

# DEATH PERCEPTIONS AMONG AT-RISK AND GANG-INVOLVED YOUTH

## THE ISSUE OF YOUTH GANGS



<1%

But...

11%

Youth gangs make up less than 1 percent of the US population  
(*"National Gang Survey, n.d."*)

3x

They commit 11% of total crime in the US.  
(*The United States Department of Justice, 2020*)

Gang-involved youth have violent crime rate three-times higher than non-gang delinquents.  
(*The United States Department of Justice, 2020*)

## YOUTH GANGS AND VIOLENCE

Typical initiation involves being beaten by current gang members.  
(*Bolden, 2013*)



Leaving the gang could result in death because ex-members know too much.  
(*Bolden, 2013*)



Intergang wars can be sparked by random encounters and kept alive by revenge attacks.  
(*Gravel, 2023*)

## WHAT IS A YOUTH GANG?

- Group of three or more members, aged 12-24
- Share an identity (name, symbols, etc.)
- View themselves as gang, recognized by others as a gang
- Group has some permanence and degree of organization
- Group is involved in an elevated level of crime

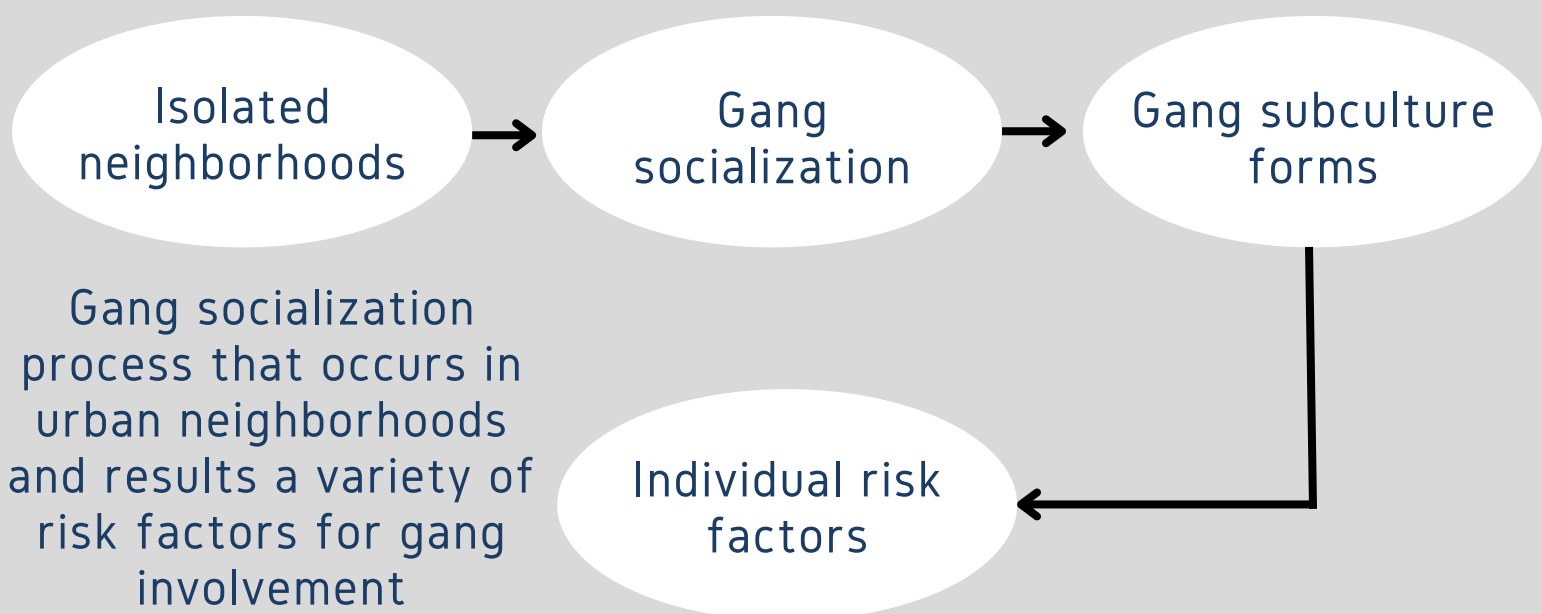
(*National Gang Center, n.d.*)

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# HOW DO YOUTH GANGS FORM?

## Vigil's Multiple Marginality Theory



(Vigil, 2010)

## KNOWN RISK FACTORS AND THE NEED FOR OTHERS

### Macro-Level

- Economic disadvantage
- Ethnic heterogeneity

(Pyrooz et al., 2010)

### Meso-Level

- Perceived low family support
- Perceptions of school unsafety

(Lenzi et al., 2015)

### Individual-Level

- History of delinquency
- Violent victimization
- Exposure to violence

(Howell & Egley, 2005); (Merrin et al., 2020)

### Added Factor: Death Perceptions

- At-risk and gang-involved youth have unique proximity to violence and death

## DEATH PERCEPTIONS

### Positive Death Attitudes

- Approach acceptance and neutral acceptance
- Associated with psychological and physical wellbeing

★ Death perceptions may influence gang-involvement risk level. Need to identify trends among at-risk, gang-involved, and non-gang youth.

### Negative Death Attitudes

- Fear of death, death avoidance, and escape acceptance
- Associated with psychological distress, depression, and suicidal ideation

(Wong et al., 1994)

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For more information about youth gang involvement, risk factors, and death perceptions, check out my full thesis by scanning the QR code:

