the three types of motivation to join the gang are not treated as dummy variables because each category was not mutually exclusive.

6.2.3. CHAID analysis results

The CHAID algorithm was used to test the relationship between the independent variables and the age of first gang involvement. Figure 3 illustrates the results of the CHAID analysis for the first dependent variable. As indicated by the root node of the tree, 53.4% joined before (or at) age 13, and 46.6% joined after (or at) age 14. Consistent with the results of the regression model solutions, the analysis suggests that the presence of family members in gangs is the most significant variable that differentiates early and late gang entry. In fact, 78.3% of the members who did not have family in gangs reported a late age of membership onset, compared to 46.6% for the whole sample. For those who did not report having family in a gang, it is the notion of respect that becomes important. In fact, those who do not have family gang members but who reported seeking respect were almost all found in the late-entry category (94.4%). The CHAID algorithm needed no other information to properly classify age of entry for those participants.

Figure 3. CHAID analysis with older age of onset as the predicted outcome



6.3. The occurrence of the gang initiation

6.3.1. Bivariate results

The second dependent variable of interest is whether members have been initiated or not. Table 7 presents the bivariate results. First, 100% of the Aboriginal participants in the sample ($n = 18$) were initiated before joining their gang ($\chi^2 = 8.406$, $p \leq 0.01$). Second, none of the prior delinquency indexes was significant. Third, regarding motivations to join gangs, aiming to get respect was significantly related to the occurrence of an initiation. In fact, 83% of those who mentioned having joined to get respect as one of their motivations were then initiated ($\chi^2 = 8.223$, $p \leq 0.01$). A possible hypothesis is that people who are willing to be initiated may be described as individuals who are looking for respect, especially from former gang members. It is important to

also note that the 5 participants who said they were forced to join their gangs were all initiated. This result is not significant but indicates that some individuals do not have the same choice to avoid that criminal path. These 5 participants were from three different ethnicities: Aboriginal ($n = 3$), Caucasian ($n = 1$), and Indo-Canadian ($n = 1$). In addition, a variable that accounts for the number of reasons to join was created to see if those who report a greater number are more likely to be initiated. At a bivariate level, participants who were initiated were more likely to have a variety of reasons for joining gangs. In fact, initiated participants recorded an average of 3.19 motivations in comparison to 2.58 for the non-initiated participants. This difference is marginally significant ($F = 2.762, p \leq 0.10$). Finally, only one of the social capital variables significantly differentiated the two groups of prospective members who were initiated from those who were not: introduced by multiple sources ($F = 3.656, p \leq 0.10$). This result suggests that initiated participants were more likely to be surrounded by a wider array of recruitment opportunities.

Table 7. Characteristics of gang members along their initiation status

	Not initiated <i>n</i> = 19	Initiated <i>n</i> = 54	<i>F</i> / χ^2	Phi/Eta
Age	16.47 (1.35)	16.41 (1.17)	0.041	0.024
Gender (Female = 1)	33.3%	66.7%	0.285	-0.062
Ethnicity (Aboriginal = 1)	0%	100%	8.406**	0.339
Age of gang involvement	13.63 (1.83)	13.11 (1.97)	1.017	0.119
Desistance (yes = 1)	40.9%	59.1%	3.622†	-0.223
Prior delinquency				
Drug use exposure index	2.26 (1.15)	2.72 (1.43)	1.587	0.148
General delinquency index	3.53 (2.61)	4.56 (2.51)	2.318	0.178
Motivations to join gangs				
Money	29.6%	70.4%	1.398	-0.138
Respect	17%	83%	8.223**	0.336
To deal drugs	22.2%	77.8%	0.882	0.110
Protection	25.6%	74.4%	0.006	0.009
Friends	16%	84%	1.986	0.165
Forced to	0%	100%	1.889	0.161
Motivation scale	2.58 (1.26)	3.19 (1.40)	2.762†	0.194
Criminal social capital				
Introduced by friends	20%	80%	2.214	0.174
Introduced by family	27.3%	72.7%	0.025	-0.019
Introduced by multiple sources	1.63 (0.68)	2.33 (1.54)	3.656†	0.221
Family members in gangs	24%	76%	0.339	0.068

† $p \leq 0.10$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.00$

6.3.2. Multivariate results

Table 8 presents the logistic regression models that predict the likelihood of being initiated when the participants joined their gangs. The baseline model includes the control variables (e.g., age of gang entry, gender, drug use exposure index, and the general delinquency index). Note that the age of the first gang involvement (and not the age of the participant at time of the interview, as found in the previous analyses) was included in the model. In addition, the ethnicity variable could not be included because of its lack of variation. Recall that 100% of Aboriginals in the sample were initiated ($n = 18$). The baseline model is marginally significant ($\chi^2 = 7.99$, $p \leq 0.10$). Only the age of gang entry appears to be a significant predictor of the occurrence of a gang initiation ($\beta = -0.371$, $p \leq 0.05$). The β coefficient for age of entry is negative, meaning that being young when joining a gang increases the likelihood of being initiated. Model 2 includes the control variables and the motivations to join a gang, which improves the model ($\chi^2 =$

16.42, $p \leq 0.05$). The age of entry becomes marginally significant ($\beta = -0.43$, $p \leq 0.10$), and the motivation to get respect is significant ($\beta = 1.924$, $p \leq 0.05$). Youths who join to get respect are more likely to have undergone an initiation rite. Maybe they were more likely to agree to such rituals because they were seeking an opportunity to prove who they were and to get the respect they expected from the group. Model 3 adds the set of variables that taps into the role of their social environment. The model is not significant. None of the variables introduced in Model 3 is significant; the only marginally significant variable that remains is age of entry ($\beta = -0.378$, $p \leq 0.10$). Finally, the best model presents the two variables that are associated with a higher likelihood of being initiated: age of gang entry and wanting to join gang to get respect. Only the motivation to get respect remains significant.

Table 8. Logistic regression predicting gang initiation when first joined gang

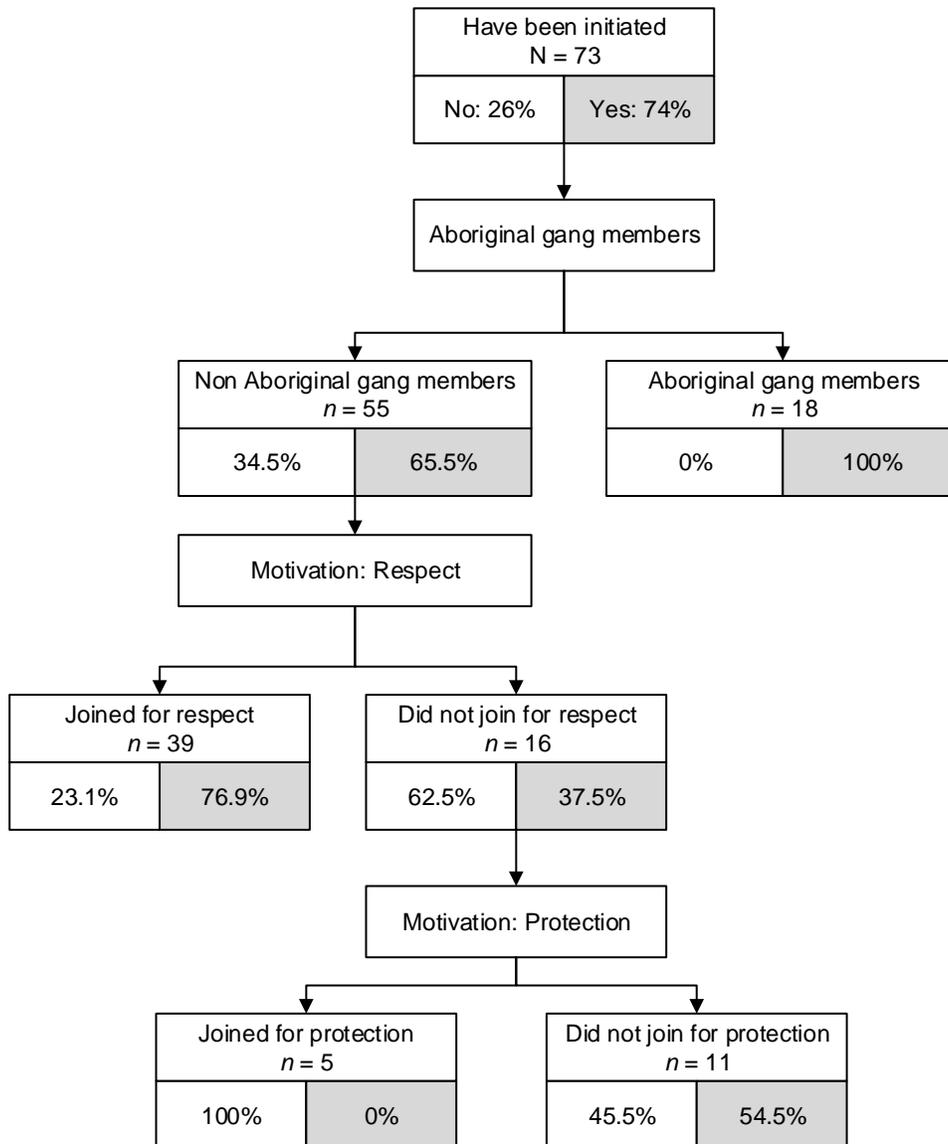
	Baseline		Model 2		Model 3		Best model	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Age of gang involvement	-0.371*	0.184	-0.432†	0.225	-0.378†	0.197	-0.288	0.183
Gender	-1.069	0.876	-1.062	1.03	-1.053	0.886		
Drug use exposure index	0.199	0.281	0.176	0.310	0.174	0.286		
General delinquency index	0.262	0.164	0.229	0.171	0.271	0.165		
Motivation to join: Respect			1.924*	0.754			1.878**	0.636
Motivation to join: Protection			-0.575	0.710				
Motivation to join: Make friends			0.446	0.737				
Introduced by family					-0.372	0.723		
Family members in gangs					0.056	0.726		
Constant	4.599*	2.288	4.508†	2.737	4.783†	2.661	3.677	2.380
Overall % predicted	76.7		78.1		75.3		78.1	
$\chi^2 (p)$	7.991†		16.420*		8.2831		10.556**	
Cox and Snell pseudo-R ²	0.104		0.201		0.107		0.135	

† $p \leq 0.10$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.00$

6.3.3. CHAID analysis results

The results of the CHAID analysis for the occurrence of the gang initiation are presented in Figure 4. First, as specified by the root node of the tree, 26% of the participants of the sample were not initiated when they first got involved in gangs, and 74% reported having undergone one. The first split in the tree differentiates Aboriginal gang members and non-Aboriginal gang members. Recall that 100% of the Aboriginals of our sample ($n = 18$) were initiated, which represents approximately one quarter of our sample. For the Aboriginal gang members, no other variable was needed by CHAID to predict the occurrence of an initiation. Among the non-Aboriginal gang members, 65.5% reported the occurrence of an initiation. Examining non-Aboriginal members reveals that there is a second differentiating node, that is, the motivation to get respect by joining gangs. Almost 77% of the participants who stated that getting respect was one of their motivations were initiated. For those non-Aboriginal gang members, this motivation is the only variable identified by CHAID as an important predictor. For those who did not report respect as a reason to join gangs, the analyses further differentiate between those who reported going in for protection. The main finding here is that those who reported neither going in for respect nor protection were much less likely to have been initiated. The last node on the left side of the tree shows that for those who said yes to protection and no to respect among non-Aboriginals, none of them had been initiated ($n = 5$).

Figure 4. CHAID analysis with the occurrence of the gang initiation as the predicted outcome



6.3.4. Summary

The examination of the pre-membership portrait of the participants and their social environment is informative regarding two key points: the onset and process of gang entry. First, participants who were characterized by a late entry in gangs were associated with two main factors: (1) a more important history of prior general delinquency behaviours and (2) a desire to get respect by joining gangs. These results

suggest that these participants were already active as criminals before they decided to join a gang. Their decision to join their gang might have been influenced by the desire to get credit and respect for what they were already doing. Respect is a core value of the gang lifestyle and might be an important asset for an independent criminal looking for some recognition. In contrast, for participants who were characterized by an early gang entry, at a bivariate level, being introduced by a parent is associated with the likelihood of an early entry. When moving to the multivariate level, this factor was not as important as simply having family ties in gangs. In short, early onset participants have family in gangs but do not necessarily use them to get introduced in the gangs. In this case, the use of the criminal social capital is not essential for early entry. The current chapter also intended to explore the incidence of the gang initiation when the prospective members first joined their gang. At a bivariate level, Aboriginal participants of the current study had undergone a gang initiation. In addition, participants who stated that they were motivated by a desire to gain respect when they first joined were more likely to be initiated. At the multivariate level, the age of first gang involvement and the motivational drive to get respect played the biggest role in the prediction of the gang initiation. Note that none of the criminal social environment variables was significantly associated with the likelihood of the occurrence of the gang initiation. In sum, the willingness to undergo such an event tends to be associated with a limited number of individual characteristics. The examination of the gang characteristics in the following chapter discusses the group factors that could influence the use of a rite of passage when gangs recruit new members.

7. The Right to Belong: Youth Gang Initiations

“Blood in - Blood out, that's how I get my thug on”¹²

– *The Menace Feat, Lil Wayne & Mitchy Slick (2010)*

This second results chapter examines the nature of initiations and whether there is a relationship between the nature of these events and any of the individual pre-membership factors. The first part of this chapter describes, qualitatively, the initiations that formalized gang membership as described in the narratives of the 54 participants (74%) who confessed to having undergone initiation when they joined gangs. The narratives reveal some previously less well-known aspect of gang initiation, specially the nature and the context of the ritual. The second part of this chapter compares types of initiation and how they vary based on individual characteristics of the individuals being initiated (e.g., the demographics, prior delinquency, motivations to join gangs, and the pre-membership criminal social capital). The idea is to investigate whether these pre-membership characteristics are associated with a particular type of gang initiation.

7.1. Qualitative findings: Types of gang initiation

The qualitative results shed light on the initiation process as the first experience of a gang criminal activity. Participants of the current study were asked to describe the ritual that they had to go through.

Table 9 presents the distribution of the different types of initiation described by the 73 participants of the current study. Most respondents were initiated when they

¹² “Gang members frequently refer to joining a gang as “Blood in - Blood out”. “Blood in” requires the prospective member to shed the blood of someone by assaulting or murdering them. “Blood out” refers to the only way a member can leave the gang - either by his natural death or his death at the hands of the gang” (Walker, 2010, para. 5).

joined their gangs ($n = 54$; 74%); only 19 (26%) were not. Those who had been initiated described three general types of initiation that were subsequently labelled as (1) the *crime commission*, (2) the *ego violent initiation*, and (3) the *expressive violence towards others*. Seven participants reported having been initiated but preferred not to discuss the details of their initiations (9.6%). Among the 19 participants that were not initiated, 9 were not because of special circumstances; however their gangs did usually initiate prospective members. This category is labelled as the *blessed-in* one and will be examined more closely.

Note that 14 participants (19.2%) reported having undergone a mixed initiation (e.g., a combination of two types of initiations) versus 39 participants who reported having undergone only one type of initiation (53.4%). More specifically, 8 participants (11%) were initiated through a combination of an ego violent ritual and an expressive violence towards others type of initiation. Five participants (6.8%) reported a combination of an ego violent initiation and a crime commission type, and, finally, only 1 participant (1.4%) reported a combination of a crime commission initiation and an expressive violent one. For coding purposes, it was decided to focus on violence because that is the more serious event. It was also for the violent events that participants provided the most details. The mixed initiations were then recoded into the most serious types undergone. For example, those who reported having committed a crime and undergone an ego violent initiation were categorized in the ego violent initiation. Similarly, those who reported having undergone an ego violent initiation and having perpetrated violent crime towards others were coded in the expressive violence category.

Table 9. Distribution of the types of the gang initiation

Types of Initiation	<i>n</i> (%)
Overall Initiated	54 (74.0%)
Crime commission	11 (15.1%)
Ego violence initiation	21 (28.8%)
Expressive violence towards others	15 (20.5%)
Do not want to specify	7 (9.6%)
Overall Not initiated	19 (26.0%)
Blessed-in	9 (12.3%)
Not initiated and not blessed-in	10 (13.7%)

7.1.1. *The crime commission type*

First, the crime commission type implies that the prospective member is asked to commit one or more non-violent crimes in order to get in. This type of initiation is represented by 15.1% of the sample of the initiated gang members and is driven by the desire of the prospective member to prove that he or she is a suitable criminal and also a future asset to the organization. The crime commission initiation type is described by the participants as the completion of a specified amount of non-violent work for the gang. Participants of the sample used the expression “doing work, a job or doing a score” to refer to this category. In the current sample, the crime commission could include criminal acts such as: dealing drugs, selling items (other than drugs), defending a block, stealing something expensive, having to bring back money to the gang, breaking and entering, and driving cars for robberies. The most common type of crime committed during an initiation mentioned by the participants is the completion of a drug deal. For example, participant 1056 mentioned that the leader of the gang that he wanted to join asked him to sell weed first, and if he was “doing good”, to come see him afterwards for more work, which he did. This initiation was a starting point for his criminal career as a gang member. Over time, he was given more and more responsibilities and was dealing larger amounts of drugs.

Participant 1675 said that the objective of completing a certain amount of work was to earn the gang’s trust. This period of probation allowed the gang and its members to learn more about the newcomers, their drive, loyalty, and skills, before granting them membership. Participant 1555 emphasized that loyalty was also an important component of his initiation for which he had to sell stuff on a street corner: “You get a block to sell items like drugs, or other things. You have to prove your loyalty, and that you don’t steal etc. You have to defend the block.” He had to prove that he could be trusted for future work for the gang and that he had what it took to serve well the gang’s needs. Participant 1648 also had to prove that he could be reliable and that he could meet financial targets set by the gang leaders. His initiation consisted of bringing \$5,000 to the gang within one week, by any means he could find. Note that this does not exclude the possible use of violence, although it is not the main goal of the initiation. The fixed amount and timeframe set a precise expectation, making clear that nothing less will be acceptable. Through mainly drug dealing, participant 1648 met the well-

defined goal and joined the gang. Finally, another participant (1626) described his crime commission initiation by explaining that he had to steal something very expensive before being considered an official gang member. He stole a gold ring from a specific jewelry store. His initiation got him arrested (the reason he was incarcerated when we interviewed him). Later in the interview, he also stated that his gang had specific gang symbols, and one of them is wearing a specific type of gold ring. It was impossible for the interviewer to clarify if the ring that he stole during his initiation ritual was the ring that would be given him as a symbol of full membership or if it was meant for another member or simply to sell.

7.1.2. *The ego violent event*

The second type of initiation is the ego violent event, where the prospective member gets beaten by a certain number of gang members for a given period of time to show that he or she can take the beating and/or that he or she can fight back, if allowed. This type of initiation is referred to by the participants as being “jumped in” or “beaten in”. The ego violent event is the most common in the current sample, with 28.8% of the initiated participants reporting it. Some variations have been observed from one participant to another. First, among those who were initiated through an ego violent event ($n = 21$), 17 participants described the duration of the beating. According to them, it can vary from 20 s to 15 min ($M = 3$ min and 7 s; $SD = 4$ min and 26 s). The mode is 30 s. For some participants, the duration was set before the initiation, for example, participant 1324 knew that he had to be beaten for 30 seconds in order to get in, while participant 1867 explained that his initiation was more about the amount of time he could tolerate the beating.

[They] beat the shit out of you. You got your minutes (so how many minutes you drop from getting beat up). I made 13 minutes before dropping my knees. They did not use weapons, just fists on me, because I was too young (12 years old). If you are older and bigger, they give you weapons and they use weapons on you. (1867)

Second, among the 21 participants who were initiated through an ego violent event, 14 revealed the number of people who participated in the beating. According to

them, it could vary from 1 to 14 people involved, on average 5 people ($SD = 3.27$). The mode was 4 people. Only participant 1825 mentioned that she was initiated by three individuals: two participated in the beating and the other one was only watching. For all other participants, all members who were present at the initiation had to participate in the beating. Third, some participants were not allowed to fight back during their initiations (15 participants of 20), whereas others were instructed to fight back (5 of 20). To illustrate this difference, participant 1572 mentioned that he got “beaten by three or four guys without fighting back, and without complaining. I had to take on a beating”. The members who initiated the prospective member wanted to see if he was tough enough to join their gang. The objective of the initiation dictates the right or not to fight back. For example, participant 1680 stated that he got “a 30 seconds stomp out”, and the gang wanted to see if he could fight. Finally, out of the 21 who have been initiated through an ego violent event, 5 mentioned a weapon was used against them during their initiation. The type of weapon mentioned by the participants who specified this information included bear mace, knife, and metal bat. Participant 1771 indicated that he “got bear sprayed and smashed out for 20 seconds by five people”, and participant 1863 summarized his initiation by saying “[I had been] shit kicked. I had to go through a whole group of people with metal bats for seven minutes”. Injuries were reported by individuals who had been initiated with or without a weapon. For example, participant 1829 explained that he took a two-minute beating by six people and “they were all standing and I have to take the beating. I got six broken ribs and was stabbed”. Participant 1742 stated that his initiation resulted in a giant scar about 12 inches long that he had for 9 months,

7.1.3. *The expressive violence towards others*

The third type of initiation is the expressive violence inflicted to others, where the prospective member is the perpetrator of such violence, in contrast to the ego violent event presented above. Among the initiated sample, 20.5% had to perpetrate violence toward other individuals in order to get into their gangs.

The first form of expressive violence initiation is the perpetration of a violent criminal act against others, such as robbery. Even though robbery is considered a violent act, the goal of such initiation seems to be driven by the financial outcome. In

fact, two participants mentioned that they had to bring back a certain amount of money by robbing people as their initiation.¹³ Participant 1686 had to get a total of \$1,200, and the amount set for participant 1857 was \$1,000. The amount of money was quite high and implies that many violent crimes are committed for one initiation. Another participant had to rob a specific crack shack and “had to stab some guys, you just go in there and you get what you can” (1852). No information was given regarding the choice of this particular crack shack, nor whether the victims were the tenants or the users of the crack shack. A second form of expressive violence is illustrated by participant 1677 who had to prove how far he was willing to go to perpetrate violence and how committed he was to the demands of the gang:

[They] gave me a gun to shoot someone. We were on the street and they pointed at a random guy and told me to shoot him. I pulled the trigger... but there were no bullets in the gun. That was just a test.

This example suggests that the primary objective of this initiation was to determine if the prospective member was mentally strong enough to be worthy of membership and not necessarily to hurt the target. However, there was still a victim of this extreme act of violence. Although it is assumed in this case that the goal set by the gang was not to hurt a victim, other participants mentioned that, in their cases, the goal was clearly to hurt people, including non-gang members. Participant 1576 said that he “had to cut, leave a mark on someone, a stranger”. Participant 1514 used the word *torture* to describe what he did to his victims as part of his gang initiation: “I had to beat some people, had to really fuck them up, I tortured some ‘kids’ (like 19 or 20 years old)”. In the same vein, participant 1437 stated that his gang asked any prospective member to shoot someone – either a random person or somebody in another, rival gang. This form of expressive violence, voiced by these 3 participants, refers to the “blood-in” concept, where prospective members have to shed some blood of a target in order to get

¹³ This classification exclusively includes participants who had perpetrated violent crimes in order to bring money to their gangs as initiation. Note that participant 1648 also had a specific amount of money to bring to his gang; however, the distinction was that his gang did not specify a particular criminal means to achieve the financial goal. For this reason, participant 1648’s initiation was classified in the crime commission type. The violence aspect was not as fundamental as it was in the expressive violence type.

in. The discourse of these participants does not include a rationalization for the choice of the target. Although relatively rare in this sample, it raises concerns for public safety. A victim could be chosen by the gang because of a conflict over drugs debts, values, or disrespect of the gang. For example, participant 1351 “had to punch out a certain person who had ratted out the crew”, and participant 1705 “stabbed a guy who owed money over a debt”. Some gangs target their victims from another gang, usually a rival gang. This form of expressive violence towards other gang members was illustrated by participant 1714 who “had to beat someone up in a gang, it was the gang call”. Another example is presented by participant 1717 who had to kill someone from a rival gang. This initiation is an extreme representation of what a violent gang initiation could be.

7.1.4. The blessed-in type of gang entry

While analysing the data, a fourth category was revealed. In fact, of the 19 other participants who did not report being initiated when they first joined their gangs, 9 (12.3%) confirmed that they did not have to undergo an initiation because of their existing connections in the gang. In other words, usually their gang used the initiation to formalize membership, but because of the criminal social capital and the reputation these 9 participants had, they were granted entry into gangs without an initiation. This is the category referred to as “blessed-in”. Note that the term *born-in* is also used as a synonym of *blessed-in*. It seems important to include them in a separate category, because not all participants who had family in gangs ($n = 50$) or had been introduced by family members ($n = 22$) were blessed-in. Among the 50 participants who said that members of their families were involved in gangs, only 7 were blessed-in (approximately 14%). A similar proportion (13.6%) was found for the participants who mentioned having been introduced by a family member (not necessarily a gang member) – that is, only 3 participants were blessed-in. The second part of this chapter will examine the factors that most influenced this particular outcome.

Participant 1491 clearly described her situation. When the participant was asked if she had to undergo an initiation, she answered negatively and specified that she was instead “asked to ride with them”. She explained that both her parents and grandparents were involved in gangs and are still well-known in the area where the gang hangs out. She was born in this environment. In her case, the concept of born-in best describes her

situation since she literally grew up in the gangs' world. Similarly, participant 1768 claimed that he was blessed-in because of his Hell Angels dad. Participant 1900 also mentioned that he was not initiated because his cousin was a leader, but explained that newcomers do usually have to go through a crime commission initiation. Participants 1746 and 1858 both specified they were blessed-in because their brothers were already members of the gang. Finally, 2 other participants (1721 and 1835) did not report family but, rather, friends who were already well-established in the gang so that they also avoided the initiation that others usually had to go through. The next step was to verify whether there are other group-related variables that could influence the blessed-in decision.

Before concluding the qualitative results section, it is important to specify that no one mentioned that they failed their initiations or that the initiation did not go well so the promotion of membership was jeopardized. The initiation is seen as a ritual that some individuals have to go through, no matter what the outcome (e.g., success, failure of the mission, or getting caught). In fact, one participant mentioned that he had to commit a certain crime and also to get caught for it in order to get full membership. Moreover, he specified that usually the gang asked for a crime that would result in a more severe incarceration sentence. This anecdote was not confirmed by other participants of the study.

7.2. Types of initiation and individual characteristics

This section of the chapter compares the four types of gang initiations identified in the narratives of the 54 initiated participants based on individual characteristics of the participants. Note the same individual characteristics entered in the predicting models presented in the first results chapter were used to provide consistency in a more thorough examination of the initiation process. For each type of initiation, *t* tests and chi-square tests were performed on the 16 individual characteristics (Table 10, 11, 12, and 13).

First, Table 10 shows the results for the crime commission type of initiation. None of the characteristics was found to be statistically significant. In terms of

demographics, none of the 9 female gang members of the study were initiated through a crime commission type of initiation in addition to a very small number of Aboriginal gang members. This type of initiation does not seem to be associated with a particular profile of individual, and is perhaps more related to the socio-organizational structure of the gang. The following chapter will address this hypothesis.

Table 10. Characteristics of the initiated participants through a crime commission initiation

	Crime commission type		F/ χ^2	Phi/Eta
	No n = 43	Yes n = 11		
Gender (female = 1)	14.5%	0%	1.821	-0.158
Ethnicity (Aboriginal = 1)	27.4%	9.1%	1.689	0.152
Age of gang involvement	13.13 (1.96)	13.91 (1.70)	1.530	0.145
Prior delinquency				
Drug use exposure index	2.61 (1.37)	2.55 (1.44)	0.022	0.018
General delinquency index	4.37 (2.63)	3.82 (2.18)	0.433	0.078
Motivations to join gangs				
Money	74.2%	72.7%	0.010	-0.012
Respect	72.6%	72.7%	0.000	0.001
To deal drugs	64.5%	45.5%	1.436	-0.140
Protection	51.6%	63.6%	0.543	0.086
Friends	32.3%	45.5%	0.723	0.099
Forced to	6.5%	9.1%	0.102	0.037
Motivation scale	3.02 (1.34)	3.09 (1.70)	0.027	0.019
Criminal social capital				
Introduced by friends	62.9%	54.5%	0.276	-0.061
Introduced by family	29%	36.4%	0.238	0.057
Introduced by multiple sources	2.21 (1.43)	1.82 (1.25)	0.727	0.101
Family members in gangs	69.4%	63.6%	0.142	-0.044

† $p \leq 0.10$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.00$

Second, the ego violent type of initiation presents some significant differences (Table 11). Of the 16 measures, 5 were found to be significant. In terms of demographics, females were most likely to be initiated through an ego violent ritual (23.8% vs. 7.7%; $\chi^2 = 3.595$, $p \leq 0.05$). Prospective Aboriginal members were also most likely to be found in this category of initiation (42.9% vs. 17.3%; $\chi^2 = 5.256$, $p \leq 0.05$). This type of initiation also included the youngest prospective members. In fact, those who were initiated through an ego violent event were, on average, 12.67 years old when

they first got involved in a gang in comparison to an average of 13.48 years old for those who were not initiated through this type of initiation ($\chi^2 = 2.711, p \leq .10$). Regarding the motivations for joining gangs, two particular reasons are significantly associated with the ego violent ritual. First, participants who identified the drive to make money as motivation were not primarily initiated through an ego violent ritual (52.4% vs. 82.7%; $\chi^2 = 7.139, p \leq 0.01$). However, participants who identified having been forced to join were predominantly initiated through an ego violent event (19% vs. 2%; $\chi^2 = 6.876, p \leq 0.00$).

Table 11. Characteristics of the initiated participants through an ego violent event

	Ego violent event type		F/ χ^2	Phi/Eta
	No n = 33	Yes n = 21		
Gender (female = 1)	7.7%	23.8%	3.595*	0.222
Ethnicity (Aboriginal = 1)	17.3%	42.9%	5.256*	0.268
Age of gang involvement	13.48 (1.85)	12.67 (2.06)	2.711†	0.192
Prior delinquency				
Drug use exposure index	2.44 (1.26)	3.00 (1.58)	2.525	0.185
General delinquency index	4.08 (2.42)	4.81 (2.86)	1.231	0.131
Motivations to join gangs				
Money	82.7%	52.4%	7.139**	-0.313
Respect	71.2%	76.2%	0.191	0.051
To deal drugs	61.5%	61.9%	0.001	0.003
Protection	55.8%	47.6%	0.399	-0.074
Friends	28.8%	47.6%	2.341	0.179
Forced to	1.99%	19%	6.876**	0.307
Motivation scale	3.02 (1.36)	3.05 (1.47)	0.006	0.009
Criminal social capital				
Introduced by friends	57.7%	71.4%	1.194	0.128
Introduced by family	30.8%	28.6%	0.034	-0.022
Introduced by multiple sources	2.04 (1.33)	2.43 (1.57)	1.162	0.127
Family members in gangs	63.5%	81%	2.212	0.170

† $p \leq 0.10$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.00$

The results for the third type of initiation are presented in Table 12. Participants who were initiated through an expressive violent act towards others were significantly different on four characteristics. Prospective Aboriginal members were initiated through this violent type of initiation (46.7% vs. 19%; $\chi^2 = 5.256, p \leq 0.05$). Note that a similar proportion of Aboriginal gang members was found for the ego violent event type,

suggesting that prospective Aboriginal members were exclusively initiated through violent gang rituals. Another characteristic that best describes the participants who were initiated through an expressive violent act towards others is an involvement in a wider range of delinquent behaviours prior to their membership (5.33 vs. 4.02; $F = 3.255$, $p \leq 0.10$). Finally, participants who were initiated through this type of initiation were most likely to confess to having joined gangs to get respect (93.3% vs. 67.2%; $\chi^2 = 4.079$, $p \leq 0.05$) and to deal drugs (80% vs. 56.9%; $\chi^2 = 2.690$, $p \leq 0.10$). Note that this category presents a higher score on the total number of motivations mentioned by the participants. Although this result is non-significant, it suggests that participants of this category may have had a stronger drive to get in. As such, it could be hypothesized that they were also more willing to undergo a more violent type of initiation.

Table 12. Characteristics of the initiated participants through an expressive violence ritual

	Expressive violence towards other type			
	No <i>n</i> = 39	Yes <i>n</i> = 15	<i>F</i> / χ^2	Phi/Eta
Gender (female = 1)	13.8%	6.7%	0.560	-0.088
Ethnicity (Aboriginal = 1)	19%	46.7%	5.256*	0.268
Age of gang involvement	13.21 (2.04)	13.40 (1.50)	0.117	0.041
Prior delinquency				
Drug use exposure index	2.56 (1.40)	2.80 (1.26)	0.387	0.074
General delinquency index	4.02 (2.56)	5.33 (2.32)	3.255†	0.209
Motivations to join gangs				
Money	72.4%	80%	0.356	0.070
Respect	67.2%	93.3%	4.079*	0.236
To deal drugs	56.9%	80%	2.690†	0.192
Protection	50%	66.7%	1.330	0.135
Friends	36.2%	26.7%	0.482	-0.081
Forced to	8.6%	0%	1.388	-0.138
Motivation scale	2.91 (1.43)	3.47 (1.13)	1.926	0.163
Criminal social capital				
Introduced by friends	58.6%	73.3%	1.091	0.122
Introduced by family	31%	26.7%	0.108	-0.038
Introduced by multiple sources	2.05 (1.28)	2.53 (1.81)	1.416	0.140
Family members in gangs	67.2%	73.3%	0.205	0.053

† $p \leq 0.10$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.00$

The last category, shown in Table 13, is the blessed-in type. Even though this category is not an initiation type per se, it is important to understand whether there are individual characteristics that are associated with this particular situation. Recall that the blessed-in is an absence of initiation and is characterized by prospective gang members' having either family members or friends who are already in the gang and are influential enough to grant the prospective member membership without the need of going through an initiation. The blessed-in category is characterized by three significant variables among the 16 measures proposed. First of all, none of the Aboriginal gang members of the study was blessed-in (0% vs. 28.1%; $\chi^2 = 3.360$, $p \leq 0.10$). In addition, blessed-in prospective members present the lowest rate on the general delinquency index prior to their gang involvement (2.33 vs. 4.56; $F = 6.448$, $p \leq 0.05$). This result does not mean that they were not criminally active before their gang membership; rather, that they were less versatile or more specialized. The last characteristic that is associated with the blessed-in category is that of prospective members who were introduced by one of their friends. Those participants who reported having been introduced by a friend were less likely to have been blessed-in (33.3% vs. 65.6%; $\chi^2 = 3.480$, $p \leq 0.10$). In other words, to be blessed-in, an individual needed other types of connections in the gang world.

Table 13. Characteristics of the blessed-in participants

	Blessed-in		<i>F</i> / χ^2	Phi/Eta
	No <i>n</i> = 45	Yes <i>n</i> = 9		
Gender (female = 1)	12.5%	11.1%	0.014	-0.014
Ethnicity (Aboriginal = 1)	28.1%	0%	3.360†	-0.215
Age of gang involvement	13.30 (1.97)	12.89 (1.76)	0.348	0.070
Prior delinquency				
Drug use exposure index	2.66 (1.39)	2.22 (1.20)	0.788	0.105
General delinquency index	4.56 (2.51)	2.33 (2.06)	6.448*	0.289
Motivations to join gangs				
Money	73.4%	77.8%	0.077	0.033
Respect	75%	55.6%	1.500	-0.143
To deal drugs	62.5%	55.6%	0.161	-0.047
Protection	54.7%	44.4%	0.333	-0.068
Friends	35.9%	22.2%	0.659	-0.095
Forced to	7.8%	0%	0.755	-0.102
Motivation scale	3.09 (1.39)	2.56 (1.33)	1.196	0.129
Criminal social capital				
Introduced by friends	65.6%	33.3%	3.480†	-0.218
Introduced by family	29.7%	33.3%	0.050	0.026
Introduced by multiple sources	3.22 (1.46)	1.67 (0.71)	1.229	0.130
Family members in gangs	67.2%	77.8%	0.410	0.075

† $p \leq 0.10$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.00$

7.3. Summary

This chapter illustrated the gang initiation process as one of the first experience of a gang activity. Among the sample of this study, 54 participants mentioned they were initiated when they first joined their gangs. From their descriptions of the nature and context of their initiations, three main types of initiations were identified.

The first type was the crime commission type, also termed as “doing work” for the gangs, which included non-violent crimes to be performed before granting the prospective members membership. Although no particular pre-membership factor was identified as significant, participants who were initiated through a crime commission were more likely to be non-Aboriginal male participants, and older when they first joined their gang.

Second, the ego violent ritual, also known as the “beaten-in” or “jump-in” ritual, was described as the type of initiation that most of the prospective Aboriginal members and female members went through. This category also had participants who were the youngest when they first joined a gang. In addition, this category of initiation is most common among participants who mentioned being forced to join. Even if this includes only five cases, it is important to mention that most of them were beaten-in to join.

The third category of initiation is the expressive violence act towards others. This type includes violent acts perpetrated by prospective members against a victim. Victims could be gang members or not. Victims could have been previously targeted by the rest of the gang or randomly chosen at the time of an initiation. Aboriginal gang members were associated with this type of gang initiation, along with participants who were the most versatile in terms of delinquency prior to their membership. In addition, participants who were initiated through this type of violent initiation mentioned wanting to join their gang for respect and to deal drugs. This type of initiation recorded the highest prevalence on every reason stated, suggesting that prospective members were fully aware of the drives that drove them toward gang life. This drive may have manifested itself in a willingness to do almost anything to get in, including agreeing to commit the most violent type of initiation.

Finally, the fourth, blessed-in category, groups the participants who were not initiated because of their particular connections in the gang or gang world. Most of them either had family ties in the gang that they joined or in another influential criminal organization, such bikers. In this category, we also included those who were introduced by a friend who was highly ranked in the gang. However, the latter was less frequent, and, as shown in the second section of the chapter, those who were introduced by a friend were more likely to have undergone a gang initiation. In addition, this type of non-initiation was found to be exclusively reserved for non-Aboriginal gang members.

Though the objectives of this chapter were to provide a descriptive portrait of the gang initiation that occurs in our gang landscape and to see to what extent the variation of gang initiation could be attributed to individuals’ characteristics prior to their membership, some questions remain. Knowing that the gang initiation is the first experience of the individuals in the gang criminal activities, it can be hypothesized that

the type of initiation could be associated with the socio-organizational structure of the gang and its main areas of criminal activities. The following chapter will focus on these hypotheses.

8. The Art of Hustling: The Importance of Group Processes

“You learn to work the water, without work, you thirst before you die”

– *December 4th* by Jay-Z (2003)

The challenges related to the operationalization of the gang concept have been, and still remain a subject of debate among scholars. Because gangs are continually evolving in a high-pressure and fast-paced environment, their structures tend to vary and reflect their adaptation to such contexts (Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Decker, Katz, & Webb, 2008; Hagedorn, 1994). Gang structure has been shown to vary with criminal activities, making it important to analyze gangs’ characteristics, behaviours, and activities. The current chapter examines the patterns of organizational structures (e.g., gang composition and gang level of organization) of the gangs to which 73 of the interviewed respondents from the sample belonged. A classification of gang types was created using a two-step clustering strategy to group participants on various dimensions of their gangs’ organization and composition. This chapter also investigates whether these different types of gangs were active in equally different criminal activities.

8.1. Description of gangs

Participants in the study described their gangs in terms of organization, composition, initiations, criminal activities, and criminal social capital (Table 14). First, the gangs described in the sample have a fair level of organization compared to what has been found in earlier studies (see Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Decker, Katz, & Webb, 2008). The most prevalent organizational features reported by the participants about their gangs are the following: have established leaders (91.8%), use violence to enforce rules within the gang (91.8%), have a gang name (89%), and have clear rules (89%). In addition, some participants described their gangs’ hierarchies as including

well-defined titles and roles (78.1%). Most gangs have gang symbols (74%) such as tattoos, burn marks, clothes, colors, hand signs, and graffiti. Finally, two items that are not as frequently reported are (1) an identified and well-delimited territory that the gang claims to own and defend (65.8%) and (2) regular gang meetings (63%). Participants reported a large range of gang size, varying from 7 to 5,000 members, with a mode of 50. The average age of members is 19.84 years old ($SD = 3.81$), just above the age of majority. In addition, participants were asked to determine the number of months their gangs have existed. On average, the duration was 133.10 months ($SD = 106.27$), that is, the equivalent of 11 years. In terms of ethnicity, participants revealed that 32.9% of the gangs they belonged to were mixed; 26% were composed exclusively of Caucasians; 19.2%, exclusively of Aboriginals; and 21.9% were composed exclusively of one particular ethnicity other than Caucasian or Aboriginal (Indo-Canadian ($n = 5$), Hispanic ($n = 4$), Asian ($n = 3$), Middle Eastern ($n = 3$), and Afro-Canadian ($n = 1$)).

In addition, as shown in the previous chapters, gangs represented in the current study tend to conduct four main types of initiation: (1) the crime commission type (15.1%), (2) the ego violent event (28.8%), (3) expressive violence towards others (20.5%), and (4) the blessed-in type (12.3%). Gang criminal activities reported by the participants were regrouped into four themes: (1) the drug crimes index (0 to 3) ($M = 2.34$), (2) the violent crimes index (0 to 4) ($M = 2.71$), (3) money generating crimes (0 to 5) ($M = 2.19$), and (4) the “other” crimes index (0 to 2) ($M = 0.90$). Finally, participants also provided information about the criminal social capital of their gangs (the number of positive and negative connections their gangs maintain with other criminal organizations). On average, gangs in this study have 2.56 ($SD = 2.32$) positive relationships and 0.62 ($SD = 1.38$) adversarial relationships with other criminal organizations.

Table 14. Description of the gangs

	% / Mean
Gang organization	
Gang name	89%
Established leaders	91.8%
Gangs' symbols	74%
Regular meetings	63%
Specific territory	65.8%
Hierarchy	78.1%
Rules of conduct	89%
Rules enforcement	91.8%
Gang composition	
Gang size log mean (<i>SD</i>)	4.48 (1.47)
Members' average age(<i>SD</i>)	19.84 (3.81)
Duration in months (<i>SD</i>)	133.10 (106.27)
Gang ethnicity	
Exclusively Caucasians	26%
Exclusively Aboriginals	19.2%
Exclusively another ethnicity	21.9%
Mixed ethnicities	32.9%
Gang criminal social capital	
Positive (<i>SD</i>)	2.56 (2.32)
Negative (<i>SD</i>)	0.62 (1.38)
Gang criminal activities	
Drug dealing and supply index (<i>SD</i>)	2.34 (0.80)
Violent crime index (<i>SD</i>)	2.71 (1.20)
Money generating crime index (<i>SD</i>)	2.19 (1.31)
Other crimes index (<i>SD</i>)	0.90 (0.87)
Gang initiation types	
Crime commission	15.1%
Ego violent event	28.8%
Expressive violence towards others	20.5%
Blessed-in	12.3%

8.2. Cluster analysis: A typology of gang organization and composition

The 73 gang members of this study were classified according to their organizational characteristics and composition. Table 15 shows the cluster membership and the prevalence of each of the cluster dimensions. Those dimensions included gang organization (e.g. gang name, leaders, symbols, regular meetings, specific territory, hierarchy, rules, and the use of violence to keep order within the gang) and gang

composition (e.g., size, average age of members, and duration) as reported by the participants. The results of the cluster analysis suggest that there are three types of gangs represented in the data: Type 1 - Low profile gangs (20.55%); Type 2 - Horizontally organized gangs (43.84%); and Type 3 – Vertically organized gangs (35.62%). Below, the validity of the cluster solution is assessed and then each cluster is described.

8.2.1. Validation of the cluster solutions

One important step when using cluster analysis is the assessment of the cluster solutions' stability and validity (Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984; Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011). First, the stability of the cluster solution was investigated by using another method to compare and determine whether a similar typology would be revealed. The three-cluster solution obtained from the two-step method was compared to the three-cluster solution obtained from the Ward's method. The use of a hierarchical method requires that the variables have a similar scaling. For this reason, the three continuous variables (e.g., gang size log, average age of members, duration) were standardized. The three-cluster solution created by the Ward's method produced remarkably similar profiles to the two-step method. Only four cases were not classified in the same clusters provided by the two-step solution.¹⁴

Second, to investigate the validity of the clustering solution, the significance tests on an external variable, one technique outlined by Aldenderfer and Blashfield (1984), was used. This procedure aims to compare the clusters on variables that were not used to develop the clustering solution by performing significance tests. The external criteria are normally chosen for their expected association with the clusters. To do this, the associations between the typology revealed and the gang initiations, criminal activities, and criminal social capital variables that were not used in the cluster analysis were examined (See Table 16). One major finding is the fact that level of organizational structure is directly related to diversity of gang criminal activities. In other words, the more organized a gang is, the more likely it has the ability to diversify the sources of its

¹⁴ All 26 cases of the vertically organized cluster (Type 3) remain together, whereas 4 cases of the low profile (Type 1) were classified as horizontally organized cluster (Type 2).

criminal activities. In that sense, the three-cluster solution indicates the generality of the solution against relevant external criteria.

8.2.2. Description of the cluster solution

Low profile gangs

The low profile gangs form the smallest group of the sample (20.55%). The gangs in this group are characterized by the presence of leaders (100%), the occurrence of regular meetings (93.3%), a clear hierarchy (80%), and well-defined rules of conduct (80%). One particularity of this group is the fact that its gangs do not exhibit any gang symbols (0%), and not all of them have gang names (53.3%). These findings might suggest that these gangs prefer being low key by being less easily identifiable. This category also has the smallest gangs of the sample, another feature that may help in avoiding unnecessary attention. This group was labelled *low profile* because of the tendencies of the gangs that belong to it to maintain few discernible features, compared to other gangs. Note that this group is mostly represented by gangs that are exclusively composed of Caucasian gang members (40%) or an ethnicity (Asian, Hispanic, Afro-Canadian, or Indo-Canadian) other than Aboriginal (46.7%).

Horizontally organized gangs

This type forms the largest group (43.84%) from the sample and presents a majority of high frequency rates on many organizational features. In general, these gangs have gang names (96.9%), gang symbols (87.5%), rules of conduct (84.4%), and presence of leaders (81.3%). This group can be distinguished from the two other groups by its lowest prevalence of (1) regular gang meetings (18.8%) and (2) presence of a clear hierarchy (59.4%). This group can be portrayed with a more horizontal style of organization, where leaders are present but where there are no titles and positions under them. For this reason, this group of gangs was labelled as *horizontally organized*. Note also that Aboriginal gangs of the study tend to be mainly characterized by this type of gang structure (31.3%).

Vertically organized gangs

The third type represented 35.62% of the sample. This group clearly showed the highest possible level of organization. The gangs categorized in this group have gang names (100%), gang symbols (100%), leaders (100%), regular meetings (100%), a clear hierarchy (100%), and rules of conduct (100%). This group also comprises the largest gangs of the sample and can be characterized by a more traditional and vertical gang structure. For this reason, this group of gangs was labelled *vertically organized*. In addition, this type tends to best describe gangs that are ethnically heterogenic (46.2%).

Table 15. Gangs organizations and composition clusters

	Low profile (n = 15)	Horizontally organized (n = 32)	Vertically organized (n = 26)	F / χ^2	Phi/ Eta
Gang organization					
Gang name = 1	53.3%	96.9%	100%	24.813***	0.583
Leaders =1	100%	81.3%	100%	8.376*	0.339
Gangs' symbols = 1	0%	87.5%	100%	54.821***	0.867
Regular meetings = 1	93.3%	18.8%	100%	48.078***	0.812
Specific territory = 1	53.3%	71.9%	65.4%	1.562	0.146
Hierarchy = 1	80%	59.4%	100%	13.874**	0.436
Rules of conduct = 1	80%	84.4%	100%	5.171†	0.266
Rules enforcement = 1	86.7%	90.6%	96.2%	1.236	0.130
Gang composition					
Gang size log	3.79	4.17	5.26	6.983**	0.408
(SD)	(1.51)	(1.30)	(1.34)		
Members' average Age	20.80	19.53	19.65	0.605	0.130
(SD)	(4.26)	(3.81)	(3.59)		
Duration in months	118.64	116.38	162.01	1.519	0.204
(SD)	(108.51)	(109.11)	(99.10)		
Gang ethnicity ^a					
Exclusively Caucasians	40%	21.9%	23.7%	15.366*	0.459
Exclusively Aboriginals	0%	31.3%	15.4%		
Exclusively another ethnicity	46.7%	15.6%	15.4%		
Mixed ethnicity	13.3%	31.3%	46.2%		

^a Variables not used in cluster solution.

†p ≤ 0.10; *p ≤ 0.05; **p ≤ 0.01; ***p ≤ 0.00

8.3. Types of gangs and behavioural outcomes

Gang structure matters only to the extent that it is associated with different criminal outcomes. The objective of this section is to determine whether the three types of gang structure can be differentiated in terms of gang initiations, gang criminal activities, and the gang criminal social capital (Table 16).

Table 16. Gang initiations, criminal activity, and criminal social capital by category of gangs

	Low Profile (n = 15)	Horizontally organized (n = 32)	Vertically organized (n = 26)	F / χ^2	Phi/ Eta
Gang initiations = 1	46.7%	84.4%	76.9%	7.725*	0.325
Crime commission = 1	13.3%	15.6%	15.4%	0.045	0.025
Ego violent event = 1	20%	34.4%	26.9%	1.097	0.123
Expressive violence towards others = 1	0%	25%	26.9%	4.915†	0.259
Blessed in = 1	13.3%	6.3%	19.2%	2.254	0.176
Gang criminal activities diversity (0 to 14) (SD)	6.4 (3.44)	8.16 (3.28)	9.15 (2.38)	3.938*	0.318
Drug dealing & supply index (0 to 3) (SD)	2.13(0.99)	2.22 (0.83)	2.62 (0.57)	2.488†	0.258
Violent crimes index (0 to 4)(SD)	2.13 (1.30)	2.50 (1.19)	3.31 (0.88)	6.291**	0.390
Money generating index (0 to 5) (SD)	1.67 (0.123)	2.25 (1.44)	2.42 (1.14)	1.676	0.214
Other crimes index (0 to 2) (SD)	0.47 (0.74)	1.19 (0.82)	0.81 (0.90)	4.088*	0.323
Total gang criminal social capital (0 to 22)	1.73 (1.33)	3.63 (3.57)	3.35 (3.50)	1.846	0.224
Positive (0 to 11) (SD)	1.53 (1.06)	2.72 (2.41)	2.96 (2.62)	1.500	0.203
Negative (0 to 11) (SD)	0.20 (0.41)	0.91 (1.59)	0.50 (1.42)	1.984	0.232

† $p \leq 0.10$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.00$

8.3.1. Gang initiations

This section examines whether a specific type of organizational structure is associated with (a) the occurrence of gang initiations and (b) the nature of gang

initiations. First, both the horizontally and the vertically organized gangs tend to have initiated their members (respectively, 84.4% vs. 76.9%). In contrast, the low profile group shows a significantly lower prevalence (46.7%) ($\chi^2 = 7.725, p \leq 0.05$). The latter group does not encourage gang symbols, and the gang initiation could be considered as a symbolic ritual that marks gang entry. Second, when investigating whether one particular type of initiation was most common among others by one particular type of gang structure, no clear patterns emerged. It was found, however, that the expressive violence act towards others was never reported as a type of initiation among the low profile gangs (0%). For the two other types, it was reported as occurring in similar proportions (vertically organized type = 25% and horizontally organized type = 26.9%).

No clear association was found between the type of gang and the type of initiation undergone by the participants of the study. But maybe this is more related to the nature of the gangs' criminal activities. A reasonable hypothesis would be that the severity of the initiation (e.g., violent or not) could be a good predictor of the nature of future gang criminal activities. This possibility was examined by classifying the three types of gang initiations into two groups: violent (ego violent event and violence towards other; $n = 36$) and non-violent (crime commission and blessed-in; $n = 20$). These two types were then compared to the diversity index and the four types of gang criminal activities. The results are presented in Table 17. First, participants who were initiated through a violent initiation were more likely to be found in gangs that were more criminally active (9.12) than those who were initiated through a non-violent initiation (7.32). The difference is statistically significant ($F = 5.356, p \leq 0.05$). Second, as expected, the results show that violent initiations tend to occur more often in gangs that are criminally active in violent crimes (3.02 vs. 2.37; $F = 4.380, p \leq 0.05$). In addition, violent initiations are also found in gangs that commit vandalism and graffiti (1.14 vs. 0.53; $F = 7.096, p \leq 0.10$). Note that graffiti are often used to mark a territory and others trespassing these boundaries can generate acts of violence, especially if the trespassers are from a rival gang (Walker, 2010).

Table 17. The occurrence of violent initiations and its association with the gang criminal activities

	Violent initiations		F	Eta
	No (n = 20)	Yes (n = 36)		
Gang criminal activities diversity (0 to 14)	7.32 (2.73)	9.12 (2.86)	5.356*	0.286
Drug dealing & supply index (0 to 3)	2.26 (0.73)	2.51 (0.70)	1.604	0.161
Violent crimes index (0 to 4)	2.37 (1.38)	3.02 (1.01)	4.380*	0.261
Money generating index (0 to 5)	2.16 (1.21)	2.44 (1.28)	0.670	0.105
Other crimes index (0 to 2)	0.53 (0.84)	1.14 (0.83)	7.096†	0.325

† $p \leq 0.10$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.00$

8.3.2. Criminal versatility

Table 16 also presents the associations between the three types of gangs found in the study and their involvement in criminal gang activities. The main objective is to verify whether the level of organization of the three different types of gang structure is related to a different level of criminal diversity. Moreover, it was important to examine if a certain type of gang would dominate in a particular area of criminal activities. The results suggest that greater diversity is associated with greater levels of organization. The more organized the gang is, the more versatile. For example, the vertically organized group is involved in a greater number of different criminal activities (9.15) compared to the horizontally organized group (8.16) and the low profile group (6.4). These differences are significant ($F = 3.938$, $p \leq 0.05$). More specifically, vertically organized gangs tend to be more diverse in two main areas: drug dealing and supply and violent crimes. However, the *other* crimes category, which includes vandalism and graffiti, does not follow the same logic based on the level of organization. Only the horizontally organized group tends to be more active in this area compared to the other two. One element that can explain this result is the fact that the use of graffiti is often linked to the need to mark a particular territory. In Table 15, it was evident that the horizontally organized group of gangs had the highest prevalence for identification of specific territory (71.9% in comparison to 65.4 for the vertically organized type and 53.3% for the low profile type).

8.3.3. Criminal social capital

Finally, Table 16 shows that none of the gangs' criminal social capital variables is significantly associated with the three types of gang structure. However, note that horizontally organized gangs (Type 2) recorded the highest level of total social criminal capital, including the highest proportion of negative ties. This type of gang structure also recorded the highest prevalence of violent crime involvement. Having more enemies may naturally lead to more violent activity. The vertically organized type (Type 3) recorded the highest prevalence of positive social criminal capital. That result may also explain their ability to diversify their criminal activities by reaching out to resources found in other criminal organizations.

8.4. Summary

The current chapter first aimed to provide a typology of gang structures that emerged from the sample of 73 gang members interviewed. A three-cluster solution was found. The first type was the low profile group. This group was mainly characterized by two organizational features: they do not show any gang symbols and only 53.3% have a gang name. Given that these gangs had other important organizational features; it is possible that the absence of these two particular features might be attributed to these gangs' preferring being less recognizable and identifiable. It also cannot be ruled out that they have not reached that stage yet. Note, however, that these gangs were found to be just as old as the other two types (Table 15). In addition, this type also includes gangs that tend to be the smallest of the sample, adding to the idea that they wish to be more discreet, without necessarily compromising their efficiency. The second type is the largest group and includes gangs that seem to be more horizontally organized. Two particular organizational features distinguish them: the lowest prevalence of occurrence of regular meetings and the lowest rate of the presence of a clear and well-defined hierarchy. It is important to specify that these gangs have gang leaders, a clear set of rules and ways to enforce them. The absence of hierarchy suggests that these gangs prioritize a horizontal style of organization and were labelled as such. The third type of gang corresponds to a more vertical style of gang organization. This type has the

largest and most highly organized gangs, showing 100% prevalence on almost every significant organizational feature.

A subsequent aim of the chapter was to explore whether these different types of gangs were embedded in different behavioural structures. Several major findings are linked to the gangs' initiation and gang criminal activities. First, gang initiations were found within all of the three types of gang structures. The low profile type showed the lowest prevalence. The initiation ritual could be interpreted for some gangs as a form of a gang symbol, and recall that the low profile type of gangs is not inclined to show any distinguishing gang sign. In addition, when looking at the specific type of gang initiation, an absence is noted, in the lower profile type, of the expressive violence initiation, which requires the perpetration of extreme violence on another gang member from a rival gang or a stranger. The highest prevalence of gang initiation is found within the horizontally organized gang, where most gangs exclusively composed of Aboriginal gang members are found. As shown in the previous chapter, most prospective Aboriginal gang members are initiated before being granted gang membership. Even if the difference is not statistically significant, a preference for violent types of initiations is observed, which is in line with what was found in the previous chapter. Second, in terms of gang criminal activities, the presence of a higher level of organization results in greater and more diverse involvement in gang criminal activities. This result has been found in prior research in both Canada and the United States (Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Decker, Katz, & Webb, 2008). In addition, all types of gang structures are involved in drug dealing activities and violent crimes. Involvement in vandalism and graffiti is more strongly associated with the second type of gang (horizontally organized). Note that this type is mainly characterized by Aboriginal gangs and specific territories, where usually the use of graffiti is useful to demarcate the turf. Finally, none of the gang criminal social capital variables tend to be significantly associated with a particular type of gang.

9. Can't Leave the Game Alone: The Gang Disengagement Process

“Gangs are easy to get in, but it could take your life (literally) to get out”

– *Beauvoir Jean, member of the first gang in Montreal -*

Master B, 21th June 2011, speech given at the launch of his biography

A total of 22 participants reported that they had desisted from their gang. This chapter examines that desistance process. More specifically, it investigates whether termination of membership is associated with the characteristics of the individuals or whether group characteristics and processes are more important when it comes to desistance. To do so, the differences between the active and desisted members are first examined. Then, a logistic regression and a CHAID analysis are used to determine which factors are more likely to predict gang desistance among our sample. This chapter also aims to examine (a) the role of potential triggering events on decision making related to membership desistance and (b) the role of violence in either discouraging membership. These two last objectives will be addressed by analysing the narratives of the 22 participants of this study who had recently left their gangs. The objective is to complement the quantitative results, which may not capture the complete spectrum of the decision process.

9.1. Description of the sub-sample of desisted members

Table 18 compares the sub-sample of the 22 desisted members of the study to the 51 other gang members still actively involved in their gangs at the time of the interview. The comparison between the two sub-samples is made based on individual characteristics that include the demographics (e.g., age of membership onset, gender, and ethnicity), the pre-membership variables (e.g., motivations to join and pre-membership criminal social capital), and membership variables that reflect (1) their

frequency of co-offending with non-gang members during their membership and (2) their time spent in custody during their membership.

Table 18. Description of the desisted subsample

	Disengagement from gang involvement			
	No (n = 51)	Yes (n = 22)	F / χ^2	Phi/Eta
Age of first gang involvement	13.33 (2.03)	13.05 (1.73)	0.337	0.069
Gender (female = 1)	5.9%	27.3%	6.506*	0.299
Ethnicity (Aboriginal = 1)	31.4%	9.1%	4.107*	-0.237
Total length of incarceration during gang involvement	146.04	204.14	1.510	0.144
Motivations to join				
Money	76.5%	68.2%	0.548	-0.087
Respect	76.5%	63.6%	1.273	-0.132
To deal drugs	62.7%	59.1%	0.087	-0.034
Protection	49.0%	63.6%	1.320	0.134
To make friends	33.3%	36.4%	0.063	0.029
Forced in	7.8%	4.5%	0.262	-0.060
Motivation scale (0 - 6)	3.059 (1.41)	2.95 (1.64)	0.086	0.035
Criminal social capital				
Introduction friends	60.8%	63.6%	0.053	0.027
Introduction family	33.3%	22.7%	0.821	-0.106
Introduced by multiple sources	2.37 (1.51)	1.64 (0.95)	4.446*	0.243
Family members in gang	68.6%	68.2%	0.001	-0.004
Frequent co-offending with non-gang	39.2%	50%	0.115	0.100
Initiation (Initiated = 1)	80.4%	59.1%	3.622†	-0.223
Violent initiations = 1	77.8%	47.1%	5.478*	-0.297

† $p \leq 0.10$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.00$

9.1.1. Demographics

Among the 73 participants of the sample, 22 (30%) answered negatively when asked if they were still currently affiliated with their gangs. Female participants made up 27.3% of the desisted group, compared to only 5.9 % of the active members ($\chi^2 = 6.506$, $p \leq 0.05$). In contrast, Aboriginal gang members were less likely to be found in the desisted category (9.1% vs. 31.4%) ($\chi^2 = 4.107$, $p \leq 0.05$).

9.1.2. *Pre-membership characteristics*

In terms of motivations that were mentioned as drives to get in, no significant difference was noticeable between the non-desisted members and the desisted members of the sample. However, note that desisted members presented a higher prevalence for the desire to get protection from the gangs. Among the kinds of criminal social capital that the individuals had before their membership, one main significant difference arises. Members who desisted from their gangs reported a fewer number of different sources that introduced them to gangs (1.64) in comparison to those who were still actively involved at the time of interview (2.37) ($F = 4.446$, $p \leq 0.05$). This result supports the idea that those who did not leave their gangs (yet) were more embedded in a social environment that encouraged gang affiliation.

9.1.3. *Characteristics during the membership period*

In addition, participants who were initiated when they first got involved made up 80.4% of the active group, compared to 59.1% of the desisted members. The difference is marginally significant ($\chi^2 = 3.622$, $p \leq 0.10$). However, this distinction is even more significantly evident when looking at the severity of the nature of the initiation (e.g., violent vs. non-violent). Those who were initiated through a violent gang initiation were less likely to have exited their gangs; in fact, they made up 47.1% of the desisted group, compared to 77.8% of the active members ($\chi^2 = 5.478$, $p \leq 0.05$). Another interesting observation is that desisted members reported that they were frequently co-offending with non-gang members during their membership (50% vs. 39.2%). The difference is not statistically significant, but it supports the idea that some gang members progressed through their exit by maintaining a co-offending network that could support their transition so that they could feel less dependent on the gang. It could also explain why terminating gang membership does not necessarily mean terminating committing crimes. Finally, members who desisted from their gangs recorded a higher number of total days spent in custody during their membership period. In fact, they recorded an average of 204.14 days, and those who are still active, an average of 146.04 days. The result is not statistically significant.

9.1.4. Description of the gang characteristics of the desisted sub-sample

Table 19 presents the gang characteristics that were reported by study participants. The comparison among the two sub-samples (active vs. desisted members) was used to identify whether there are significant differences between the two groups. First, in terms of the gang composition, there is no significant difference observed. Note that gangs who are mainly composed of Aboriginal members reported the lowest rate of desistance. Second, only one variable related to gang organization is significant: the use of violence to enforce gang rules. Desisted members reported a lower prevalence (81.8%) of such enforcement in comparison to the participants who are still active (96.1%; $\chi^2 = 4.143$, $p \leq 0.05$). This result is supported by American studies (Decker & Lauritsen, 2002; Pyrooz & Decker, 2011; Vigil, 1988). Third, members who decided to disengage from their gangs reported that their gangs were less versatile in their criminal activities (7.23 vs. 8.55; $F = 2.777$, $p \leq 0.10$). More specifically, desisted participants reported their gangs were less involved in drug-related crimes (2.05 vs. 2.47; $F = 4.517$, $p \leq 0.05$) and violent crimes (2.36 vs. 2.86, $F = 2.742$, $p \leq 0.10$). Finally, none of the gang criminal social capital variables was found to be statistically significant. Note that those who are still involved in their gangs present higher prevalence in terms of their gang criminal social capital.

Table 19. Group characteristics of the desisted sub-sample

Disengagement from gang involvement				
	No	Yes	<i>F</i> / χ^2	Phi/Eta
Gang composition				
Size log	4.52 (1.48)	4.38 (1.47)	0.153	0.046
Average Age	19.94 (3.91)	19.59 (3.66)	0.128	0.042
Duration (in months)	142.56 (113.72)	111.16 (84.91)	1.348	0.137
Ethnicity in four				
	-	-	2.499	0.185
Only Caucasian	23.5%	31.8%	-	-
Only Aboriginal	23.5%	9.1%	-	-
Only another ethnicity	19.6%	27.3%	-	-
Mixed	33.3%	31.8%	-	-
Gang organization				
Gang name	86.3%	95.5%	1.327	0.135
Leaders	94.1%	86.4%	1.225	-0.130
Symbols	76.5%	68.2%	0.548	-0.087
Meetings	68.6%	50%	2.288	-0.177
Specific territory	70.6%	54.5%	1.757	-0.155
Hierarchy	82.4%	68.2%	1.804	-0.157
Rules	86.3%	95.5%	1.327	0.135
Violent rules enforcement	96.1%	81.8%	4.143*	-0.238
Gang criminal activities				
Diversity	8.55 (3.28)	7.23 (2.65)	2.777†	0.194
Drug crimes	2.47 (0.78)	2.05 (0.79)	4.517*	0.245
Violence crimes	2.86 (1.23)	2.36 (1.05)	2.742†	0.193
Money generating crimes	2.27 (1.34)	2.00 (1.23)	0.673	0.097
Other crimes	0.94 (0.88)	0.82 (0.85)	0.305	0.065
Gang criminal social capital				
Positive	2.69 (2.12)	2.14 (2.80)	0.847	0.109
Negative	0.76 (1.53)	0.27 (0.88)	1.978	0.165
Combined	3.45 (3.18)	2.41 (3.40)	1.584	0.148

† $p \leq 0.10$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.00$

9.2. The disengagement from gangs: multivariate results

The association between desistance and both individuals' and gangs' characteristics were next examined at the multivariate level using a nested logistic regression model. The models included the control variables and only the variables that were significant from the bivariate analyses. Table 20 presents the logistic regression models that predict disengagement from gangs. The baseline model includes the four control variables (e.g., age of first gang involvement, gender, ethnicity, and total length of incarceration time during gang involvement). The model is significant ($\chi^2 = 17.61$, $p \leq$

0.01); all variables except the age of first involvement are found to be significant. As found in the bivariate results, female members are more likely to have left their gangs ($\beta = 2.38, p \leq 0.05$), in contrast to Aboriginal gang members, who are less likely to have done so ($\beta = -2.45, p \leq 0.05$). In addition, the more time the members spent in custody during their membership, the more likely they would desist from their gangs ($\beta = 0.00, p \leq 0.10$). This finding suggests that length of separation from gangs can reduce gang ties and facilitate desistance. Model 2 includes the control variables and two variables related to the gang-entry period (e.g., introduction by multiple sources and occurrence of a violent initiation). The model fit improves and is still significant ($\chi^2 = 21.97, p \leq 0.01$). Here it can be seen that both introduction by multiple sources and occurrence of a violent initiation are associated with continuing gang engagement (respectively, $\beta = -0.50$, and $\beta = -1.38$). These results are marginally significant, but suggest two things. First, that the pre-membership environment that first created the opportunity for prospective members to join gangs is as influential in the disengagement decision. The criminal environment seems to keep members in the gang lifestyle. Second, the presence of violence as the first manifestation of the group process may create a fear of having to undergo such rituals when leaving a gang. Note that this may be an inaccurate perception that some individuals have. Finally, Model 3 includes the control variables and two gang variables (e.g., violent rule enforcements and drug dealing gang activity). The model slightly improves in fit and remains significant ($\chi^2 = 22.63, p \leq 0.01$). Violent enforcement of gang rules is marginally significant and negatively associated with desistance ($\beta = -1.92, p \leq 0.10$). This result suggests that members may be scared to face violent consequences if they leave their gangs, because their gang employs violent enforcement for misconduct.

Table 20. Logistic regression predicting disengagement from gangs

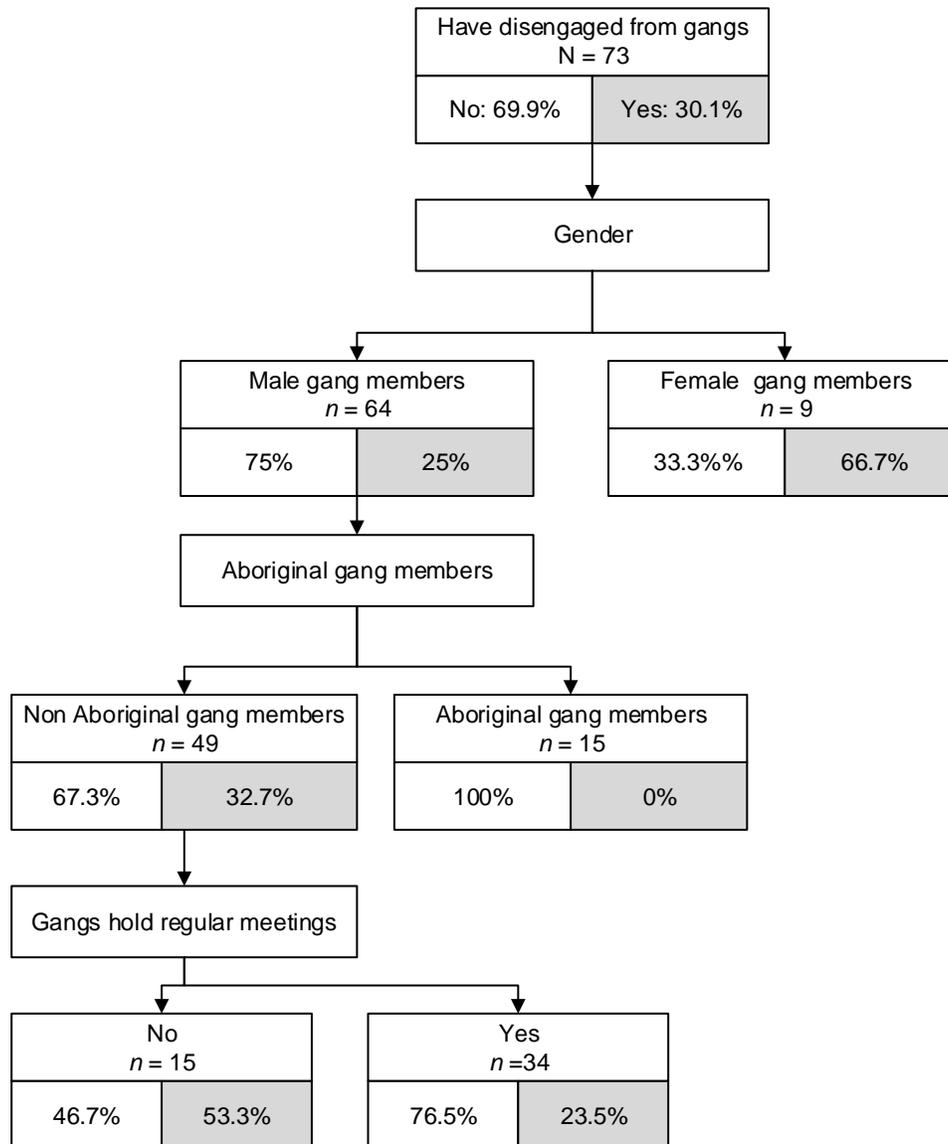
	Baseline		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Age of first involvement	-0.765	0.595	-0.834	0.722	-0.757	0.683
Gender (female = 1)	2.384*	0.936	3.163*	1.261	2.388*	0.973
Ethnicity (Aboriginal = 1)	-2.445*	1.025	-2.501†	1.299	-2.266*	1.048
Total length incarceration during gang involvement	0.003†	0.002	0.004*	0.002	0.003†	0.002
Introduced by multiple sources			-0.497†	0.284		
Violent initiations			-1.377†	0.818		
Violent rules enforcement					-2.024†	1.151
Drug crimes gangs activities index					-0.423	0.383
Constant	-0.937	0.460	0.543	0.834	1.863	1.445
Overall % predicted	74.0%		85.5%		75.3%	
χ^2 (<i>p</i>)	17.609**		21.967**		22.627**	
Cox and Snell pseudo- <i>R</i> ²	0.214		0.298		0.267	

†*p* ≤ 0.10; **p* ≤ 0.05; ***p* ≤ 0.01; ****p* ≤ 0.00

9.3. CHAID analysis results

The results of the CHAID analysis for the occurrence of the disengagement process are presented in Figure 5. First, as specified by the root node of the tree, 30.1% of the participants of the sample have disengaged from their gang at the time of the interview, while 69.9% reported being still active members. The first split in the tree differentiates female gang members and male gang members. For the female gang members, no other variable was needed by CHAID to predict the occurrence of the disengagement process. Among the male gang members of the sample, 25% reported having desisted from their gang at the time of the interview. Examining the male gang members reveals there is a second differentiating node, that is, being an Aboriginal gang member. None of the Aboriginal male gang members of the sample desisted from their gang. For those Aboriginal male gang members, no other variable is identified by CHAID as an important predictor. For male gang members who were not Aboriginals, the analyses further differentiate between those who reported belonging to a gang that held regular meetings. Those who reported regular meetings with their gang were less likely to have desisted from their gang (23.5%) compared to non-Aboriginal male gang members who did not report having to attend regular meetings.

Figure 5. CHAID analysis with the disengagement from gang as the predicted outcome



9.4. A qualitative examination of triggering events that influence gang desistance

To extend the understanding of the gang desistance process, the following section discusses triggering events that were identified as turning points by the 22 participants who desisted or were in the process of desisting from their gangs. These turning points illustrate how complex the desistance process is. Desisting from gangs

requires a de-identification process that starts with individual motives and a favorable group context. The de-identification process could be triggered by specific events (e.g., getting a job, having children, experiencing a traumatic event, incarceration) that result in a decision to leave (Vigil, 1988).

Participants were asked if they were still currently involved in their gangs and, if not, to explain why they decided to leave. This open question led to narratives that were grouped into five themes. Table 21 presents the distribution of the reasons for leaving reported by participants. Note that 3 participants mentioned more than one reason. For coding purposes, it was decided to recode multiple reasons into the one for which the individual provided the most detail.

Table 21. Distribution of the reasons for desisting from gangs

Reasons to desist	n	(%)
Maturation	4	(18.18%)
Incarceration time	3	(13.64%)
Gang dissolved	2	(9.09%)
Desire of independency	5	(22.73%)
Exhaustion of the gang life	3	(13.64%)
Near-death experience	3	(13.64%)
Moved	1	(4.56%)
No particular reason	1	(4.56 %)

9.4.1. Maturation

The first theme is maturation during the gang membership period. Four participants referred to that reason to explain their desistance. During the first interview, participant 1056 verbalized the desire to leave his gang once he gets out of prison. He was affiliated with a well-known gang in British Columbia. His offences were related to his gang activities and resulted in an incarceration of 927 days. When he was asked why he would like to leave his gang, he pointed out that he did real jail time because of his gang activities. Also, he said, “I realise how much I hurt my family and my girlfriend. I turned 18. Adult and crimes, it affects you for a long run”. I conducted multiple interviews with this participant and, for 2 years, observed him evolve in the prison setting. Over time, a change in his attitude toward his gang affiliation was noticeable. At

first, he was very proud of being affiliated with his notorious gang. He bragged about the advantage his membership had on his lifestyle, claiming, for example, that when “[I am] on the outs, I am hanging in casino, and illegal casino. I am wearing Versace, have a luxury life, and am dating a 28-year-old girlfriend”. Later, when his trial was coming, I met him to conduct other interviews, and he was tense and feeling anxious about everything. During that time, he had learned that his grandmother was very sick and then had passed away a couple of weeks later. This dramatic event was hard on him, and he was very talkative about his emotions. He was one of the rare kids that had weekly visitors. His family was supportive, and he told me how he has to make them proud. They were hurt and had invested a lot of money to find him the best lawyer. When he was taken into custody, he had had the feeling that his gang was still there for him, still behind him. (There is a common perception of “doing time” for the gang). He mentioned that he still had indirect contacts with his gang through his girlfriend. He was still feeling part of it, but, with time, he had less and less communication. His gang ties fell apart. He faced the reality that once a member is incarcerated, there is not much the rest of the gang can do, and it is the biological family that comes every week to support you.

Another incentive to change the gang lifestyle was mentioned by a female participant (1491) who got pregnant while being a member of a gang affiliated with the Hell’s Angels. She knew from that moment that she did not want that lifestyle for her baby boy. This event challenged her thoughts about the future, causing her to reconsider her gang membership and, consequently, terminate her gang affiliation. Two other participants stated that they just grew out of it and did not want to be involved anymore (1466 and 1531). Participant 1531 specified that she wanted to change her life and that “it was not hard to leave. I just stopped doing stuff and work with them. I told them I do not want to do that”.

9.4.2. *Incarceration time*

Three other participants mentioned that it was mainly their time in custody that affected their membership. Participant 1439 was incarcerated for more than a year. Her incarceration isolated her from her gang environment and forced her to desist, but, under other circumstances, she might have remained active. She did not deny this possibility.

Participant 1706 explained his desistance by the fact that he “stopped chilling with them because I was in custody”. Some were able to put more thought into their decisions to desist from gangs. Participant 1754 said that “when you end in a place like custody, it’s a change of motivation”. Note that this participant mentioned that his primary motivation to first join his gang was to get protection from them. It is probable that it was not part of his expectation of being in a gang to end up in custody by himself.

9.4.3. *Gang dissolved*

Two participants (1867 and 1869) mentioned their membership ended because their gangs were dissolved. Participant 1867 explained her situation:

After my brother and my cousins went in jail, it was just a bunch of 15 years-old kids left. All the OG’s were gone. I tried to run it but it was too hard and too stressful. I tell them to do one thing and they do something else. They screwed up, ratted.

At time of the interview, she was incarcerated for offences that were related to her gang activities (e.g., robbery and breach of probation order). Participant 1869 mentioned that he did not really have to leave his gang because the gang dissolved. He stated that his gang was not a formal gang per se, but they were a group who hung out together, fought together, and protected each other. In his interview, he also stated that his group had positive contacts with biker gangs (e.g., friendship, partying once or twice, and protection). According to him, his group was up and coming in 2009, especially when Abbotsford had lots of gang-related activity. At that time, police thought this group could become the next generation, and the youth was targeted by the police.

9.4.4. *Desire for independence*

Another cause of termination of membership is the desire to be an independent criminal (or, for some participants, to return to the “independent state”). This reason was mentioned by 6 participants. Participant 1827 stated, “I begin to be too old, I don’t want to do it anymore, I want to be independent”. The desire to be independent has a price. In fact, when the participant was asked if he faced any difficulties when leaving his gang,

he claimed that he had to undergo a beating out of 30 seconds by seven people, but he was allowed to fight back. This process is called the “beaten-out” and known as the hostile method of leaving a gang according to Pyrooz and Decker (2011). Note that the participant had to go through a similar ritual when he first joined the gang; his was a “blood-in” initiation, which refers to being beaten in.

Two other participants stated that they preferred to quit and continue their criminal activities on their own. Participant 1870 described himself as “just an independent guy”, and this is why he left his gang, whereas participant 1882 specified that it “was getting too heavy for me. I make more money by myself, I got to know people, know more connections, and I could protect myself”. Participant 1561’s discourse also suggested that the money was not worth it: “It was pointless, not enough money. I could do things my way. It was easy to leave; I just did not contact them anymore”.

Another participant (1880) mentioned that his membership terminated because of a conflict between him and the leaders. He was dealing drugs for them (crack, coke, and heroin). He explained the situation: “[I] got busted and now they said I owe them money. They told me I had two days to pay. I said fuck that, and dropped out at age 16”. The individual joined this gang at age 13. He quit his gang at 16, but, as shown by his most current criminal records, he was still involved in drug dealing. At time of interview, he had been charged with two counts of possession of a controlled substance and one count of possession for trafficking purposes. Termination of gang membership does not necessarily mean the cessation of crime involvement as well.

9.4.5. *Exhausted from gang life*

Three participants clearly stated that they based their decision to leave their gangs on the exhaustion they felt regarding gang life. Participant 1636 mentioned that in addition to the custody time related to his gang activities that he had to do, he was tired of the whole thing: “Too much heat, custody, tired of the lifestyle”. He even said that the gang itself suggested he leave. He said he did not have any problems with leaving. This participant was not classified with those who were tired of custody because his reasons were much more general, referring to custody as only one of multiple reasons

for his desistance. Exhaustion was the reason also expressed by participant 1351 who specified that he “got fed up with people beefing all the time. Gang fights and stuff”. This participant mentioned that his gang would pimp and also help provide protection for an organized crime group. Given the types of criminal activities his gangs were involved with; it appeared that he was involved in many physical altercations and conflicts.

Similarly, participant 1898 mentioned that he decided at some point to leave his gang because there was “too much bullshit and too much beef. If I did not leave I would have ended up in jail for a long time or dead so I moved”. Note that this participant had to leave the environment to end his membership, but obviously his involvement in criminal activities did not end as he had been incarcerated for other offences (e.g., two breaches, two counts of aggravated assaults, and one count of possession of dangerous weapon) when interviewed. One idea underlying his discourse was his awareness of the possibility of the dangerousness of this lifestyle.

9.4.6. *Near-death experience*

This last theme regroups the near-death experiences of 3 participants and/or their families. Participant 1588 admitted that he had reconsidered his membership 6 months earlier, when his dad died because of his own gang involvement. He also added that, at the same time, “he (the participant) started to shoot up” and “when the shit hits the fan, no one is there for you”. Participant 1771 faced a similar dramatic event. His dad was a Hell’s Angel, and he had committed suicide 3 years earlier. At that moment, the youth decided to quit; he just walked away from his gang. He did not have to do anything in particular. He was well respected in his gang due to his father’s status and because he (the participant) was one of the middle men. Another participant (1858) stated that his near-death experience made him reconsider his membership. “I dropped out at 15 years old. I did not want to get involved anymore. I almost got shot”. He reached his limit when he was exposed to violence that threatened his own security.

9.4.7. *Continued involvement and the power of the gang culture*

As mentioned by Decker and Lauritsen (2002), one barrier to disengagement comes from the gang, the belief and fear that one can never leave the gang. Three

participants mentioned during the interviews that they would like to leave their gangs but they simply couldn't. Participant 1684 clearly stated that "once you are in, you cannot leave". He believed that gang membership was permanent and part of the gang culture. This participant had been a member of a well-known gang of Vancouver, since he was 11 years old. His step-dad, who was also a member, "got [him] initiated".

Two Aboriginal participants also stated that desistance was not an option. Participant 1825 stated, "I just can't". Similarly, participant 1717 asserted that he could not leave: "It's just impossible". This participant was affiliated with a sub-group of a well-known Aboriginal gang. In this case, the youth knew that for him, there was no other life option than gang life. All his family were in gangs – "even my mom", he said. He also had family members affiliated with the Hell Angels. He stated:

We are not bad kids; it is just what we are doing that is bad. We did not have the chance to be raised "normally" like other kids. This is what my family is doing. A crew.

The gang was his roots; gang membership was his identity, and even if he wanted to change all that, it was way too complex, he was born in. Prior gang research shows that one first step to gang disengagement is self-determination, and a second is family support. This individual seems to have had neither of these two, and he was being very realistic about his prospects for leaving. This sort of situation should be taken into account when designing gang exit initiatives and programs.

9.4.8. *The gray zone of desistance and membership fluidity*

As voiced by some participants of this study, many gangs allow their members to dissociate themselves from the gang at any time, without any serious consequences. Only 1 participant reported having undergone a "beaten-out". Although 3 participants mentioned that, in their cases, membership was permanent, 3 others explicitly explained that there is a gray zone that exists with membership and desistance status.

To illustrate the gray zone of membership status, participant 1721 explained his transition through his disengagement. He stated: "[I] never leave really, but I am not in frequent contact anymore". According to him, he desisted from his gang, even though

he still works for them sometimes, i.e.: “sell drug and chill with them in houses”. Pyrooz, Decker, and Webb (2010) examined the social and emotional ties to gangs that persist after desistance, and this participant’s case is a typical example of a gradual de-identification that characterizes gradual desistance.

In contrast, participant 1834 stated that technically he did not leave, so he was still active, but he had just stopped doing jobs for them, and only did work for himself: “[I] just thought it was stupid, it was worth the money but not worth the jail time”. He specified that he had never been in jail for gang-related offences, but being there for other criminal activities, and he figured that the addition of more risks was not worth it. However, his membership status remained officially unclear.

Participant 1746 reported: “I am working with my brother, I can stop doing stuff or being involved for a while and it is fine”. His situation might be particularly due to his status with his brother; however, it shows how fluid membership could be. These three examples are not sufficient to draw general conclusions on the fluidity of membership, but certainly constitute an aspect to consider in future research.

9.5. Summary

This chapter aimed to provide insights into the disengagement process of gang members. A mixed approach was proposed to provide more contexts to the findings.

The results suggest that both individual and gang predictors are worth taking into account when examining the desistance process. At an individual level, female members are more likely to desist, whereas Aboriginal gang members are less likely to quit their gangs. These two main findings were also echoed in the findings of the CHAID analysis. Those who were introduced to gangs via multiple sources are less likely to quit their gangs because they are more embedded in a more favorable environment for gang membership. In addition, those who were initiated through violent rituals were more likely to still be active in gang life. At a gang level, two predictors are important to note: (1) If violence is used to enforce a gang’s rules, it is less likely that individuals will desist, and (2) the more criminally active the gang, especially in drug-related crimes, the more likely members will remain engaged.

It was possible to complement the findings by analysing the narratives of the 22 members of the sample who desisted from their gangs. Several themes discussed by the participants echoed the quantitative findings, but also provided more information on the reasons why some participants left their gangs. First, the time spent incarcerated while being a member was mentioned as a reason to quit. The feeling of having served enough time for the gang was voiced by the participants. Second, the desire for independence was mentioned as a reason that influenced the choice of desistance. The gang may not be lucrative enough to meet the needs of some members, or the members believe that they can do as well, or better, themselves, without having to depend on the gang. Third, the power of the gang culture was apparent in the narratives of 3 participants who stated that, for them, leaving the gang was not an option. Aboriginal gang members are less likely to leave their gangs, and they are the ones who are mostly initiated through violent initiations.

Finally, the fluidity of membership that allows for moving in and out of the gangs and, more importantly, the persistence of gang ties after desistance are key to explaining the challenges that both gang members and practitioners are facing when they tackle the gang desistance issue.

10. Discussion

Before the discussion moves into the results and their significance to gang studies, it seems important to recall the theoretical background that helps designing this dissertation. The main objective of the dissertation was to examine the sequential process of gang membership, from gang entry to the gang disengagement, by analyzing the pre-gang context, gang experience, and group processes of gangs. Three time periods were identified as crucial in gang members' trajectories: (1) the pre-membership period, (2) the gang involvement period, and (3) the disengagement period. These three periods fit the role transitions and the evolution of membership status that were described by the group socialization model proposed by Moreland and Levine (1982). Moreover, two causal models proposed by Thornberry et al. (1993) are used to specify the causal direction of the membership effect during these three periods.

The first causal model is the selection model. It suggests that individuals who are already involved in delinquency and violence seek out or are recruited into gangs. The selection process occurs during the pre-membership period. This phase fits the investigation period proposed by Moreland and Levine's (1982) model which is the time when groups are recruiting and individuals are looking for recognition of their value and assets. This period is marked by the entry-role transition, when an individual's status changes from being a prospective member to being new member. However, little is known regarding when and how entry opportunities occur. The main hypothesis is that the pre-membership social environment in which prospective members are embedded facilitates opportunities for gang entry. Opportunities should vary in terms of time (early vs. late onset), and nature (occurrence of an initiation or not) along the pre-membership social environment. The first part of this chapter discusses the results from Chapter 6 that examined this pre-membership period.

The second causal mechanism is the facilitation model. The main argument is that the gang, through its group dynamics and normative structure, facilitates

delinquency and violence, resulting in a significant increase of individuals' involvement in such criminal activities. The facilitation process occurs during the gang involvement period, which is also referred to as the socialization and maintenance periods described by Moreland and Levine (1982). During this period, the group tries to adapt to the newcomers, and the newcomers are becoming assimilated. This period is marked by the acceptance transition, when a new member is promoted to full member. One particularity specified by Moreland and Levine's (1982) model is that role transitions are often accompanied by a ritual, such as an initiation event. In the current study, particular attention was paid to the initiation process that marked the transition of prospective members to newcomers because no Canadian studies have examined this first experience in the group. One hypothesis is that some pre-membership factors may be associated with a particular type of initiation. For instance, the motivation that drove a prospective member to join a gang might be reflected in the type of initiation he or she had to undergo. For prospective members who mentioned wanting to join a gang to deal drugs, it can be hypothesized that the gang might want to initiate them through a drug deal mission in order to test their skills and commitment to this kind of work.

