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LIFE NARRATIVES OF FORMER GANG MEMBERS

A Thesis
Presented to the Faculty of
College of Graduate Studies and Teacher Education Research
Philippine Normal University
Taft Avenue, Manila

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Science - Master of Arts in Psychology
and Counseling – Straight Program

STEPHANIE L. SALADAGA

April 2019

ABSTRACT

Name : **Stephanie L. Saladaga**
Title of Study : **LIFE NARRATIVES OF FORMER GANG MEMBERS**
Key concepts : Gangs, former gang members, reasons, experiences,
gang membership, gang exit
Degree : Bachelor of Science - Master of Arts in Psychology and Counseling
Specialization : Guidance and Counseling
Adviser : Armina B. Mangaoil, Ph.D, RPm

This study utilized qualitative research design and life narratives approach in capturing the life stories of former gang members through answering four (4) inquiries such as reasons in joining a gang, experiences during gang membership, reasons in leaving the gang and experiences after leaving the gang. In answering the said queries, interview of ten participants was utilized. Participants in the study were those who have been part of a street gang at the age of twelve to twenty-one for at least a year, left the gang for at least three years and are at least eighteen years old at present. Manual coding and thematic analyses were used in generating themes which explain that individuals join gangs because they receive protection and emotional and financial support from the group. During gang membership, gang members experience joining gang wars and carrying out acts of violence and committing vices and other delinquent activities. Upon adopting a new role and/or responsibility of being a parent and a partner in starting one's own family, gang members decide to leave gangs and generally experience a happier and better life with their families afterwards. The findings of the study were used for recommendations in the field of counseling, particularly in school counseling.

DEDICATION

To my Tatay and Nanay. I dedicate this thesis for all your love, hard work and sacrifices for me. I love you.

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My entire thesis journey has never been easy and I couldn't reach its end without the help and support of the following.

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Table of Contents

Abstract		ii
Dedication		iii
Acknowledgements		iv
Table of Contents		vii
List of Tables	.....	ix
List of Figures	.....	ix
List of Appendices	.....	x
Chapter I		
Background of the Study	.....	1
Literature Review	.....	4
Research Problems	.....	18
Conceptual Framework	.....	18
Definition of Terms	.....	19
Chapter II		
Qualitative Design and Methodology	.....	21
Research Site	.....	21
Selection Criteria and Participants	.....	22
Data Collection	.....	25
Data Analysis	.....	27
Role of Researcher	.....	28
Methods of Validation	.....	29
Ethical Issues	.....	30
Chapter III		
Findings and Discussion	.....	32
Chapter IV		
Summary of the Study	.....	100
Summary of Findings	.....	101
Limitations of the Study	.....	102
Conclusion	.....	103

Recommendations	.....	105
My Personal Journey	.....	106
References	.....	111
Appendices	.....	119
Curriculum Vitae	.....	151

List of Tables

Table	Page
1 Profile of the participants	24
2 Reasons in joining a gang	33
3 Experiences during gang membership	49
4 Reasons in leaving the gang	79
5 Experiences after leaving the gang	89

List of Figures

Figure	Page
1 Conceptual Framework	19
2 Implications for Change	99

List of Appendices

Appendix	Page
A Narratives	119
B Interview questions	132
C Informed consent	134
D Sample Transcription	137
E Sample Initial Coding Per Participant	147
F Sample Categories of Codes and Emerging Themes	148

CHAPTER I

The Problem and Literature Review

Background of the Study

The existence of gangs, the amount of gang-related crimes, and the extent of violence among gang-related activities are not trivial. In criminological research, it has been the most sound and constant knowledge that people who join gangs perpetrate a bigger number of crimes than nongang individuals (Tita & Ridgeway, 2007; Bjerregaard, 2002; Carson, Wiley, & Esbensen, 2017; Barnes, Beaver, & Miller, 2010; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith, & Tobin, 2003). Membership in gangs has been posing problems to society in a number of ways and in different contexts such as delinquencies in schools and violent acts in the streets. Thornberry et al., (2003) further elaborated the general consensus that connection of gang membership and delinquency is remarkable in more violent offenses.

In the Philippines, news reports about gangs have been speaking up about the youths getting involved in gang-related crimes and how aggressive their activities have become. Gutierrez (2008) reported that a gang, which was much dreaded in Baguio City, increased greater reputation as its members were identified to be in charge of the murder of a fifteen-year old high school student. According to the news report, the victim was brutally beaten and stabbed by suspected gang members. It was also recorded that one of the suspected gang members already had a standing warrant of arrest for the murder of another minor two years ago. Macas (2015) reported another gang activity which was caught on security cameras in Sta. Ana, Manila

wherein a gang of juvenile delinquents assaulted a nine-year-old, and eventually attacked a store employee who tried to help the nine-year-old.

Due to its far-reaching negative effects to society, gangs have been subject for research over the centuries. As early as 1927, there has been a comprehensive social scientific research about gangs done in Chicago, USA (Thrasher 1963, as cited in Bjerregaard 2002). The research involved the study of 1, 313 gangs in detail and the results served as foundation of many theories in studying gangs and delinquencies.

As time passes, investigation about gangs has evolved. Gangs have been the topic of investigation in different disciplines such as sociology, criminology, and psychology. An array of topics about gangs can be found in literature such as gang typologies (Spindler & Bouchard, 2011), gang involvement (Campbell, 2011; Hounslea, 2011), gang exit (Carson & Vecchio, 2015), gender differences in gangs (Deschenes & Esbensen, 1999; Peterson, Miller, & Esbensen, 2001; Valentin, 2012) and gang-related interventions (Aldridge, Shute, Ralphs, & Medina, 2009; Sharkey & Mayworm, 2015).

The present study focuses on the life narratives of former gang members. According to Roman, Decker, and Pyrooz (2017), developmental and life course frameworks set gang membership in accordance with the aspects of continuity and change as individuals mature and experience potential turning points in their lives. It has been further elaborated that these frameworks have been pertinent in understanding gang membership and disengagement because the shifting stages during adolescent development can be linked with the stages of adolescents' gang identities (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002).

The study is the result of the researcher's observations which she transformed into academic interest. Looking back at her high school years, the researcher had many exposures to groups of juvenile delinquents in her school such as gangs. She observed the groups' activities not just in school but also in different news platforms such as television, news websites, and social media. These observations caused the researcher a lot of curiosity about their stories behind their projected images and activities. This, in turn generated the researcher to choose to study their life stories as part of her academic venture.

Also, it is of the researcher's interest to study the topic as Edwards (2011) argued that while schools have been becoming centers of gang activities such as recruitment of members, they have also been a unique place to battle the epidemic of gang because they offer access to many youth who are vulnerable and potential gang members. In doing so, understanding the story of the lives of former gang members is unarguably a prerequisite.

More so, it has been reported by Wood and Alleyne (2010) that despite the wide range of literature available about gangs, our current understanding about gangs is yet narrow and obscure. They have also suggested that psychology plays a role in studying gangs and that psychology can provide in-depth understanding of youths who join them. Thus, it is expected that this research paper will create an impact to the field of Psychology and Counseling.

The novelty and uniqueness of this study can be traced in its setting. Although a number of researches about youth gangs have been done in Western countries, few are available regarding those that focus on our own cultural context. Lor (2003) postulated that there have been few researches investigating Southeast Asian youth posing serious problems to their

community. To this, it has been believed that the results from Western studies may not be relevant to apply to our country.

The complexity of the research paper can be shown in its utilization of empirical processes in studying the topic. Standard procedures were followed in data gathering based on the overall design that was used. Appropriate techniques and defining principles were utilized in coding and analyzing data. The researcher also used a valid instrument in data gathering.

Literature Review

This section presents findings of other researches in relation to the present study with emphasis to the said relationship. It provides history of different definition of gangs, past studies explaining youth gang involvement and gang desistance, and a synthesis of the literature reviewed.

Gangs

Despite many years of studies, researchers, law enforcement and policymakers have not concurred on a single definition of street gang (Ball & Curry, 1995; Klein & Maxson, 2006; Miller 1975, as cited in Matsuda, Esbensen, & Carson, 2012). Lack of definitional consensus of gangs and gang membership has not only caused confusion to other gang researchers but also affected gang-related public policy. According to Esbensen, Winfree, He, and Taylor (2001), researches on the degree and nature of gang problems face three (3) conceivable results: (1) accurate statement of gang problem using precise definition for the research question, (2) underestimation of the problem using narrow definition, or (3) overestimation of the problem

with a definition that is very broad, including groups, individuals, and behavior that are far detached from the intended audience. Thus, it is imperative to discuss different definitions and approaches in defining gangs.

One of the earliest and most comprehensive research about gangs offered a profound and careful analysis of 1, 313 gangs in Chicago and defined gang as a group spontaneously formed and integrated through conflict. It is characterized by a number of behaviors such as getting together, wandering, instigating and planning conflicts which result to the formation and development of customs and traditions, thoughtless internal structures, camaraderie, solidarity, union and attachment to a local territory (Thrasher 1963, as cited in Bjerregaard, 2002).

From this definition, a number of valuable definitions emerged about gangs. Bjerregaard (2002) summarized traditional definitions of significant researches. In her study, common elements from the traditional definition of gangs were outlined which included (1) organizational aspects of the gang, some definitions characterize this element by regular meetings or frequent associations with the group, and the presence of the leader; (2) symbolic characteristics of the gang, which can be in the form of external symbol such as special clothing and/colors that is evident in the existence of a gang's name; (3) allegiance and/or control of specific territories; and (4) group's involvement in criminal activity, which is the widely considered defining element of gangs.

As studied by Esbensen, et al., (2001), from the beginning of gang research in the 20th century, a mainstream system in defining gangs was to let the youths who claimed gang membership do the defining themselves. This approach was seen to be advantageous as it

permits various structures and activities to be depicted and increases the possibilities of drawing conclusions about gangs (Klein, as cited in Bjerregaard, 2002). Yet it was also seen to have major disadvantage of the chance that many definitions are provided by different respondents, therefore causing potentialities that some people identify themselves as gang members even though they are not. Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages on its own respect, which shows that as more researches are being done, approaches in studying the topic are also being discovered and explored.

Ergo, other research studies (Melde & Esbensen, 2011; Melde, Taylor & Esbensen, 2009) used a different way in identifying gang members by asking the question, “Do you consider your group of friends to be a gang?”, but this method still depended on a respondent’s personal meaning of gang and that of those who actually associate with gangs (Matsuda et al., 2012). This approach, similar with the mainstream system in defining gang in the 20th century was unarguably exposed to subjectiveness and biases because it might include a wide array of definitions from the respondents that might not be appropriate to the nature and purpose of the study being done.

In response to this issue, a working group of European and American scholars in the field of research on gangs and troublesome youths named Eurogang defined and measured gang membership while avoiding the utilization of the term ‘gang’. The definition, instead, included characteristics that are claimed to be central in a gang (i.e., necessary factors in defining a gang). This was to avoid self-reported definitions from the respondents that might cause bias, subjectiveness and inconsistencies. The Eurogang provided a definition of gang as “any

enduring, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity” (Weerman, Maxson, Esbensen, Aldridge, Medina, & Gemert, 2009).

On the other hand, Candaliza-Gutierrez (2012) studied prison gangs in the Philippines and used the term *pangkat* to address them. In the study, gangs were not presented negatively as groups who engage in delinquent activities but rather as a functional group. Gang as *pangkat* was defined as a Filipino word referring to a group bound by common experience and interests and by the pledge to protect and contribute to the group. According to the study, participants intentionally interchange the term gang with *pangkat* because of the negative connotation that comes from it.

Notwithstanding different definitional approaches used, Esbensen et al. (2001) posited that involvement in a criminal activity is a major component which differentiates youth gangs from other youth groups. Matsuda et al. (2012) also claimed that despite the used definition of a gang, a number of behavioral characteristics have been constantly proven to differentiate gang members from non-gang youth.

Gang Involvement

Previous studies used different designs in studying gang involvement, one of which is cross-sectional studies, which was defined by Setia (2016) as a type of observational study design wherein a researcher measures the outcome and the exposures of participants in a study at the same time. Gilman, Hill, Hawkins, Howell, and Kosterman (2014) claimed that the cross-sectional studies are informational since they identify potential factors that lead to identifying the

gang status of the youth. Nonetheless, it was likewise constrained in such a way that it is difficult to recognize whether the associations are causes or outcomes of gang membership.

Longitudinal studies, on the contrary, involved repeated or continual measures to follow specific individuals over long periods of time—often years or decades (Caruana, Roman, & Solli, 2015). In turn, longitudinal studies allow researchers to have a more comprehensive understanding of the individuals involved in gangs, not only at the beginning of their membership but even beforehand. In studying gangs, it was asserted by Gilman et al. (2014) that longitudinal studies make a more robust case for causal relationships.

However, most studies generally identified and categorized factors in gang membership into five (5) domains namely, (1) individual characteristics; (2) parental and family dynamics; (3) peer influences; (4) educational involvement; and (5) neighborhood characteristics (Howell & Egley, 2005).

Individual characteristics. According to Howell (1998), a common gang member is a male, living in an inward city territory, and who is in a racial or ethnic minority gathering; around seventeen (17) to eighteen (18) years of age, but can range from ages twelve (12) to twenty-four (24) years. While they are predominantly male, it is also important to note the rising number of female gang members. Female gang members were also found to be involved in an array of illegal gang activities, but not as frequently as male gang members. From this, one can infer that both males and females are both becoming involved in gangs but differ in a number of ways. Valdez (2007) highlighted that the majority of current research concluded that females are becoming involved in gangs at a much earlier age, often in their early teens.

Males and females become involved in gangs to fulfill similar needs (Hayward & Honegger, 2014). For example, both males and females are in search of attention, respect, kinship or money and this influences their decision to seek out gangs to satisfy these needs. What differs between the genders is the strategies employed to attain these needs. Males more commonly joined and gained status within a gang by demonstrating that they are powerful, confident, strong and intimidating and females typically joined a gang by dating a male gang member (Kelly, 2015). Moreover, once females become affiliated in a gang, their status is determined in large part by their male partner and their ability to meet the demands dictated by male gang members. It can be implied that even though both sexes share some similarities on motivations in joining a gang, it is undeniable that there are internal structures which portray difference in the roles of males and females within the gang.

Some recent studies have also found that psychological characteristics such as low self-esteem increases the likelihood of gang inclusion as well as disengagement in gangs (Dukes et al., 1997). To define, an adolescent whose confidence is low looks toward a gang for help and, subsequently, as the gathering regard goes up (derived from achievement in corrupt and haughty exercises), that person's regard of himself parallels. Consequently, it also takes a high self-esteem to resist the pressure and eventually leave the gang. Moreover, negative life events (Klein & Maxson, 2006) and being in an ethnic minority (Farmer & Hairston, 2013) were found to increase the likelihood of affiliation to a gang. However, Thornberry et al., (2003) claimed that at the individual level, the role of attitudes and behaviors represented one of the most robust findings - having prior history of delinquency, as well as holding nonconventional attitudes, have become associated with a higher risk of being a gang member.

Parental and family dynamics. Aside from the increased time and energy spent with peers during adolescence, Thornberry et al., (2003) added that family influences begin to fade in adolescence. In turn, sharing of positive values and prosocial behaviors from the family during this crucial period is impeded. According to Social Bond Theory, there are certain bonds (attachment, commitment, involvement, belief) that prevent people from drifting into delinquency, and one of them is family bond. If a person has strong attachment to family and loved ones, they would not commit crimes so as not to disappoint them.

Some family structures are also proven to have significant contributions to gang involvement. Youths who are of minority foundations who live in single-parent families are at a considerably more serious danger of turning into a group than individuals who are Caucasian and have a two-parent family. Family transitions (change in parent figures), on the other hand is another family structure that predicts stable gang membership (Thornberry et. al., 2003).

Moreover, female gang members reported higher social alienation from family and friends than male gang members. Rossmann (2013) discovered that variables that increased the likelihood of gang entry for females are fights between parents or other adults living in the home, psychological abuse in the form of threats or taunts, and sexual abuse by someone acquainted with them. In this case, one can observe how factors overlap and integrate to lead the youth to gang membership. Given that family is a factor in joining a gang, sex is another. The familial factor causes more influence on the single female. Both Miller and Mullins (2006) and Rossmann (2013) indicated that situations of domestic violence is one factor, of many, that led women to join gangs.

Peer influences. The impact of peers gives a vital passage for cruelty for it happens during gang membership amid one's youth and immaturity years. Klein and Maxson (2006) claimed that the role of peers in predicting gang membership has been well established and that the association with and affective ties with deviant peers is strongly and consistently related to youth gang involvement. This can be interpreted as a manifestation of the adolescents' great demand of the need to belong. During this developmental period, the greatest influence that an adolescent can ever receive is from his peers. Campbell (2011) further elaborated that youths joining gangs experience a sense of respect and attention from their community. Additionally, gangs are also proven to provide youths the support and protection they desire which then makes the gangs a substitute family to them.

According to Interactional Theory (Thornberry & Krohn, 2001), gang membership roots from the association between the individual and his or her peer groups and other social structures. The more an individual feels that he or she is connected with the gang, the higher the tendency that the individual associates his or her identity with the group. More specifically, the theory posits that experiences of weakened social bonds (e.g., perceiving low levels of parental support) and reinforcement to delinquency (e.g., by associating with deviant peers or attending an unsafe school) in different social settings reinforce the likelihood of joining a gang.

Forsyth (2010) claimed that people's need to belong is satisfied when a group accepts them, but they are most fulfilled when a group actively seeks them out. Due to extended time youths spend with their peers, gang members gain higher chance to select and recruit members especially in settings where youth who are vulnerable can be found such as schools. Gang membership may result from selection where gangs select and recruit members who were

already delinquent, from facilitation where gangs provide opportunities for delinquency to youths who were not delinquent beforehand, and from enhancement where gang members are recruited from a population of high-risk youth who, as gang members, become more delinquent (Thornberry et al., 2003).

Education. According to Hounslea (2011), education is influential in young people joining and leaving gangs. The findings in the study also proposed that with no activity, no preparation, and no training, access to education was profoundly tricky, driving youngsters to draw in with gangs. This lack of orientation towards education and its importance influences the individuals' perceptions of gangs, as a group they can settle with, that which could provide them their needs. In addition, factors that contribute to multiple marginalities include poor quality education, a dismal labor market and an abundance of low-skilled workers. Rossmann (2013) posited that poverty often accompany social problems such as violence, unemployment and homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, and family disintegration and for some, gangs fill voids that these predicaments create. Furthermore, it was highlighted in the study that gang membership functions to empower marginalized youth and make them feel like socially competent agents.

Poor action and low responsibility in school has been connected with gang involvement and it is arguable that gang-related crime is a consequence of education failure and disappointment. As gangs offer youth opportunities for prestige, status, and material possession more quickly than conventional means (Hallsworth & Young, 2004), gang members see little incentive in what state funded instruction brings to the table (Howell & Egley, 2005; Spergel, 1995).

Neighborhood characteristics. Campbell (2011) claimed that the neighborhood both influences and maintains the initial gang involvement of the youth. Some youngsters reported that joining a gang was normal and an expected developmental milestone within their communities. The proximity and accessibility of existing gangs also influence their gang involvement. Furthermore, Nakhid (2009) posited that once connected in a gang, members begin to have a sense of ownership and accountability to protect their neighborhood from other gangs outside.

Social Learning Theory argues that crime is learned through the development of beliefs that crime is acceptable in some situations, the positive reinforcement of criminal involvement (e.g. approval of friends, financial gains), and the imitation of the criminal behavior of others—especially if they are people the individual values (Akers, 1997). If an individual is exposed to observations of delinquent behaviors and crimes practiced in their neighborhood, Social Learning Theory claims that it is more likely that an individual learns the observed behaviors.

Although the above mentioned factors have been dominant in past researches, Gilman et al., (2014) suggested that such environmental influences do not operate in isolation. The integration of the risk factors in multiple domains produces the greatest risk of gang membership (Thornberry et al., 2003). For example, neighborhood disorganization may influence family functioning, and, in turn poor family functioning may influence the child's further exposure to antisocial neighborhood influences.

Gang Desistance

In gang researches, there is a popular conception that gang membership is a lifelong commitment and membership is permanent (Bolden, 2012; Pyrooz, 2014). Along with this conception is the belief that youth gang members experience difficulties and serious consequences in leaving gangs. Researchers claimed that the above-mentioned conceptions were generated by pop culture and mass media. Thornberry and Porter, as cited in Khron and Thornberry (2008) added that in a way, these conceptions are also brought about by observational researches that often focused on traditional gangs in large cities with long histories of street gangs.

On the other hand, a considerable number of researches prove the impermanence of gang membership. Pyrooz (2014) concluded that gang career is brief and temporary, enduring only two (2) years or less. Additionally, Bolden (2012) rejected the notion of “blood in-blood out”(having to suffer violence to get in and again to get out) that the media promoted about gangs. He argued that gang membership is a fluid process and that individuals can join and leave gangs without any difficulty.

In looking into the process of gang disengagement, it is important to note its different definitions. Different approaches in studying gangs also use varied terminologies in describing the said phenomenon such as gang exit, leaving the gang, gang disengagement and gang desistance, but the use of the term gang desistance seems to dominate. However, difficulties were encountered in presenting a single definition of gang desistance. This parallels with the lack

of definitional consensus of gangs and active gang members (Ball & Curry, 1995; Klein & Maxson, 2006; Miller 1975, as cited in Matsuda et al., 2012).

A study done by Bushway, Piquero, Broidy, Cauffman, and Mazerolle (2001) showed that in the field of criminology, researches viewed desistance as a stable state in which an individual stops offending. Yet the study also mentioned that recent researches advocated studying desistance as a process.

In the context of gang studies, Radak (2016) claimed that research has constantly proven that gang desistance is a slow withdrawal from criminal gang acts. This is in line with previous study of Kazemia (2007), in which she explained that desistance does not happen overnight and that looking at it as a stable state might overlook important aspects that could further explain the desistance. On 2012, Carlsson concluded that desistance from offending acts is complex often involving multiple processes. In his study, he used turning points such as experiences of homelessness, spiritualism, and engaging in a relationship to explain desistance.

It was also suggested that gang exit is a natural consequence of developmental process experienced by gang members (Miller, 2011). That is, as individuals age and move out of youth, they also tend to move out from youth activities and begin to move in to adult responsibilities (Decker, Pyrooz & Moule, 2014). In relation to this, Decker and Pyrooz (2011) found out that major pull factors, or those factors outside the individual that mostly motivated gang members to exit gangs involve adopting adult responsibilities such as familial responsibilities and job responsibilities. Push factors, on the other hand, are those factors inside the individual. On the

same study by Decker and Pyrooz (2011), among the push factors, growing out of the gang lifestyle was found to dominantly motivate gang members to leave.

Using the role exit theory of Ebaugh, as cited in Radbo (2015), an individual can only disengage in a role when he/she engages with a new role. Furthermore, it was elaborated that the probability that an individual will abandon a certain role depends upon how strong the emotional intensity and attachment he/she puts into that role. In other words, the more emotional intensity there is the stronger role attachment, which makes it more difficult to abandon a role.

Summary of Literature Review

Despite the fact that past studies used different definitions and approaches in defining the term ‘gang’ in their study and have caused confusion to researchers and policy-makers, involvement of members in criminal activity remained the most common and well-studied defining feature of a gang.

Gang involvement was generally studied using different approaches (e.g., cross-sectional and longitudinal). However, most studies identified and categorized factors in gang membership into five (5) main categories. The five (5) categories are (1) individual characteristics, past studies showed a number of individual characteristics that contribute to gang involvement of youth such as age, sex, race, low self-esteem, attitudes, perceptions and negative life events; (2) parental and family dynamics, such as different family structures (e.g., single-parent family, family transitions) and domestic violence were found to be factors associated with membership in a gang; (3) peer influences, such as reinforcement to delinquency and recruitment to gangs; (4) educational involvement, which include academic failure and lack of educational

opportunities; and (5) neighborhood characteristics such as exposure to communities with gangs, its proximity and accessibility. These factors have independent association to gang membership but research has also proven that the integration of each one of them is found to have the most impact in gang membership.