Another hypothesis is that type of gang structure is more likely to be associated with a particular type of criminal behaviour and gang activity, such as the initiation. Past research has shown that the level of organization of a gang is directly associated with its capacity to orchestrate diverse criminal activities (including an initiation). However, most studies have looked at the facilitation influence of the gang on individual criminal outcomes and too little is known about the same influence on the group criminal behaviours and activities. In addition, knowing that gangs are embedded in a larger socio-criminal structure (e.g., inter-gang structure), it can be hypothesized that gangs' criminal social capital (i.e., the nature of the interactions that gangs have with other gangs and/or criminal organizations) can facilitate gangs' involvement in criminal activities. No prior studies have looked at that particular aspect in order to predict the group's involvement in criminal activities. The current chapter also aims to discuss the results on both the initiation event presented in Chapter 7 and the influence of gangs' structures on their criminal activities (Chapter 8).

According to the facilitation model, the disengagement from gangs should result in a diminution of criminal activities (see Thornberry et al., 2003) however recent

research has suggested that the facilitation effects produced by the gang seemed to persist even after members have left their gangs (Pyrooz & Decker, 2011; Pyrooz, Decker, & Webb, 2010). The persistence of the facilitation effect is associated with the individual's emotional attachment to the gang and embeddedness in criminal networks. For the purpose of this dissertation, it has been hypothesized that individuals who are ready to start the process of disengagement from gangs have already begun a contemplation phase. This phase refers to a self-assessment of readiness for change (this concept has been applied to the street exit process of homeless people; see Karabanow, 2008). Moreland and Levine (1982) referred to this period as *resocialization*, when one last chance is given to the accommodation and/or assimilation to occur between the group and the individuals. If both parties do not agree on an acceptable level of commitment, then the divergence transition begins. The member gradually becomes a marginal member and drifts to the exit transition role, to finally become an ex-member of the group. Although a handful of studies have addressed the desistance process, no studies have looked at the association between both the group and the gang members on the disengagement process. The current chapter discusses the results from Chapter 9 on the disengagement process among the 73 participants of this study.

While this combination of the causal explanatory models of Thornberry et al. (1993) and the group socialization model of Moreland and Levine (1982) seemed to theoretically cover the sequential process of gang membership, two other perspectives emerged as important to an understanding of the trajectory of gang members. The first is the *group process perspective* which stipulates that any group carries properties that are influencing the behaviour of its members, and the second is the *social capital perspective* (at both the individual and group levels) which is defined as any aspect of informal social organization that constitutes a productive resource for one or more actors (Coleman, 1994). Both will be referred to in the interpretation of the results below. The discussion of the results is divided into the three important time periods in gang trajectories.

10.1. The pre-membership period

The dissertation has first examined the pre-membership period and investigated whether individuals' characteristics are associated with the age of first gang involvement and nature of gang entry.

10.1.1. *First gang involvement*

When differentiating early and late-onset gang members of the sample, two main findings are worth reiterating: the influence of the family members already involved in gangs and the desire to get respect. First, this study examined whether the pre-membership social environments of prospective members played a facilitating role in first gang involvement process. As hypothesized, an early entry in gangs (before 14 years old) may have been facilitated through the pre-membership social environment. The results showed that participants who reported having been introduced to gangs by a parent were more likely to have joined a gang at an early age. Similar associations were found for participants who mentioned having family members already in gangs, without specifying if they had to use their existing connections to become affiliated. At the multivariate level, when the immediate criminal social environment (having family members involved in gangs) is compared to the actual use of available social capital (being introduced to gangs by a parent), only the presence of family members in gangs remained significant. This result suggests that an early opportunity to join a gang is more likely to be created for individuals who are already embedded in a criminal social structure. The concept of *social embeddedness*, echoed in the works of Sutherland (1947) and Granovetter (1985, 1992), refers to the social structure in which an individual is entrenched and with whom he or she has frequent interactions with other individuals in that structure. Individuals' already having family members in gangs suggests that they were also already frequently interacting with that world. Sharing the same social environment may reinforce social beliefs and norms; it can also create obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness (Granovetter, 1985). More importantly, as mentioned by Coleman (1988), embeddedness in networks is a source of social capital and such social structure facilitates action. In this case, it seems that the opportunity to join a gang at an early age is facilitated by the embeddedness of the individual in the gang

environment. Miller (2001) interviewed 48 female gang members and 46 criminally active non-gang members in two cities: St. Louis and Columbus. In St. Louis, female gang members were significantly more likely to report having family members in gangs (both immediate and extended family) than non-gang members. In Columbus, the proportion was also higher for gang members, but was not found to be significant. More specifically, participants explained that family members contributed to their decisions to join gangs by prompting them toward that path. As the author mentioned, having family in gangs encourages the perception of “gangs as an appropriate option for themselves as well” (p.54). However, this study did not examine whether having family members involved in gangs facilitated early entry. Thornberry et al.’s (2003) study looked at the motivations to join and their associations with an early or later onset. According to them, boys who joined gangs by *wave 3* (which is defined as early onset) were less likely than those with a later onset to join because of the influence of family and friends who were already involved in gangs. Their interpretation of this result was built around the formation of social networks around deviant behaviours and the role played by the fun, action, and excitement this network provides. One limitation acknowledged by the authors is that their category included both “friends” and “family”, potentially blurring an important distinction between these two sources of influence. In the current study, no participants mentioned fun, action, and excitement as a motivation to join gangs. However, the participants who were included in the late onset category mentioned that they joined a gang in order to gain respect, in contrast to those who were in the early entry category. One hypothesis could be that respect is a value that young people search for at a later age, rather than during the pre-adolescence period. Younger offenders might have joined for more instrumental reasons, such as making money, friends, and dealing drugs.

Respect is very central to gangs, but also, more generally, on the streets. As argued by Anderson (1999), having respect on the streets is a form of social capital; it can be seen as a protective asset, as well as at the core of the individual’s identity and self-esteem. In the study of Decker and Van Winkle (1996), one of the benefits of gang membership identified by some participants was that it brought respect from others. One hypothesis suggested in the results chapter on gang entry is that individuals who were already involved in violence and delinquency looked for membership in order to get the

respect they thought they deserved for what they were already doing as a non-gang member, which involved criminal activities. In other words, they were in need of recognition. In Moreland and Levine's (1982) group socialization model, search for recognition was identified in the initial phase of the membership process, the search for a suitable group to join. In the current study, participants who reported having joined their gangs to get respect were more likely to have been involved in a greater number of different criminal activities prior to their gang involvement (3.40 vs. 4.62; $F = 3.430$, $p \leq 0.10$). This result suggests a possible explanation regarding the association between the motivation to get respect and later age of first gang involvement: Because the individuals had spent more time as independent criminals before joining gangs, it could have delayed the time of their gang entry. Why is respect so important? How do gangs facilitate this value? Anderson (1999) suggested that often respect is all they have, referring to the inner-city youths of his study. Respect is at the core of the code of the street. The code provides a way to achieve respect and to hold it. The gang context provides an opportunity to gain and maintain respect (Decker & Curry, 2000; Matsuda et al., 2013). For example, as mentioned by Anderson (1999), respect could be measured by appearance (including clothing, behaviours, way of moving, crowds they run with, family reputation), and by the method used to punish those who transgress the code. Violence plays an important role in deterring transgressors, both within the gangs and between gangs (Decker, 1996, Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Respect is facilitated by group processes of the gang (including, e.g., gang organization, use of violence, gang criminal social capital) (see Matsuda et al., 2013). The initiation is a turning point where prospective members can prove who they are, and gain some respect; the gang uses the event to also establish the normative system that is part of the gang life.

10.1.2. Nature of gang entry

The first results chapter (Chapter 6) also examined whether pre-membership factors were associated with a specific type of gang entry, that is, being initiated or not. First, all Aboriginal gang members in the study ($n = 18$) had undergone an initiation when they first became affiliated. In the CHAID solution, being an Aboriginal gang member is the most robust predictor associated with the occurrence of a gang initiation. According to Totten (2009), Aboriginal gangs are an intergenerational phenomenon, and

they are more inclined to rely on violent entry and exit rituals to protect the gang from outsiders. Aboriginal gangs are well known to be involved in violence (Cohen & Corrado, 2011; Grekul, & Laboucane-Benson, 2008; Totten, 2009), but it remains unclear whether that could explain why Aboriginal prospective members are more likely to be initiated. One hypothesis of the current study is that some individual-related factors might influence the occurrence of a gang initiation, but also their willingness to undergo such ritual. Goodwill's (2009) dissertation focused on entry into and exit from Aboriginal gangs, as well as the motivations underlying each process. She proposed that a possible interpretation of the desire of Aboriginal individuals to join gangs is to prove their worth. Many Aboriginal youth have experienced disenfranchisement, violence, abuse, and multiple sources of maltreatment (Badger & Albright, 2003; Goodwill, 2009; Totten, 2009), and the options for meeting their needs are often very limited. Gang life becomes a survival option for them (Goodwill, 2009). This survival mode might be hypothesized to be at the core of the willingness of the Aboriginal prospective members to join gangs and to undergo gang initiation. However, it is important to recall that the current study does not have a representative sample of Aboriginal gang members ($n = 18$). In addition, although Decker and Van Winkle (1996) suggested that prospective members had a certain "choice" to decide on the type of initiation, however they never mentioned that the prospective member had a choice regarding the occurrence or not the initiation.

Another factor that seems to influence the occurrence of initiation is prospective members' age when they are recruited. Younger prospective members are more likely to have undergone a gang initiation. Two possible hypotheses are worth discussing. First, from an individual point of view, it is possible that, at a young age, prospective members are more inclined to accept initiation. Their willingness may be associated with naivety about the risks and consequences of membership, as well as with a sort of eagerness to be a part of something. Thornberry et al. (2003) found that individuals who had joined for fun and excitement were more likely to have joined at an early age of onset. The initiation became their first experience of being part of a gang, and the younger prospective members seemed more inclined to comply with gang requirements. Second, from a group point of view, recruitment of younger members may involve testing their credentials and skills because gangs may suspect that at such young ages, recruits

have less criminal experience. Gang initiation is an opportunity to test newcomers to see if they are worthy of membership and if they will contribute to the achievements the gangs expect.

Again, as previously discussed, respect is at the core of the gang code and of gang life. The results of the current study showed that individuals who joined gangs in order to get respect were more likely to get initiated. For the same reason, the gang initiation event is the first opportunity for prospective members to gain some respect, and it can be hypothesized that those who are thirsty for recognition might be more inclined to agree to such rituals. One limitation of this study is that participants were asked about their motivations after they had already been members of gangs, had already been initiated. It is important to question if these individuals really had the drive they described they had before entering the gang or whether their answers were affected by the time they had spent as members in the gang. Their answers could have reflected their current situations more than the ones they were in as younger prospective members.

Finally, one less expected result was that no criminal social capital predictors appeared to be significantly associated with the occurrence of initiation. The initial hypothesis was that prospective members who already had family in gangs were more likely to avoid the initiation process, as suggested by the concept of being blessed-in. Recall that being blessed-in means being granted membership without having to undergo an initiation because of previous connections in the gangs, such as family members (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Walker, 2010). This special case was also echoed in the narratives of some of the participants, but that association was not revealed by the analyses. Although statistically non-significant, all the criminal social capital measures point in the same direction, that is, a positive association between criminal social capital and initiation. The lack of statistical power from the small sample size is the most probable explanation for the non-significance of this finding. In any case, this result suggested that social capital does not seem to help in avoiding gang initiation.

10.2. The gang involvement period

After pre-membership period, the gang involvement period was examined. This period was covered by two different results chapters (Chapter 7 and 8). The first one focused on the nature of the initiation process, during which the prospective member was first granted membership. The second results chapter described the different gang structures represented in the sample of the study and whether the different gang structures were associated with different criminal activities.

10.2.1. *Gang initiations*

Chapter 7 qualitatively described the nature of the gang initiation based on the narrative of the 54 initiated participants and investigated whether the variation in gang initiations could be attributed to individual pre-membership characteristics. No specific hypotheses were elaborated as no prior studies have looked at these possible associations.

Although the findings are exploratory, they reveal a variation in types of gang initiation in the British Columbia context. Three main types were identified: the ego violent event, the crime commission, and the expressive violence towards others. Most studies (although few in number) that have mentioned information on initiation rituals have reported relatively similar types, although they have labeled them in different terms (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Huff, 1998; Jankowski, 1991; Miller & Brunson, 2000; Spergel, 1995; Vigil, 1988, 1996). The first category (the ego violent event) includes initiations that been referred to as a *beat-in*, or *jump-in*, where the prospective member was on the receiving end of group violence. This type is the most common one and acknowledged in most studies that reported gang initiations (Best & Hutchinson, 1996; Decker, 1996; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Huff, 1998; Jankowski, 1991; Miller & Brunson, 2000; Spergel, 1995; Vigil, 1988, 1996). The two other types are generally combined into one category: “going on a mission or a posse” (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996, p. 70). This type of initiation may require prospective members to engage in acts of violence toward another individual (usually a rival gang member) or to commit a crime (violent or not). For the purpose of the current study, it has been decided to distinguish the initiations that were strictly violent (expressive violence towards others) from those

that did not necessarily require violence (the crime commission type). Best and Hutchinson (1996) asserted that random violence toward a non-gang member should be considered an urban legend. In the current study, however, some participants stated that the target of their violence was a non-gang member. Although these cases are rare, the presence of this phenomenon in this small sample needs to be emphasized.

These three types of gang initiation were then compared based on individual characteristics nested in the pre-membership period. The idea was to examine whether or not prospective members' backgrounds had any influence on the type of initiation the gang required. The crime commission type was not associated with any individual characteristics. One interesting observation is that no female gang members in the study ($n = 9$) were initiated through the crime commission type. Miller and Brunson's (2000) study mentioned that 63% of the female gang members of their sample were initiated ($n = 27$). More specifically, 11 (41%) reported having undergone an ego violent initiation, while 6 (21%) reported that their gangs held other types of rituals (including committing a crime, getting gang tattooed, or being sexed-in). In Miller and Brunson's study, the crime commission type of initiation was not only reserved for male gang members, in contrast to what was the case in the current study. In fact, most of the female gang members of the current study reported having been initiated through an ego violent type of initiation.

The ego violent type of initiation was also associated with members who joined a gang at an early age. This association could be interpreted in two ways. At an individual level, as mentioned by Thornberry et al. (2003), younger prospective members may be motivated by the fun and excitement that gangs provide. In addition, younger prospective members might be more willing to undergo such violent rituals. At a group level, and as suggested by Decker and Van Winkle (1996):

[The gang wants to] determine whether a prospective gang member is indeed tough enough to endure the rigors of violence they will undoubtedly face. After all, members of the gang may have to count on this individual for back up, and someone who turns tails at the first sign of violence is not an effective defender. (p. 69)

Also, this type of initiation was more frequent for participants who reported having been forced into it and less frequent for those who purported having joined to make money. The use of an ego violent ritual for those who were forced to join ($n = 5$) was expected. The two other types of gang initiation require a voluntary involvement of the individual by either committing a crime or by engaging in expressive violence toward others, whereas the ego violent ritual is basically a form of victimization by the gangs (Peterson, Taylor, & Esbensen, 2004). Also, participants who said they joined gangs to make money were not primarily initiated through an ego violent ritual. This result was not surprising. The only way to make money by joining a gang is by being involved in criminal activities. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that if there is an association between the motivation of the prospective member and the type of initiation required, then perhaps those who reported this type of motivation were more likely to be initiated through a crime commission initiation. However, it is important not to forget that the gang has an organizational structure and areas of criminal activities that they are involved in and that these elements may have a stronger impact on the type of the initiation than the actual motivation of the individuals.

In addition, half of the Aboriginal gang members of the sample were initiated through this type of initiation. Totten (2009) previously reported that Aboriginal gangs have a preference for violent entry and exit rituals. Although being an Aboriginal gang member does not necessarily mean being involved in “Aboriginal gangs”, most Aboriginal participants of the study (11 out of 18) reported being affiliated with a gang exclusively composed of Aboriginal members. Similar results were found for the expressive violence towards others where 7 out of 18 Aboriginal members reported having undergone such an initiation.

The last type of initiation that was revealed in the interviews was the expressive violence towards others. In addition to being reported by Aboriginal members, the expressive violent ritual was also most frequent for participants who had recorded a higher number of different delinquent activities prior to their gang involvement. This type of initiation is also characterized by participants who reported having joined their gangs to gain respect and to deal drugs. First, as demonstrated previously, respect is gained mostly through violence. The expressive violence ritual, which is considered the most serious type of initiation among those in the sample, entails a prospective member's

being asked to perpetrate a violent act against another individual (either another gang member or a non-gang member). Decker and Van Winkle (1996) acknowledged this type of initiation and mentioned that one of its objectives is to “advertise to all that the gang intends to protect its own and how far its members will go in standing up for each other” (p.173). This type of initiation is an opportunity for the gang to promote violence, a specific type of violence that is motivated by honour, respect, reputation, and solidarity (Gould, 2003). Secondly, the rationale behind the association of the motivation to deal drugs and the expressive violent type of initiation seems to be linked with the group criminal activities. Drug markets are governed by violence (Reuter, 2009); consequently, the prospective member needs to be able to show that he or she can handle violence, and, most importantly, that he or she can be a perpetrator. Being able to engage in violence is a requirement for several criminal activities, but mostly for drug dealing. For instance, participants were asked to raid a crack shack or to collect drug debts from consumers. These are examples of the daily business that a prospective member will have to be ready to deal with as an official member.

Finally, the results showed that another scenario is possible. The blessed-in category referred to participants who avoided the initiation usually required by the gang because of the connections they had within the gang or other criminal organizations. The blessed-in option did not occur for any of the Aboriginal gang members in the study. In addition, prospective members in this category were also characterized by the lowest rate on the general delinquency index prior to their gang involvement, meaning they were less versatile or more specialized offenders. The expectations were that these participants had family members involved in gangs. The statistical findings were not significant, perhaps because of the small number of participants who were blessed-in. Also, participants who had been introduced by a friend were less likely to have been blessed-in. While it remains unclear whether or not the friend was already involved in the gang, it can safely be assumed that he or she had some sort of connections in the criminal milieu. That being said, these friends generally did not have the status to help those prospective members avoid initiation.