Alongside with the studies about gang involvement, were a number of studies about gang desistance. Most researchers rejected myths about the permanence of gang membership and claimed that gang membership is temporary and lasts for only a brief period of time. Emerging researches proved that gang members endure for only two (2) years or less. Contrary to the notion portrayed by pop culture and mass media, studies claimed that gang exit is a fluid process such that gang members do not generally face difficulties in leaving their gangs.

Furthermore, gang desistance is viewed both as a stable state and as a process. Such claims are supported by theories such as role exit theory and considerable number of studies providing insights about factors that motivate gang desistance. Researchers often identify push and pull factors in explaining gang exit. Push factors as being the factors inside the individual and pull factors as factors outside the individual that mostly motivate gang members to exit gangs.

On the other hand, other studies used turning points in the life of an individual in discussing gang life. They argue that turning points such as experiences of homelessness, spiritualism, and engaging in a relationship cause an individual to leave gangs. Moreover, other researchers look at gang desistance as a natural developmental occurrence. They argue that that as individuals age and move out of youth, they also tend to move out from youth activities and begin to move in to adult responsibilities.

Research Problems

This narrative study sought to examine the experiences of former gang members residing in the province of Cavite. It aims to elicit events, experiences, and epiphanies from the lives of former gang members, thereafter taking these events in chronology and emerging themes to create a story and/or identity of former gang members.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following:

1. What are the participants' reasons in joining a gang?
2. How do the participants describe their experiences during gang membership?
3. What are the participants' reasons in leaving the gang?
4. How do the participants describe their experiences after leaving the gang?
5. What inputs to counseling can be developed from the results?

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 explains that the life narratives of former gang members were examined in terms of their reasons in joining a gang, experiences during gang membership, reasons in leaving the gang and experiences after leaving the gang.

As the figure shows, the objective of this research paper to capture life stories of former gang members, was attained by studying four (4) elements regarding the participants' gang life such as (1) the participants' reasons in joining a gang - this include motivations, internal and external factors, perception towards gangs and other reasons that are provided by the participants; (2) experiences during gang membership - this element of research include

experiences of the participants during their gang membership; (3) reasons in leaving the gang - this include motivations, internal and external factors, perception towards gangs and/or other groups aside from gangs and other reasons that are provided by the participants; and (4) experiences after leaving the gang - this element of research include experiences of the participants after leaving the gang. These elements were studied as a process and/or a chronology of events in the lives of the participants and were synthesized into life stories to be used in understanding the experiences of gang members.

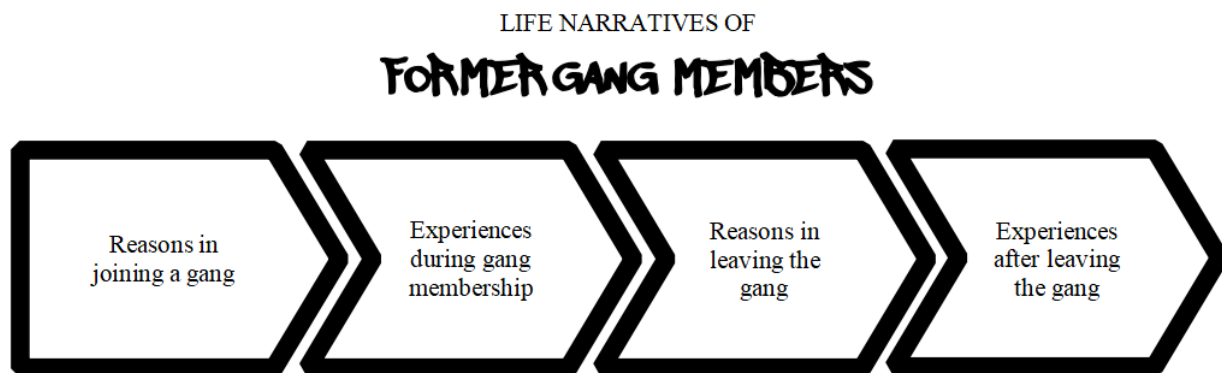


Figure 1 *Conceptual Framework of the Life Narratives of Former Gang Members*

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined operationally to provide a clear and single understanding in relation to their use in the present paper.

Street gang

Despite different definitions and different approaches in defining gangs, this study utilizes the Eurogang definition of gangs, that is, “any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity” (Weerman et al., 2009).

Former gang members

Those who have been part of a street gang at the age of twelve (12) to twenty-one (21) for at least one (1) year and who have left the gang for at least three (3) years already at the time of the study.

CHAPTER II

Procedures

Qualitative Design and Methodology

The present paper is a qualitative study. It is a research in which the researcher trusts textual data more than numerical data and analyzes data in its textual form instead of transforming it into numbers for analysis, with the objective of understanding the meaning of human action. (Schwandt 2001, as cited in Fernández, Olmos, & Cebollero, 2014). Furthermore, Sutton and Austin (2015) claimed that qualitative research can help researchers to access the thoughts and feelings of research participants, which can enable development of an understanding of the meaning that people ascribe to their experiences.

The researcher utilized life narratives as the overall design of the study. According to McAdams (2001), a person's evolving and dynamic life story is a key component of that particular person, situated in a particular family and among particular friends and acquaintances and living in a particular society at a particular historical moment. Narrative research designs describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about people's lives, and write narratives of individual experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Research Site

The present study was conducted in the province of Cavite. It is a province in the Philippines located in the southern shores of Manila Bay in the CALABARZON region on Luzon island. Situated just twenty-one (21) kilometers south of the capital, it is one of the

most industrialized and fastest growing provinces because of its close proximity to Metro Manila. With a population of 3,090,691 in 2015, it is the most populous province in the country. The province is the smallest province in the CALABARZON region and is composed of seven (7) cities and sixteen (16) municipalities.

It is the researchers' personal choice of research site with the reason of convenience and safety. It is convenient since the researcher actually resides in the province. Factors such as traffic, financial expenses and familiarity of the place would be prevented. It is also seen that the study is safer to be conducted since respondents are somehow familiar and not complete strangers to the researcher.

Additionally, the choice of research site is based on the data by the National Statistics Office (2008) about the total crime volume by region in the Philippines. From the statistics, with 1,485 recorded crimes, CALABARZON appeared to be the second region with the highest volume of total crimes in Luzon. With the argument of the association of crime and delinquency towards gang membership, the researcher found the province as the most valid research site.

Furthermore, for the purpose of safety and convenience of the participants, the conduct of the interview was done in their residence. In effect, physical safety was ensured and the identity of the participants as well as their responses were kept more privately.

Selection Criteria and Participants

The inclusion criteria in the study will be ten (10) individuals who have been part of a street gang defined as "any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal

activity is part of its group identity” (Weerman et al., 2009) at the age of twelve (12) to twenty-one (21) for at least one (1) year and who have left the gang for at least three (3) years already at the time of the conduct of the study. Participants were at least eighteen (18) years old at present and were not limited to any sex, religion, marital status, and educational background but was only limited to those who are residing in the province of Cavite. The researcher intentionally specified the criteria for length of time since gang disengagement to maintain safety of the researcher from the possible risk associated if ever the participant is still connected with a gang. The researcher particularized a minimum number of three (3) years for the participants since gang disengagement to assure that they are no longer connected with the gang. More so, these criteria of the participants were specified to be able to answer the main inquiries of the present study.

The exclusion criteria in the study will be former gang members of a fraternity, sorority and/or other forms of delinquent groups other than gangs were excluded in the study and those who are still a member of a gang at the time of the study. It was highly required that the participants are no longer involved in gangs. The participants are not anymore joining any gang-related activity at present.

Snowball sampling technique was utilized in selecting the participants in the study to ascertain the gang eligibility based on the operational definition used and the members’ legitimate membership in the gang.

Table 1. Profile of Participants

Name *	Age **	Sex	Age at the time of gang membership	Length of gang membership	No. of yrs. since gang disengagement	Delinquent activities with the gang
Isko	25	M	17	5 yrs.	8	alcohol drinking, vandalism, school drop-out, stealing, participation in troubles and gang wars, use of weapons during wars such as knife, use of drugs and marijuana, called out in the Barangay & imprisonment
Danilo	18	M	12	3 yrs.	3	throwing of urine to passengers passing by, school drop-out, shoplifting, participation in troubles and gang wars, possession of weapons during wars such as knife, brass knuckles, sexual activities such as trading girls as birthday gifts, birthday sex, use of marijuana & being called out in the Barangay
Juan	31	M	15	3 yrs.	13	alcohol drinking, wandering around, vandalism, school drop-out, participation in troubles and gang wars, sexual activities such as watching of pornography and sexual intercourse, use of drugs and marijuana & selling of substance
Anton	32	M	14	10 yrs.	8	alcohol drinking, participation in troubles and gang wars, use of weapons during wars such as pillbox, bottles, knives and bow and arrow, sexual activities such as trading girls as birthday gifts & use of marijuana
Angelito	19	M	15	1 yr. & 6 mos.	3	participation in troubles and gang wars, use of weapons during wars such as pillbox, bottles, knives and stones & sexual activities
Jose	21	M	17	1 yr. & 3 mos.	3	<i>pagtambay</i> , <i>pagpupuyat</i> , alcohol drinking all night, cigarette smoking, school drop-out, participation in troubles and gang wars, use of weapons during wars such as knives, use of wari (substance) and marijuana & being called out in the Barangay
Cardo	25	M	15	5 yrs.	5	<i>pagpupuyat</i> , alcohol drinking, school drop-out, shoplifting, participation in troubles and gang war, use of weapons during wars such as knives and guns, sexual activities such as trading girls as

						birthday gifts and passing candy (kissing) & use of weeds
Andres	24	M	14	6 yrs.	4	<i>pagtambay</i> , vandalism, cigarette smoking, alcohol drinking, school drop-out, stealing, participation in troubles and gang wars, use of weapons during wars such as knives , sexual activities such as trading girls as birthday gifts and sexual intercourse as initiation to join gang, use of drugs and marijuana, called out in the Barangay & imprisonment
Rowena	21	F	15	3 yrs.	3	alcohol drinking, participation in troubles and gang wars, use of weapons during wars such as stones, brass knuckles and knives, sexual activities & use of marijuana
Maria	20	F	15	1 yr.	4	<i>pagtambay</i> , wandering around all night, alcohol drinking, cigarette smoking, cutting classes & participation in troubles

***alias**

**** at the time of study**

Data Collection

The following steps were conducted in collecting the data:

Firstly, with the help of a contact person, participants were contacted and located. Then, rapport was built between the researcher and the participant. This was done through conversation that was initiated by the contact person and researcher to get to know the participant. Secondly, through presenting the informed consent form (see Appendix B) to the participant, the researcher discussed the nature and purpose of the study, the description of study procedures, risks and discomforts of participation, measures of confidentiality, the participants' right to ask questions, report concerns, and refuse or withdraw from the study. According to Eyler & Jeste (2006), ensuring and preserving the autonomy of research participants through the full provision of

information regarding the research process, the voluntary nature of the consent, and the assurance that the participant has the right to make a decision is the primary goal of any informed consent. Subsequently, the participant was given ample time to read, review and sign the informed consent form.

In order to facilitate data gathering, the researcher used in-depth interview. According to Prairie Research Associates, Inc. (2001), in-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation. It is highly effective in obtaining detailed information on a person's thoughts, perceptions and other issues. In conducting in-depth interview, the researcher asks questions to the interviewees, listens attentively to their responses and asks follow-up questions if necessary. Currently, it is considered as one of the common qualitative methods.

The researcher used semi-structured interview (see Appendix A). It was consisted of global questions together with probing questions. Questions in the interview were ensured to be free from any kind of bias such as gender, class, ethnic and culture. The questions were also translated in the Filipino language for the purpose of easier and clearer comprehension of the participants. The interview between the interviewer and the participants was recorded using a voice recorder and lasted for an approximation of half an hour up to one hour. For most of the participants, the interview was conducted inside the house of the participant, and to some, inside their church. Throughout the interview, the researcher was with the contact person to maintain safety and security.

The audio files of the interview were saved in the personal computer of the researcher in a manner that no other person shall have any access on the files. The printed copies of the transcribed data were organized into folders. One folder for each participant was assigned. These folders are kept solely by the researcher and shall not be available to any other people outside the research.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, thematic analysis was used. It is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It minimally organizes and describes detailed data. The data of the present study underwent the following procedures:

First, the researcher familiarized herself with the data. The interview accounts were transcribed in verbatim merely translating the thoughts of the participants. Afterwards, redundancies were eliminated in the transcription such as incidental and irrelevant expressions. Subsequently, the researcher paid attention to the participants' statements which correspond to the research questions posed in the present study.

Second, the researcher started to do line-by-line manual coding. Each statement of the participant was analyzed, considering it as the unit of the analysis. From these statements, codes were identified and generated.

Third, the initial codes with relative meanings, descriptions, and/or context were grouped into categories of codes. Afterwards, analysis was continued and some codes, as well as

categories of codes were recoded and recategorized based on its relevance to the objectives of the study.

Fourth, as the categories of codes were finalized, themes were generated. Through using a matrix, categories of codes were analyzed in identifying emerging themes which formed the essential structure and framework of the entire data. After carefully examining the common themes, the researcher improved them into more significant themes. More so, to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the themes, the researcher sought the help of an expert with a doctorate degree in Psychology who reviewed and revised some of the themes.

Lastly, the researcher started reporting the findings and results of the study by writing the discussion of the themes. The discussion included definition of the themes according to its relevance in the study, verbatim responses of the participants with its English translations that correspond to the themes, and an elaboration of how the present finding is related to the literature available.

Role of Researcher

Unlike quantitative studies which involve the use of questionnaires and surveys, data in qualitative studies are conveyed through human instrument (Simon, 2011). This means that data are inflicted with the researcher's own interpretations. That is, the role of the researcher is seen as subjective rather than objective (Radak, 2016).

The researcher in the present study herself facilitated the data collection. It was the researcher's role to elicit data from the participants through the use of questioning skills and

keen observations. The researcher was also accountable to every information from the participants. It is therefore, the researcher's responsibility to maintain confidentiality of information and secure participants' safety. Moreover, the researcher was also the one who interpreted the data.

Methods of Validation

The present study utilized a semi-structured interview in collecting data. The interview questions were reviewed and validated by three (3) experts in the field of Psychology and Counseling such as two (2) guidance counselors; and an expert with a doctorate degree in Psychology. The experts reviewed the interview questions in terms of face validity and content validity. The comments and suggestions of the experts were taken into consideration in revising the interview questions.

To ensure the accuracy of the restorying of life stories of the participants done by the researcher, member checking procedure was accomplished. The participants validated the restructuring of their stories by the researcher. Five (5) out of ten (10) participants were randomly selected to validate their stories. This ensures that their stories are not twisted or fabricated. This is done with the purpose of maintaining the authenticity of the participants' stories.

Furthermore, to assure the accuracy of the themes generated from the data, validation of themes was performed. An expert, who has a doctorate degree in Psychology validated the themes generated by the researcher. The themes were validated in terms of wording and relevance to the objectives of the study.

Ethical Issues

In the conduct of the present study, ethical considerations were of great importance. The researcher upheld the guiding principles outlined in the Code of Research Ethics and Guidelines for Review. The following ethical principles and standards were maintained.

Respect. The methods in the study were designed to protect the physical and psychological safety of the participants. The instrument that was used, the semi-structured interview, was devised to elicit responses from the participants with no intent to trigger psychological distress on them. The interview was conducted in a safe, conducive, and private place where no hazard can affect the participants and the researcher physically. For most of the participants, the interview was conducted inside the house of the participant, and to some, inside their church. Throughout the interview, the researcher was with the contact person to maintain safety and security.