10.2.2. *Gang structures and criminal outcome*

The gang structures represented in the sample were presented in Chapter 8. A gang structure classification was first created based on gang organizational and composition characteristics. It was then possible to examine whether these different types of gangs were active in equally different criminal activities (including gang initiations).

The main objective of the study was not to create a new gang typology for future use, but, rather, to organize the data in a way that could be meaningful for understanding initiations and criminal activities. The fact that gangs widely vary in structure and that such variations are associated with different outcomes is well established (Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Klein, & Maxson, 2006; Maxson & Klein, 1995; Yablonsky, 1962). The classification step was necessary for establishing whether a specific structure impacts differently the type of initiation required by the gang and their involvement in criminal activities.

Three types of gang structure were revealed by the cluster solution: (1) the low profile gang, (2) the horizontally organized gang, and (3) the vertically organized gang. The first category was mainly characterized by an absence of gang symbols, and not all of these gangs had a gang name to distinguish themselves. Gangs classified in this group tended to be composed of smaller gangs; however, that did not seem to affect their level of general organization. Decker and Van Winkle (1996) suggested that gang symbols play an important function in gangs that have grown too large. Symbols help individuals to recognize each other and to determine quickly their allegiance. Since the gangs classified in the low profile category tended to be smaller compared to gangs in the other two categories, it can be hypothesized that a need for symbols in order to recognize their members was not applicable. Though gang symbols have other functions, for instance, enhancing cohesion or communicating information, it can be hypothesized that these gangs used other group characteristics and processes to reach these objectives. For example, the low profile category tended to hold regular meetings which undoubtedly helped to share information among the members (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). In addition, some members of Decker and Van Winkle's study mentioned that they refused to get gang-tattooed because it would make them too visible a target

for rival gangs and authorities. That seems to reflect the idea behind the hypothesis that gangs in this first category try to keep lower profiles by being less physically recognizable and identifiable. This category is also represented by gangs mostly homogenous in terms of their ethnic composition. Note that no Aboriginal gangs represented in the study were found in this category. In terms of criminal activities, the low profile type included gangs that were less likely to initiate their members. The initiation ritual is a form of gang symbol and achieves a similar function, including the formalization of gang membership identity and the strengthening of group cohesion. In that regard, it is expected that this category is less likely to have initiated their members. Also, none of the participants from this type of gang reported the most serious type of gang initiation, expressive violence towards others. This finding can be related to the same idea of keeping a lower profile by not attracting authorities' attention, or it can be hypothesized that the most common types of initiation among these gangs are associated with the nature of the gang's criminal activities. The gangs represented in this category reported the lowest rate on the diversity gang criminal activity index. That could mean that these gangs are more likely to be involved in a smaller array of different types of crimes. The findings suggested that they were equally involved in both drug dealing and violent crimes.

The second category is horizontally organized gangs where members feel more like "equals", even if the presence of leaders are reported by participants. This category is the most represented in the sample of the current study. These gangs have gang name, symbols, rules, and leaders; however, they do not have a clear hierarchy and do not hold regular meetings. The absence of a clear hierarchy only means that no specific rules and responsibilities are attributable to different roles within the structure. In Decker and Van Winkle's (1996) study, some participants mentioned there was no need to hold meetings because all the gang members saw each other on the streets on a daily basis. Although the difference is not statistically significant, this type of gang, compared to the two other types, recorded the highest prevalence of having a specific territory. This observation suggests that members of these gangs occupy a specific territory and are there to protect and defend it. When examining their involvement in gang criminal activities, it was noted that this type of gang recorded the highest prevalence on the other crimes index, which included vandalism and graffiti. Decker and Van Winkle

(1996) mentioned that the main purpose of graffiti is to identify the gang's territory as well as the gang's location. Also, graffiti messages could also be addressed to rival gangs or members. Note that the horizontally organized type comprised gangs that recorded the highest prevalence of negative criminal social capital. While this result did not significantly distinguish this type from the others, it showed some support for the hypothesis that these gangs are territorial and more likely to have rivals. In terms of gang initiation, this type recorded the highest prevalence of initiation. More specifically, gangs represented in this category initiated their members through a violent type of initiation.

The third category is vertically organized gangs. Gangs in this category recorded the highest possible level of organization. This category is also composed of the largest gangs and tends to best describe gangs that are ethnically mixed. This category is also characterized by gangs that have generally existed for the longest time, an average of 14 years. In terms of gang initiation, this category is mostly characterized by the two violent types of initiations. Note that members of vertically organized gangs recorded the highest prevalence on the number of different criminal activities that their gangs were involved in, and, more specifically, they were strongly involved in drug dealing and violent crimes. This high prevalence might be associated with the level of the gang organization and its ability to carry out gang activities. This finding is consistent with previous studies on the influence of group process on involvement in criminal activities (Bouchard & Spindler, 2010; Decker, Katz, & Webb, 2008). Finally, although the difference is not statistically significant, the vertically organized type recorded the highest prevalence of positive criminal capital. This non-significant association suggested that gangs in this category have friendships and business interactions with other gangs and criminal organizations. This source of social capital could be hypothesized to be associated with the greater range of criminal activities these gangs are involved with.

The gangs represented in the sample showed different organizational structures, and it is important to understand the influence of such group processes on different criminal outcomes. First, the organizational structure of the gang did not reveal clear patterns in terms of association with specific types of initiations, but did for the occurrence or not of initiation. This result supports the decision to include the presence of initiation as a measure of gang organization level; however, the nature of initiation

does not seem to be related to level of organization. It has then been hypothesized that the nature of the initiation (violent or non-violent) might be associated with the nature of gang criminal activities. As shown by the results, gangs who are involved in violent crimes, and those who are involved in vandalism and graffiti, are more likely to have their members initiated through violent rituals. Second, the level of gang organization is associated with a greater and diverse involvement of the group in criminal activities. This finding supported the hypothesis that based on previous research that had demonstrated an association between the level of group organization and the individuals' involvement in criminal activities, a similar association could be expected at the group level, that is, involvement of the gang in criminal activities (see Decker et al, 2008).

10.3. The disengagement period

The last results chapter (Chapter 9) focussed on the disengagement process. While only 22 participants of the sample mentioned having desisted from their gangs at the time of the interviews, some important findings were revealed, especially because gang members were invited to provide further details of their disengagement experience in the open-ended section of the questionnaire. First, as suggested by Decker and Lauritsen (2002), both group and individual characteristics influence the process of desistance. Individuals may make the decisions, but, at the same time, the gang seems to influence why and when such a process is more likely to occur.

At an individual level, four characteristics were important to consider in the disengagement process. First, the only characteristic that was found to be significantly associated with the occurrence of desistance was being a female. Though the sample of the current study only included 9 female gang members, these participants seemed to have been more likely to desist from gangs than male gang members of the sample, a finding that is supported in past research. In fact, prior research on female gang members had shown that the duration of their membership tends to be shorter compared to male gang members (Peterson, Miller, & Esbensen, 2001; Thornberry, 1999). Second, Aboriginal gang members of the study were less likely to have desisted. Gangs are often described as surrogate families for disenfranchised young people, which is

particularly the case for Aboriginal youths (see Goodwill, 2009; Grekul & Laboucane-Benson, 2006). Perhaps Aboriginal gang members are less likely to desist because the gangs meet their needs of feeling a sense of belonging and acquiring some respect. Another possible explanation might be associated with the fact that all Aboriginal gang members of the sample were initiated, and mostly through violent rituals. The belief that exit from a gang is only possible through a violent ritual (Decker, 1996; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Klein, 1971; Vigil, 1988) could be even stronger for members who have been initiated through a violent entry ritual. Third, in terms of criminal social capital, the main hypothesis was that having family members involved in gangs was a stronger predictor of non-desistance. The results did not support this hypothesis. However, among the criminal social capital indicators, having been introduced by multiple sources (for example, friends and family, or neighbourhood and family) was significantly associated with continuity of gang involvement. The fact that these individuals were surrounded by environments supportive of the gang membership lifestyle may have had an impact on the duration of their membership. The concept of criminal embeddedness appears to be important in understanding continuity, just as it was central to predicting early entry into gangs. Although the study did not confirm the criminal nature of the sources who introduced prospective members to gangs, it can be hypothesized that they were related to the criminal world since they facilitated gang entry. This type of social environment is determinant in individuals' trajectories as it maintains them in a context that normalizes the criminal lifestyle (Miller, 2001). This phenomenon is an important challenge in the elaboration of gang intervention strategies because it means that the social environment that first facilitated the recruitment of the individuals remains present and influential during the gang involvement. As such, it represents a stable condition in the lives of gang members and could be a crucial obstacle to the disengagement process.

Fourth, another important finding was linked to violence within the gang. The results of this study showed that prospective members who had been initiated through violent initiations were less likely to have desisted at the time of the interview. It is hypothesized that this result is nested in the gang belief that violent entry and exit rituals are required (Decker, 1996; Decker & Lauritsen, 2002; Klein, 1971; Vigil, 1988) to ensure loyalty and long-term commitment. Though some researchers argue that this is a

common belief among gang members, only rare cases of violent exit ceremonies are reported (Pyrooz & Decker, 2011). In the current study, only one participant reported having undergone a violent exit ritual.

A similar association at the group level was observed. In fact, participants who had reported that their gang enforced rules violently were less likely to have left their gangs. These two results (both at the individual and group levels) are governed by the same process: internal gang violence (Decker, 1996; Vigil, 1988). Past research has shown that violence is one of the mechanisms that enhances group cohesion and solidarity (see Decker, 1996; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996), and it has the capacity to enhance the ties that bind the individuals to gangs. Previous studies have also shown that gangs that have violent forms of enforcement tend to be more organized (Decker, Bynum, & Weisel, 1998; Decker, Katz, & Webb, 2008; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996).

In the current study, participants who reported that their gangs were involved in several different types of gang criminal activities were less likely to have disengaged from their gangs, especially those who were involved in drug dealing. This result suggests that at the time of the interview, these participants evaluated their involvement in their gangs as rewarding enough to continue to be involved. In other words, these participants were aware that the gang provided them with opportunities to commit a certain amount of crimes that benefitted their own needs and individual goals. As mentioned by Moreland and Levine (1982), it is only when divergence between commitment and goals occurs that gradual desistance from the group begins.

From the narratives of the 22 desisted participants, it has been possible to complement previous findings by providing more contexts to the process of disengagement from gangs. The reasons given for disengaging from gangs are similar to those found in previous research: maturation, incarceration length, desire for independence, exhaustion from gang life, near death experience, and gang dissolved (see Decker & Lauritsen, 2002; Pyrooz & Decker, 2011; Vigil, 1988). As suggested by recent U.S. literature, gang desistance should not be conceptualized as an event, but rather as a process, a disengagement process. In fact, *disengagement concept* is more accurate than *desistance* because it can be concluded that (a) desistance is influenced by both individual and group characteristics and therefore there can be divergence

between the desires and objectives of both parties; (b) disengagement is facilitated by an accumulation of factors that occurs over time, and, when a threshold is reached, desistance occurs; and (c) the persistence of gang ties, even as individuals become “non-members”, creates a gray area where the “desistance” status becomes even more unclear. Considering this process on a continuum of disengagement is more realistic, and more accurate.

Although the Chapter 9 on disengagement from gangs was exploratory, it uncovered the complexity and the challenges of the process. Individuals do not hold all the cards when they need to desist from gangs. They can't leave completely according to their own will, at a time of their own choosing. The group process that governs the gang affects the process, and the criminal social environment (including the non-gang involved criminal environment) pressures individuals to remain in this lifestyle.

10.4. Limitations

The results of this dissertation should be considered in light of a number of limitations. There are at least six types of limitations that can affect the interpretation of the results.

First, as has been the case in several studies on gangs (Decker, 1996; Decker & Lauritsen, 2002; Gordon, 2000; Miller, 2006; Pyrooz & Decker, 2011), the sample size is smaller than would be ideal. The fact that the current study only has 73 participants limits the statistical power of any multivariate analyses. The desistance logistic regression model, for example, only had 22 participants in the predicted category. However, the impact of this limitation was mitigated by restricting the number of variables in each statistical model to the most relevant in each context (i.e., those variables identified in bivariate analyses as the most strongly associated with each dependent variable). It should be also noted that the study sample of 73 incarcerated gang members is the largest of its kind in the Canadian context.

Second, the findings of the dissertation are based on the retrospective, self-reported data of incarcerated youth gang members in British Columbia and had accuracy and generalizability issues. The sample cannot be considered as representative of gang

members in general, and the specificity of the British Columbia setting should be kept in mind when considering cross-national generalizations. In addition, the retrospective self-report technique can impact the recall of some information, the temporal association, and can be affected by the perceptions bias (Metts, Sprecher, & Cupach, 1991). For example, it can be hypothesized that when participants were asked to identify the motivations that led them to join gangs, the motivations they reported could have been more related to the ones that were keeping them in their gangs at the time of the interviews and actually different from the ones they had when they joined their gangs.

Another limitation is associated with the data collection process. For the Youth Group Activities questionnaire, only trained graduated students with gang research knowledge were allowed to conduct the interviews. The majority of the interviews ($n = 60$) were conducted by two main research assistants, including the author. It has to be acknowledged that each interviewer has his or her own style of interviewing and that this can affect the nature or quality of the details that participants divulge (especially for the open-ended questions). Note also that male interviewers were not allowed to interview female gang members as per policy of the youth custody center.

A fourth limitation is associated with the use of cross-sectional data to examine the turning points in gang membership, even though longitudinal data would have been best to address such issues. The findings were interpreted along causal models, but the research design did not allow for a causal design that would eliminate potential confounding factors. However, the retrospective data used in the study were organized around major events for which the sequence was known. For example, the participants were asked questions about pre-membership characteristics in order to predict the initiation event, which, by definition, occurs later. The sequential order was known for all of the key dependent variables (e.g., age of entry, gang initiation, gang criminal activities, and gang desistance). Thus it became possible to make some inferences by taking into consideration the temporal order for those main turning points.

The fifth limitation is related to the fact that participants were not asked to provide the names of their gangs (although some participants mentioned it), for reasons of confidentiality. It was impossible to determine whether participants of the study were reporting information about the same gangs. And if that was the case, it was impossible

to verify the internal validity of the information provided. As mentioned by Hagedorn and Devitt (1999), even when this information is known, it is not rare that different members of the same gangs report different information regarding gang composition and activities (see, also, Descormiers & Morselli, 2011). This discrepancy can be affected by length of membership, status of the individual within the gang, and gang organizational structure. Some participants may not be aware of some information about their gangs, either because they have been too recently affiliated and/or they did not have the status to be informed of such details or simply because the gang structure deliberately keeps the information available about itself and its activities to a minimum. In their Montreal sample of incarcerated gang members of similar ages to the ones interviewed in this study, Descormiers and Morselli (2011) found that 5 of the 20 total gang members interviewed belonged to same gang (2 members of the 13th gang, and 3 of the 18th gang). There is no reason to believe that the proportion of participants who belong to the same gang is higher in the current study, but it is impossible to verify with the current data. The general impression of the interviewers is that a single gang in B.C. at the time of the study could have generated multiple members in the sample and that less than a handful of those could have been interviewed for this study. However, it remains an important limitation of the study.

The sixth limitation is associated with the measurement of some variables. First, the nature of the connection who introduced a participant to gangs is unknown. Though it can be hypothesized that those connections were individuals involved in the criminal milieu, it would have been very informative to have known if they were gang involved, members of other criminal organizations, or something else. Second, the format of the motivations variable was to allow the participant to mention more than one answer. Consequently, it was impossible to determine what the most important motivation was for those who named more than one. Third, participants were asked to divulge whether they had recently desisted from their gangs, but they were not asked to specify when that happened. This also impacts the possibility of determining the duration of membership for all the participants of the study. Fourth, the dissertation did not include the individual's involvement in criminal activities, but only reported the gang criminal activities, as the Youth Group Activities questionnaire was initially designed. Although it was not the main objective of the dissertation, this aspect limits the ability to empirically

test the selection and facilitation causal models as they were created to verify the influence of gang membership on the individuals' propensity to commit crimes. Fifth, the initiation event and the desistance process were qualitatively examined by only one open-ended question in the questionnaire. Because this was exploratory, no other questions were developed to provide more specific details. Not having had the opportunity to probe participants further on these topics limits the breadth of information found on these themes. Sixth, participants were asked whether their gangs were in contact with other gangs, but they were not asked to specify the *number* of those connections, only the *presence* of. The number of different connections was only asked for interactions with other criminal organizations. Though the results of the study showed no statistically significant association, it can be hypothesized that a better measurement for criminal social capital would have been related to their interactions with other gangs (Descormiers & Morselli, 2011). Some of the ways in which this can be done in future studies are explored in the concluding chapter.

11. Conclusion

Prior research on gangs concur that there is something unique about gangs and their group processes that impacts individuals' behaviour through their passage into gangs. The current dissertation examined the sequential process of gang membership, from gang entry to the disengagement process from gangs. The findings highlighted important contributions to the field.

First, the importance of the pre-membership social environment was evident in both the gang entry and gang disengagement processes. In short, criminally embedded individuals start earlier and stay longer in gangs than others. The findings associated with the gang entry process showed that the pre-membership social environment may play an important role in the willingness of a prospective member to join a gang (for example, the involvement of family members in gangs influences the desire to join), but prospective members did not identify these connections (i.e., being introduced to the gang by family members) as keys in their entry process. They did not need the direct help of their social capital to get in. The criminal embeddedness of prospective members in the study was a more robust predictor of early entry in gangs. This finding has two main implications. Whereas social capital theory stipulates that the direct use of social resources is central to the perspective (Lin, 2001), the current study nuances that in the context of gangs' entry, prospective members benefit from their social environment in a more indirect way. This nuance should be taken into account in the elaboration of models predicting gang entry. Knowing that youth who are developing in criminal social environments are more likely to be attracted to gangs, and be targeted by their recruitment process, it is imperative to pay particular attention to these youth, accessing information regarding their social environment in order to be able to intervene at an early stage.