Furthermore, the participants were given an informed consent form which stated the nature, purpose and methods of the study. Specifically, the informed consent form advised the participants that their participation in the study is voluntary and that they can withdraw from participation at any point they would like to. They were also informed that during the interview, their responses shall be recorded using a voice recorder.

Most importantly, in line with today's government campaigns against illegal drugs and criminalities, the anonymity of the participants and confidentiality of every information in the study was of utmost importance. To this, the researcher ensured that past experiences of delinquencies of the participants in the study, as well as information about them would not be

available to anyone who has no direct involvement in the research. In effect, aliases were used in replacement of the participants' legitimate names. More so, after analyzing the data, audio files were assured to be deleted and not be available to any database either online or offline.

Beneficence. In relation to anonymity and confidentiality of the participants' information in the study, it was important to ensure that possible harm such as exposure of the participants' identity, be avoided and prevented. Additionally, the results and findings in the study will be shared to the participants and their community in the form of inputs to counseling. Such inputs are developed in the present paper based on the results. Upon the request of the participants, they will be given a hard copy of the results of the study. The participants may approach the researcher through the contact details written in the informed consent form which was given to each of the participants. In addition, the nearest high school and elementary school from the participant's location will also be given a hard copy of the results of the study.

Justice. The selection criteria of participants aforementioned above were followed and were free from any kind of bias. The nature and purpose of the study were completely discussed with the participants and were free from any kind of interest outside the agreement of the researcher and the participant. The conduct of the study was not related to any monetary benefits for both the researcher and the participants. The study was not also based on any kind of relationship of the researcher and the participants. Lastly, the researcher performed only activities in the research with the extent of the researcher's skill and competency.

CHAPTER III

Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the significant findings and results of the study. These results are divided into five (5) sections according to each research question posed in Chapter 1. The first four (4) sections include a table which summarizes the themes, its descriptions and sample responses which reflect the themes. On the other hand, the fifth and last section contains a framework of implications for change which correspond to the fifth research question posed. Themes for each research question which include verbatim responses of the participants, are discussed.

Reasons in joining a gang

The participants' responses were categorized into codes and carefully converted into themes. There were four (4) emerging themes which explain the participants' reasons in joining a gang. The themes are: (1) perceiving low levels of parental support; (2) receiving emotional and financial support from fellow gang members; (3) struggling to belong; and (4) bearing peer pressure within the gang.

The table below summarizes the common themes depicted from the participants' responses about their reasons in joining a gang.

Table 2. Reasons in joining a gang

Themes	Participants	Descriptions	Sample Responses
1. Perceiving low levels of parental support	Isko, Danilo, Rowena, Maria, Andres & Juan	This denotes the participants' perceived lack of attention, love, and care they receive from their parents.	<i>"That's what I thought, since I was not properly guided by my parents. Maybe I sought love and relationship within the group. There's where you find the love you're looking, that which was not provided of your parents."</i>
2. Receiving protection, emotional and financial support from fellow gang members	Maria, Isko, Andres, Cardo, Rowena, Juan & Jose	This describes the protection, emotional and financial support the participants receive from the gang.	<i>"You're comfortable when you're with the many because the moment you feel disadvantaged and you alone can't fight back, there are those at your back to help you win over."</i> <i>"There are many I could report to. When somebody offends me, I could run to the group for support. I could open up to them, especially when all of us are drunk."</i>
3. Struggling to belong	Anton, Danilo, Juan, Angelito & Jose	This reflects the participants' need to belong in a group.	<i>"I seldom was a member of a group and I wanted to try and experience joining a gang."</i>
4. Bearing peer pressure within the gang	Danilo, Maria, Juan & Cardo	This refers to the influence of peers towards the participants.	<i>"I was invited to join. At first, I didn't feel like joining but later on I was convinced because the group were strongly influential. We were together most of the time until I finally submitted myself to join."</i>

1. Perceiving low levels of parental support

Participants reasoned out that due to their perceived low levels of parental support, they decided to join gangs. Three of the ten participants shared that they came from a broken family. They all experienced lack of attention, love and care.

Isko shared that during his younger years, his father and mother separated. He lived with her mother who was always busy with work that time. He was used to be left with his aunts who happened to be always resentful towards him. According to him:

“Kasi lagi silang wala tapos hiwalay yung mama ko saka papa ko. Si mama laging nasa trabaho wala ng nag-aasikaso sa akin, mga tiyahin ko nalang tapos konting mali ko laging pinapagalitan. Tapos yung mga bagay na hindi ko naman ginawa, sa akin pa rin ang sisi...”

(They were seldom at home, my mom and dad were separated. My mom was always at work, nobody was taking care of me except aunts who always scolded me at a slight mistake, always blaming me for things I didn't do.)

“Siguro yung kakulangan sa atensyon, kasi parang lagi kasing nasa trabaho yung magulang ko...”

(Maybe it's the lack of attention because my parents were at work most days of the week.)

-Isko (Male, 25)

Danilo also came from a broken family. To this, he stated that he found no significant activity in their home before and that there was no one to take care of them which he tried to search in joining a gang. He said:

“Siyempre diba sa inyo, araw-araw broken family niyo tapos wala ng magawa sa inyo...kasi walang nag-aaruga dun sa inyo eh...”

(Since we belong to a broken family, we, the children were being neglected.)

“Kasi kapag nasa bahay kami, broken family kasi kami....kulang kami sa atensiyon, kaya ganun sa tropa namin...dun namin nahanap, dun namin natagpuan...”

(Since we belong to a broken family, nobody was caring for us that's why we joined the group because it was where we found the care that our family failed to give.)

-Danilo (Male, 18)

The same sentiment was shared by Rowena, who is Danilo's sister. She stated:

"Nung una magulo yung isip ko, kasi maagang naghiwalay yung mga magulang ko. Parang hindi ko naranasan yung pagmamahal ng mga pamilya ko...parang naghanap ako sa iba."

(I was extremely troubled mentally, at first...my parents separated when I was still young. I never felt love from a family so I tried to seek love from somewhere outside.)

-Rowena (Female, 21)

On the other hand, Maria and Andres, who did not grow up living with their parents likewise experienced lack of attention, love and care from their guardians.

Maria, who lost her father at a young age, narrated that her mother left her with her grandmother because of work. Since then, she longed for her mother's attention, love and care which she found in her gang. According to her:

"...kulang sa aruga ng magulang...iniwan kasi ako ng mama ko sa lola ko...kulang sa pagmamahal parang ganun."

(I didn't feel sufficient parental love because my mom left me in the care of my grandmother. I grew up feeling lacking in love).

"Kasi kapag nasa gang ka, parang yung pagkukulang ng magulang mo, dun mo nakukuha sa tropa mo."

(What my parents failed to give, I found it with my group/gang.)

-Maria (Female, 20)

To Andres:

"Dati kasi, ang mama't papa ko di kami inalagaan niyan...sa lola ko lang ako lumaki. Eh siyempre wala din...di rin ako naasikaso kasi maraming trabaho sa bahay yun. Kaya mga tropa ko talaga nakakasama ko maghapon hanggang magdamag."

(Our parents did not take care of us. I grew up in my grandmother's care...she also was not able to nurture us well because she was busy with household chores. Hence, I was always out with my group the entire day and night).

-Andres (Male, 24)

However, Juan and Cardo who came from a two-parent family also experienced lack of attention, love and care from their parents and family.

According to Juan:

"Isa rin yun sa tingin ko dahil nga sa ako'y hindi rin talaga nagabayan ng magulang. Maaaring doon ko hinahanap din yung...pagmamahal, yung relasyon, yung akala ko sa ganong grupo, samahan mo matatagpuan, yung talagang pagmamahal na pagkukulang ng magulang."

(That's what I thought, since I was not properly guided by my parents. Maybe I sought love and relationship within the group. There's where you find the love you're looking, that which was not provided of your parents).

-Juan (Male, 31)

In summary, participants of the present study came from different family structures. Some lived with their relatives, some came from a two-parent family, and some came from a broken family. Despite this difference, it can be inferred that the participants' family structures affected both their perceptions towards the parental support they receive and their decision to join a gang.

This finding coordinates with a study done by Thornberry et. al. in 2003 which concluded that family structures and family transitions (change in parent figures) have a significant contribution in gang involvement. Furthermore, Social Bond theory explained that if a person has strong attachment to family and loved ones, they would not commit crimes as to not

disappoint them. Consequently, as participants experienced weak family bond, they tended to associate with gangs and be involved in delinquent activities.

2. Receiving protection, emotional and financial support from fellow gang members

In relation with the lack of attention, love and care experienced by the participants from their family, statements from them show that joining a gang fulfilled these needs.

According to Maria, she found happiness and a sense of wholeness in joining the gang.

She stated:

“Kapag ako nandun ang saya-saya ko, parang kumpleto. Pag nasa ano (bahay)... parang ang lungkot.”

(When I was with the group, I felt complete, extremely happy. Unlike at home, it seemed very sad there.)

“...sa bawat oras, ang saya saya mo kapag kasama sila.”

(Every time I was with them, I felt very happy.)

-Maria (Female, 20)

Similarly, Isko also shared that due to his experiences with his parents and family, he searched for happiness which he found in joining a gang. He said:

“...saka doon ako naging masaya...”

(There's where I felt very happy.)

“...kaya naghanap lang din ako ng kung saan ako sasaya...”

(That's why I looked for a place where I could be happy.)

“Doon ko nakuha kasi naging opisyal nga ako tapos yung mga gusto ko nagagawa ko pag kasama ko sila masaya kami...”

(There’s where I got what I wanted since I was an officer of the gang, I could just do what I wanted.)

“...naranasan ko din maging masaya saka maging bata.”

(When I’m, with them, we are happy.)

-Isko (Male, 25)

Isko added that joining a gang provided him protection from his enemies and other gangs. He argued that the number of their gang members gave him confidence in facing his enemies. He said:

“...kampante ka kasi marami kayo eh. Marami kung sakali mang madehado ka, kung sakaling may maka-away man kami o may mangdehado sa amin, kung hindi mo kaya, marami kaming babawi...”

(You’re comfortable when you’re with the many because the moment you feel disadvantaged and you alone can’t fight back, there are those at your back to help you win over.)

-Isko (Male, 25)

Isko did not only receive protection and confidence from the gang but emotional support as well. He said that his gang members became his support system and help in times of need.

According to him:

“Marami akong susumbungan. Kung may problema man ako, tatakbo ako sa tropa, makikipag-inuman, doon naman ako magsasabi-sabi ng problema...”

(There are many I could report to. When somebody offends me, I could run to the group for support. I could open up to them, especially when all of us are drunk.)

“Oo, kahit personal. Kasi meron din dyang mga best friend, best friend diba? E kaming apat na opisyal, kami-kami lang din ang nagkakaintindihan. Kunwari may mga problema kami, kami lang din ang nagsasabihan.”

(Yes, even with personal matters. Usually you have a close friend in the group, a best friend you could open up to. We, the four officials of the group, are the closest and we understand each other. Whenever we have problems, we are the ones who usually could relate to.)

-Isko (Male, 25)

Similarly, Danilo received protection from the gang. He said:

“Proteksyon ba...marami kang tropa...pag may nakaaway ka, marami kang mahihingian ng tulong, saka parang argabyado ka na.”

(You feel safe when you are a member of a group. When someone offends you, there are many you could run to for protection).

-Danilo (Male, 18)

Danilo furtherly reasoned out that joining a gang protected him not only from enemies and other gangs but from people who are superior than him as well when he said:

“...para hindi ka tapak-tapakan ng mga mayayabang na tao.”

(So boastful people won't just trample you).

-Danilo (Male, 18)

Aside from these, Danilo also reasoned that the happiness and camaraderie which the gang brings pushed him to join gangs. He said:

“...hindi ka naboboring kapag kasama sila...”

(When you're with them, you don't feel bored.)

“Tulad ng pagnagsama-sama, yung masaya...”

(Our togetherness makes us happy.)

-Danilo (Male, 18)

To Andres, he joined a gang because his gang did not only protect him but other gang members also helped him with doing household chores. He said:

“...para kunyari napaaway ako, pag sila tinawag ko marami kaming babalik. Lalo na kapag marami yung makakaaway namin.”

(When we were at odds with another group, I would invite my gang mates to fight back, especially when we know we can't outnumber them.)

“Lalo pag ako'y nag-iisang kumikilos sa bahay. Kasi dati nag-iisa lang ako nag-iigib. Pero kapag sila tinawag ko, tinutulungan din nila ako. Malaki din yung naging parte nila sa buhay ko. Nakakadiskarte ako kapag nandyan sila...dati kasi hirap pa rin ako sa buhay eh. Pero nung sumali ako sa gang, kapag sinabi ko sa kanila na, "Pre wala kaming ganyan, ganun" lalo na kapag may pondo kami, binibigyan nila ako... para magkaroon kami ng solusyon.”

(It's when there are lots of chores at home. Usually, I was the only one fetching water, now I have company in doing it. My gang mates had great role in my life before. I could ask them anything that was need at home. When I joined a gang, whenever I told them what we lacked at home, they were always there to provide.)

“...nandun nga sila para tulungan ako sa lahat ng problema ko sa bahay.”

(They were them to help me in whatever problem I had.)

“...kapag ikaw din kasi sumali sa isang gang, iisipin mo na oo tutulungan ka nila.”

(When you join a gang, you can be sure that they would be of help to you.)

-Andres (Male, 24)

Cardo, Rowena, Juan and Jose shared the same reasons as reflected in their accounts:

“Siyempre samahan namin kumbaga walang iwanan. Tsaka nooon kasi maraming gang, kumbaga kapag napunta ka sa isang lugar, kapag nabanatan ka, kumbaga tulungan eh, hatakan eh kaya napasali kami dun.”

(We were solid as a group. During that time, gangs were rampant so when one goes to another place and other gangs offend you all of us gang mates altogether retaliate.)

“...yung namatay yung magulang ko, kumbaga tinulungan nila ako. Share share din sila...kumbaga nagbigay din sila ng konting tulong, pagkain.”

(When my parents died, my group were there to support me, providing what I needed in any way they could, food especially.)

-Cardo (Male, 25)

“Yung lahat kasi ng grupo na yun broken family, doon namin lahat naaappreciate yung mga nararamdaman namin sa pamilya namin, sa panlalait ng mga tao, kaya binubuo namin yun...”

(All our gang mates come from broken families so we had common sentiments about our families and those who looked down upon us, that’s how our group was formed.)

-Rowena (Female, 21)

“Ang isa sa aking naging dahilan noon ay yung proteksyon dahil bilang kabataan pag meron kang gang, nandoon yung maprotektahan ka doon sa mga grupo din na pwedeng umano sayo kasi pag mayroon kang gang mayroong magtatanggol sayo sa panahon ng ikaw ay ginugulo ng mga tao na nakapaligid sayo.”

(One reason I joined the group is for protection. A young person perceives a gang as people who are ready to protect you from other enemy groups and from people around who intend to do you wrong.)

-Juan (Male, 31)

“Kunyari may kaaway ka, yung parang sila yung tutulong sa’yo. Kasi, kasagsagan din ng gulo. Gulo, inggitan, kaya pag napapaaway ka, sila rin yung tutulong sa’yo.”

(If you were at odds at a person or a group, my gang was there to help because during that time other groups were very troublesome. You feel invulnerable when you are with your group.)

-Jose (Male, 21)

As mentioned earlier, this theme can be related to the previous one. That is, participants’ perception towards parental support they receive also affected their perception towards gangs in a

sense that gangs can provide them protection, love, care, and attention their families have failed to give them.

This finding is in agreement with the study done by the Ministry of Social Development of New Zealand on 2008. The study found out that gangs become the youths' proxy family unit by providing emotional support, meeting social needs and serving as a congregational focal point. In the study, participants were also found to have experiences of bullying and potential victimization which motivated the youth in joining a gang because gangs provided a sense of security and protection at a street level.

Likewise, according to a study done by Candaliza-Gutierrez (2012), prison gang members also perceive gangs as a group which provide them security and serve as family and home. This, in turn helped them to cope with the struggles of their imprisonment.