Decker and Lauritsen (2002) suggested that both individual and group characteristics should be taken into account in studying gang desistance. The findings

of the current dissertation supported this assertion and went further by adding that the pre-membership social environment of the members is just as important in the disengagement process. Members of the sample who reported having been introduced to gangs by multiple sources were less likely to have left their gangs. This finding suggested that the cumulative sources of potential criminal social capital maintain the individuals in a criminal social network that impedes the occurrence of a disengagement process. The fact that pre-membership social environment has the potential to impact both the entry and the exit process of youth entrenched in such a rich gang-oriented social network makes it clear that this has to be the object of particular attention when designing research, programs, and policy. Future research should consider developing research designs amenable to longitudinal social network analysis in order to capture the dynamic and influence of the social environment (both conventional and criminal) from gang entry to the gang disengagement process.

Second, an understanding of gang entry should begin with an examination of the individuals' characteristics in order to subsequently examine how those characteristics interact with gang characteristics. Individual motivations to join a gang are, a priori, developed outside of the gang context. Individuals and their motivations are confronted with gangs that have their own certain styles, with their own motives, cultures, and range of accepted behaviours. The initial interaction between the individual and the gang is of interest in and of itself. For instance, (a) individuals' motivations may impact the type of gang they are seeking or (b) a gang may try to recruit an individual that projects the motivations that correspond to the gang's own identity. If there is a lack of fit between the individual motivations and the nature of the gang, membership and the initiation may never happen.

The sample of the current study represents only matches between individuals and gangs that were successful (at least initially, in the sense that all the individuals interviewed became members). Because of this, it should not be surprising to find a relatively good match between individuals' motivations and the nature of the gang in which those individuals were members. Gangs represented in the study tended to have initiations that reflected their gang criminal activities; in addition, individuals that sought or were recruited to such gangs had motivations that were a priori individual-based. The important point is that if individual motivations were understood before youth joined

gangs, then those motivations could serve as a basis for designing interventions for those so-called high-risk youth. If motivation is important, then research examining motivation to conduct criminal activities can be conducted outside of pure gang samples and still have an impact on gang prevention. For example, at-risk youth who find themselves involved in fights and other violent interactions are much more likely to seek or to be recruited by a gang, especially a gang that is involved in high levels of violence. One implication for research is that even if little is known about the nature of the gang in which members are embedded, learning about the individuals can open at least a partial window into the gang itself.

Third, the dissertation showed that a gang initiation, independent of its nature, is most likely to occur in more organized gangs. This finding has a particular implication in the elaboration of the gang organizational-level scale. Some prior studies have included the initiation as an item on the organization scale, while others have not. Although those scales still need to be empirically validated, the current study clarified that gang initiation should be included as an item of the gang organization scale. One policy implication associated with this finding is that it may be easier to get youth to talk about the initiation rather than other organizational characteristics, of their gang. Gathering information about the gang initiation may provide an indicator of how committed the individual is to the gang lifestyle and may lead to other insights about the gang's level of organization.

Fourth, past research has shown that gang violence contributes to reinforcement of a gang's internal cohesion, and it is a means of obtaining respect from others (Decker, 1996; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996, Short & Strodbeck, 1965; Vigil, 1988). The findings of the current dissertation supported those prior results; however, some members of the study also identified violence as one of the main reasons they left their gangs. It seems that some gang members have a certain tolerance for violence until it reaches a certain point. This observation was also made in the U.S. context, where members also reported that continuous exposure to violence became the reason for their disengaging from gangs (Decker, 1996; Decker & Lauritsen, 2002; Pyrooz & Decker, 2011). One main implication of this finding is that not only is exposure to violence an important group process facilitating involvement in criminal activities (especially acts of violence), but it is also an agent of divergence between the gang's objectives and needs of the individuals. As suggested by the group socialization model of Moreland and Levine

(1982), the divergence between the two parties is the turning point that instigates the disengagement process from the group. Decker and Lauritsen (2002) have raised the idea that the threshold crossed by the members should be an opportunity for intervention: “Seizing opportunities when gang members have been victimized by violence or have witnessed a close friend’s victimization may offer a promising avenue for reducing gang involvement” (p.69). They suggested that it is important to intervene very shortly after the victimization event, since it is then when members are more likely to reflect on the risks and consequences of their membership. Also, they are more likely to be physically separated from their gangs, or at least in smaller groups. Such interventions are most likely to have taken place in hospital emergency rooms, police stations, or family settings. Future research should consider those different settings to design research and explore how a violence experience can be an opportunity for intervention.

Fifth, desistance from gangs should not be considered as an event, but more as a process. This is not a new finding; it was echoed in prior research (Decker & Lauritsen, 2002; Pyrooz, & Decker, 2011). However, in the current study, it was the first time that both the individual and the gang context were considered in attempts to understand the disengagement process. One important finding is associated with the gray zone of membership status, that is, when participants were asked if they were still involved in their gangs, it was unclear for some of them whether to answer with a yes or a no. Some had not formally desisted, but no longer participated in gang criminal activities; while others had desisted, but continued to hang out or commit crime from time to time with the gang. Pyrooz and Decker (2011) clearly demonstrated that gang ties remained for at least 2 years after members had desisted from their gangs. More importantly, the authors created a typology to illustrate the differentiation between those members who had desisted from crimes and those who had desisted from gangs. There were four possible scenarios:

- a) A gang member is an individual who has not left the gang and has not desisted from crime.
- b) An older gang member is an individual who has not left the gang but has desisted from crime.

- c) A socially tied person is an individual who has left the gang but has not desisted from crimes.
- d) Those who have truly desisted have left their gangs and have desisted from crimes.

The first implication is that considering gang members' status in one of those four ways is a vast improvement over the current vagueness about the role of ex-members with their gangs. A second implication that follows from the first is related to the choice of the measure of success in regards to the strategies and interventions developed to tackle gang issues. If the measure of success is the actual number of affiliated and/or desisted members, the typology suggests that important information and nuances are missing. Future research needs to continue investigating the disengagement process both from a qualitative and quantitative approach in order to enhance understanding of its complexities. The severing of gang ties should also be the main focus for elaboration of strategies that support individuals through the disengagement process.

Sixth, the dissertation shows that (1) researching gangs in Canada is possible and (2) having a mixed method approach with open and close-ended questions is a fruitful way to learn more about gang trajectories. Very few studies on gangs have been conducted in the Canadian context, and even fewer studies used data derived from face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with a sample of incarcerated gang members. The current study had a unique design that provided a methodology combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Even though using retrospective self-reported data and a small sample comes with clear limitations, it was still possible to establish the sequential order of gang membership turning points and their main associations with both individual and group characteristics. The open-ended questions of the instrument allowed the participants to provide more details regarding their initiation and disengagement experiences, adding an important layer to the purely quantitative findings.

In terms of the quantitative approach, a larger sample of longitudinal data with items specific to both the gang and the individual would help in distinguishing the temporal patterns of these turning points in gang membership trajectories. For example, the gang entry, the gang initiation, and the gang desistance processes are key turning points in members' gang trajectories. However, data should also include dated gang-related events that could also have influenced members' trajectories (e.g., major gang

conflicts, deaths of fellow member, etc.). Larger-scale longitudinal data would also allow generalizing to a larger population. To date, the larger longitudinal datasets do not include items identified in the dissertation as key explanatory variables for gang members (e.g., way to get introduced to gangs, type of initiation, gang criminal involvement, motives and methods of desistance).

Another implication of the dissertation that is related to some extent to the methodology is that gang members were particularly willing to collaborate with the current study. Most of them were very sensitive to the next generation of gang members and were willing to participate in order to help other youth who will be in similar situations. Once they understood the confidentiality policy and that the goal was not to prosecute them or any of their members, but really to access, via their experiences, a part of their world that only they knew about, they were very cooperative. Future research, programs, and policy development projects on youth crime should not be reluctant to include gang members in their design. For example, inclusion of questions about what would make members leave their gangs could provide useful information for thinking about alternatives to gangs.

Seventh, in the current dissertation, the passage of the individual through gang membership has been conceptualized along the group socialization model of Moreland and Levine (1982). This model did not primarily focus on gang membership; however, it considered two aspects that are central to the gang membership concept: (1) it considered the temporal perspective of the socialization process (i.e., that any group membership goes through phases, starting with an entry in the group and will usually end with a group exit) and (2) it included both the group and the individuals' points of view and mutual influences as a social perspective. In addition, the social capital and the group process perspectives were used to complement the model in order to include all the necessary components to uncover the complexities of gang membership. The current dissertation was the first to examine gangs from these perspectives in the Canadian context.

Recent research has also demonstrated the application of the life-course perspective, both from a theoretical and a methodological point of view, to examine the gang membership process that follows the key life-course patterns—onset, continuity,

and change (Melde & Esbensen, 2011; Pyrooz & Decker, 2011; Sweeten, Pyrooz, & Piquero, 2012; Thornberry et al., 2003). Most of the empirical research had focused on the risk factors that predict gang involvement and the impact of the membership on crime involvement, but not enough research has examined the whole sequential process. The main argument of the life-course perspective is based on the age-crime curve that demonstrates the offending peaks in the late teens and declines thereafter (Hirshi & Gottfredson, 1983; Sampson & Laub, 1993). Though desistance from crimes is positively associated with age, gang membership does not completely follow the same pattern. While some studies have demonstrated that disengaging from gangs is a turning point associated with desisting from crime (see, for example, Sweeten, Pyrooz, & Piquero, 2012, Thornberry et al., 2003), others have found that the ties that bind individuals to gangs continue impacting former members' lives in ways such as their continuing to be targets of victimization (Pyrooz & Decker, 2011; Pyrooz, Decker, & Webb, 2010).

Future research should consider using the life-course perspective to understand and to organize gang membership processes over time (Pyrooz, Decker, & Webb, 2010). Particular attention should be paid to the persisting gang ties in the process of the disengagement from gang, and it seems important to continue investigating what increases such gang ties. In addition, in order to account for the whole sequence of the gang membership, future research should continue examining other possible turning points, including arrests and incarceration periods, that could occur during membership and that could influence members' trajectories. A longitudinal approach including networks data would be ideal for analyzing turning-point events that punctuate gang members' trajectories.

Taken together, the findings and insights from the study conducted for this dissertation contribute to the literature on gangs, specifically by examining the passage of the individuals through these unique types of groups.

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Appendix.

Youth Group Activities Questionnaire

Youth Code |__|__|__|__|

Interviewer Code |__|__|

Date of Interview (yyyy.mm.dd): |__|__|__|__| |__|__| |__|__|

D.O.B: |__|__|__|__| |__|__| |__|__|

Ethnicity: _____

Please indicate the current offences:

I would like to ask you some questions about gang involvement. Please remember that the information you share with me is confidential, meaning that unless you make a direct threat against yourself or someone else, the information you tell me will be known only by the researchers on this project.

G1. Have you ever wanted to join a gang?

0. No 1. Yes

G2. Have you ever been asked to join a gang?

0. No 1. Yes

G3. Have you ever joined a gang?

0. No **G3a. Why did you decide NOT to join?**

1. Not interested

2. Prefer to be independent

3. Fear

4. Didn't want to be involved in violence

5. Was never asked to

6. Other (specify) _____

Thank you – please go to the next Interview

1. Yes (Please continue the interview)

G4. How old were you when you first joined a gang? |___|___| years old

G5. How were you first introduced to gangs? Check all that apply		Yes
1	...by my friend(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	...by my sibling(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	...by my parent(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	... by other members of the family (e.g. uncle, cousin)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	...through my neighbourhood	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	...through my school	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	...through prison	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	...other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

G6. <u>Why</u> did you decide to join a gang? Check all that apply		Yes
1	For money	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	For respect	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	For protection	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	To make friends	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	To deal drugs	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	I was forced to join by others	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	For power	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	To fit in, to belong	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Other reason (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

G7. Are you currently or were you recently a member of a gang?

0. No (go to G7a)

1. Yes (go to next section at G8)

G7a. Why did you leave your gang (e.g., fear for safety (youth or family), enough time served, tired of the lifestyle)?

The next few questions refer to your CURRENT gang or the one you most RECENTLY were involved in, even if you are no longer a member of this gang.

G8. How long has your gang been active? |__|__|__| months

G8a. Is your gang still active?

0. No 1. Yes

G9. Were you initiated by your gang before becoming a member?

0. No 1. Yes

G9a. How were you initiated?

G10. Approximately how many members belong to your gang? |__|__|__|

**G11. How many members have a higher status than you (are above you)?
|__|__|__|**

G12. In general, how many people in your gang do you talk to each week when you're on the outs? |__|__|__| people

G13. Is your gang made of all boys, all girls, or a mix? (check only ONE)

1. All boys 2. All girls 3. A mix of girls and boys

G14. What is the age range of the members in your gang?

|__|__| to |__|__| years old

G15. What is the average age of the members in your gang? |__|__| years old

G16. Do most members of your gang have any of the following things in common? Check all that apply		Yes
1	Ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Age	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Neighbourhood	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Family	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Country of birth	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	School	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Problems with the Criminal Justice System	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

G17. What is the major racial or ethnic background of your gang? (check all that apply)

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Caucasian | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. African-Canadian | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Black-African | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Black-Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. South Asian/East Indian | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. Latin/Hispanic | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Middle Eastern | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. Other (specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

G18. In what areas is your gang active? (check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. The island | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. The lower mainland (e.g. Vancouver, Burnaby, Surrey) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Fraser Valley (e.g. Abbotsford, Chilliwack) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Vancouver costal (e.g. North Vancouver) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. The interior (e.g. Kelowna) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. The North (e.g. Prince George) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Other (specify) _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |

G19. Where does your gang hang out? (all that apply)

1. Sky train station 2. Bus stop/station
 3. Shopping mall 4. Park
 5. School yard 6. Street corner
 8. House 9. Reserve
 10. Casino 11. Illegal gambling house
 7. Other (specify) _____

G20. Which of the following are true of the gang that you currently belong to? We have... Check all that apply		No (0)	Yes (1)
1	Established leaders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	A gang name:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Adopted specific gang-symbols, tattoos, burns, scar, colors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Initiation rites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Regular meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Specific Rules (e.g. No drug use, no snitching)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Specific territory	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Hierarchy (e.g. positions/status within the organization)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

G21. Is violence ever used to keep your gang in order? In other words, is violence used against current gang members who step out of line?

0. No 1. Yes

G22. Does your gang commit criminal activity?

0. No (go to G23) 1. Yes

G22a. What kind of criminal activity is your gang involved in? (check all that apply)		Yes	G22b. What is the <u>ONE</u> major activity that your gang is involved in? (check only ONE)
1	Drug selling (dealing, trafficking) (specify type of drug)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Marijuana growing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1	Drugs cooking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Robbery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Assault	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Other violence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Break and enter – for drugs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Break and enter – other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Fraud	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Pimping (prostitution)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Motor Vehicle theft	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Graffiti	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Vandalism (other than graffiti)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Kidnapping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	Extortion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

G23. In the past 12 months, how often did you commit crimes with people who are not members of your gang?

1. Never 2. Once or twice
3. Several times 4. Often

G24. Do members of your gang carry weapons?

0. No 1. Yes (go to G24a)
|

G24a. What kind of weapons? (check all that apply)

1. Guns 2. Knives 3. Bear Mace 4. Machetes
5. Other (specify) _____

These next few questions are about gangs in general, not just your current gang.

G25. While in custody, do you talk to any gang members who are also in this institution?

0. No 1. Yes (go to G25a)

G25a. If yes, do you have any negative contact with them? (e.g. verbal/physical fights)

0. No 1. Yes

G26. While in custody, do you communicate/talk with any gang members who are on the outs?

0. No 1. Yes

G27. Has anyone in your family ever been a member of a gang?

0. No 1. Yes

G28. Are any of your friends members of a gang?

0. No 1. Yes

G29. Does your gang have any positive contact with any other gangs, for example friendship, or being allies?

0. No 1. Yes

G30. Does your gang have any contacts with biker gangs?

0. No 1. Yes

G30a. What kind of contact? (Check all apply)

- 1. Business
- 2. Friendship
- 3. Family
- 4. Rivalries
- 5. Partying
- 6. Other (specify) _____

G31. Does your gang have any contact with any other organized crime group

0. No 1. Yes

G31a. Which organized crime group(s)? (Check all that apply)

- 1. Chinese
- 2. Vietnamese
- 3. Russian
- 4. Eastern European
- 5. Italian
- 6. Hispanic
- 7. Aboriginal
- 8. Indo-Canadian
- 9. Japanese
- 10. Other (specify) _____

G31b. What kind of contact does your gang have with the organized crime group identified in G31a? (Check all that apply)											
		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1.	Business	<input type="checkbox"/>									
2.	Friendship	<input type="checkbox"/>									
3.	Family	<input type="checkbox"/>									
4.	Rivalries	<input type="checkbox"/>									
5.	Partying	<input type="checkbox"/>									
6.	Other(specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>									

G32. Is the offence that you're currently in here for related to your gang activities?

0. No 1. Yes

G33. In the year before you came into custody, were you OR your gang involved in a conflict with members of another gang?

0. No (go to G34) 1. Yes

G33a. What was the reason for this? (all that apply)

- | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Retaliation | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Racial/ethnic conflict | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Self-Protection | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Drug Market | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Territorial | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Other (specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

G33b. How did this conflict start? (all that apply)

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Ordered by a leader | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Planned by members | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Spur of the moment | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Other (specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

G33c. Is this conflict over?

0. No (go to G34) 1. Yes

G33d. How did this conflict end?

G34. What best describes the way you usually do crime?

- Always with the same people
- Always with different people
- A mix; it varies

If the youth belongs to a gang but does not want to talk about it, please check here

Thank you. Please go to the next Interview.