Although no significant number of experiences of bullying were reported in the present study, it can be inferred that the participants look at themselves as potential victims of bullying. The participants perceive other youths from other gangs to be superior and stronger than them, and this consequently drives them to join a gang to be protected from other gangs who are potential bullies.

Accordingly, Melde, Taylor, and Esbensen (2009) studied the objective and subjective dimensions of gang member victimization and found out that gang members account higher levels of actual victimization and perceptions of victimization risk than youths who are not involved in a gang. Additionally, findings revealed that gang membership decreases fear and anxiety associated with the threat of future victimization.

3. Struggling to belong

Based on the data, participants stated experiences of the need to belong. Statements from the participants proved that this need is fulfilled by joining a gang. Four of the ten participants needed to have some company so they decided to join a gang.

Anton, who became a gang member at the age of fourteen (14), stated that he wanted to have a group of friends to share company and that he wanted to spend time and hang out with them. According to him:

“Naging dahilan ko noon..barkadahan, tropa, para may makasama rin ako...bonding.”

(I looked at joining a gang as having a peer group, a means to establish bond with other people.)

-Anton (Male, 32)

To Juan who joined the gang at the age of fifteen (15), he wanted to belong in a group which he perceived to be influential and can defend him. According to him:

“Gustong mapabilang sa ganong samahan, na syempre para yun nga yung meron kang impluwensya, mayroong magtatanggol sayo...”

(I wanted to be counted as one of the group, one having influence on others and having people to stand by my side.)

-Juan (Male, 31)

Additionally, aside from the need to have some company, Angelito and Jose shared that they also wanted to experience gang activities with the aim of being identified with the group and finally fulfilling their need to belong.

Angelito reported that he wanted to know the group very well and wanted to experience and perform their activities. He said:

“Gusto ko sila makilala ng lubusan, mga tropa.”

“Gusto ko rin maranasan yung narasan yung nauna samin.”

(I wanted to know better each one in our group. I wanted to experience the same thing experienced by those before me.)

-Angelito (Male, 19)

For Jose, he decided to join a gang at the age of seventeen (17) because he wanted to explore different set of friends and that gangs are popular that time. According to him:

“Gusto ko makakilala pa ng iba’t-ibang kaibigan, kaya sumali ako dun sa grupo na yun.”

(I wanted to meet more friends that’s why I joined that group).

-Jose (Male, 21)

He further elaborated that he was not able to belong in a group for some time so he finally decided to join the gang. He said:

“Minsan kasi hindi na rin ako napapasama sa ibang tropa. Parang gusto ko ring ma-experience yung gang. Kasi nauso kasi yung gang na yun eh.”

(I seldom was a member of a group and I wanted to try and experience joining a gang).

“Ayun nga kasi, panahon yun ng angasan eh. Maangas, nandun ang tropa. Gusto ko lang ma-experience yung ganun.”

(Joining a gang was a current trend that time. Young people wanted power and I liked to experience how it feels to be powerful.)

-Jose (Male, 21)

This finding parallels with Interactional Theory posited by Thornberry and Krohn on 2001. They claimed that the more an individual feels that he or she is connected with the gang, the higher the tendency that the individual associates his or her identity with the group. Accordingly, Quinn and Oldmeadow (2012) claimed that companionships assume an urgent part in the development of personality. It is during adolescence that youngsters invest an expanding measure of energy with peers, instead of families and different grown-ups.

4. Bearing peer pressure within the gang

As previously mentioned, it is unarguable that as adolescents spend most of their time with peers, peers also have the strongest influence in them. Participants reported experiences of peer pressure as one of their reasons in joining a gang. They elaborated how their group influenced them in joining a gang.

Danilo and Maria shared how their friends and/or gang members have influenced them to join. According to them:

“...impluwensiya...”

(To have influence over people my age.)

-Danilo (Male, 18)

“Siguro ano... na BI din ako ng mga tropa.”

(I was badly influenced by my group.)

-Maria (Female, 20)

Juan and Cardo on the other hand, shared that they did not only experience peer pressure but they experienced also being recruited by the gang.

“...sinabihan ako na ako daw ay sumali. Yun nga nakita ko, pinakilala ako, marami sila at talagang malakas yung impluwensya...”

(I was invited to join so I went to meet them and got introduced to all of them and this greatly influenced me.)

-Juan (Male, 31)

“Naimpluwensiyahan din ako kaya sumali ako.”

(I was influenced that’s why I joined.)

“Kumbaga sinabihan nila ako eh. Niyaya nila ako na sumali. Nung una ayaw ko, pero wala akong magagawa nung panahon ko kasi maimpluwensiya talaga yung tropa ko. Kumbaga sama-sama kami palagi. Kaya... sumali ako.”

(I was invited to join. At first, I didn’t feel like joining but later on I was convinced because the group were strongly influential. We were together most of the time until I finally submitted myself to join.)

-Cardo (Male, 25)

In relation to the previous theme, this theme can be understood as a consequence of the participants’ struggle to belong. Due to their desire and need to belong and be identified with a group, the group had power over them. It can also be seen that the participants’ need to belong was satisfied through the efforts of the gang members to recruit and invite them to join. Additionally, the amount of time they shared with the group affected their tendency to conform and finally join the gang.

Participants' account of their experiences of being invited and recruited support the claim of Forsyth (2010) when he argued that people's need to belong is satisfied when a group accepts them, and they are most fulfilled when a group actively seeks them out. It can be inferred that most of the participants did not just join the group but were recruited, invited and influenced to join. Additionally, Klein and Maxson (2006) claimed that the role of peers in predicting gang membership has been well established.

On the other hand, aside from the generated themes, some of the participants cited other reasons in joining a gang. Isko did not only join a gang before because of his negative experiences with his family and how the gang helped him, but also because of conformity. In one of his statements, he mentioned:

"Napasali ako kasi marami rin naman akong kakilala na taga sa amin, mga kamag-anakan ko kaya sumali na lang din ako."

(I was able to join a gang because I know many of my neighbors who are also gang members. Others are also my relatives so I decided to join.)

-Isko (Male, 25)

Danilo, on the other hand, also mentioned his other reasons in joining a gang as he stated:

"Wala lang... pa-cool"

(I joined a gang because I just want to be seen as a cool guy.)

-Danilo (Male, 18)

From the statement, it can be inferred that Danilo wanted to be known through his identity with the gang. Also, he added that he joined a gang before because he wanted to have a chance to have a romantic relationship with the girls who joined their gang.

He said:

“Yung mga babae, ganun. Makakatambayan mo, araw-araw...”

(I joined a gang because of the girls I get to meet and hang-out with in the gang everyday)

-Danilo (Male, 18)

Similar to Danilo, Jose and Juan also perceived gang involvement as a way to become known and famous and to get into what was on the trend that time as he stated:

“Kasi nauso kasi yung gang na yun eh..Nung panahon na yun, kaya...”

(Gangs were popular that time so I joined one.)

-Jose (Male, 21)

“Syempre bilang kabataan yung uso...yon, kumbaga isa din sa yung makilala ka na mayroon kang gang.”

-Juan (Male, 31)

Additionally, Rowena also reasoned out that she found the gang inviting which made her join them as she shared:

“Wala na enganyo lang ako...ano yung parang nakikita ko silang masaya sa ginagawa nila, kaya sinubukan ko...”

(The group was inviting and appeared appealing to me. I can see that they are happy with what they do so I tried to join them.)

-Rowena (Female, 21)

In addition, it is observable that participants joined their gangs during their school age, that is, during adolescence. This period of is crucial to an individual's development. It is during this developmental period that adolescents experience vast changes among themselves, more

specifically, in their social aspect. During these years, they are starting to establish their identity and explore and experiment with their peers as they can relate to each other.

Experiences during gang membership

Participants explicitly narrated their experiences during gang membership. These experiences appeared to be all negative. Common to their experiences are: (1) joining gang wars and carrying out violence; (2) committing vices and other delinquent activities with the gang members; (3) engaging in sexual activities with co-gang members and others; (4) enduring social alienation by others; (5) dwelling in educational failure and unfulfilled dreams; and (6) dealing with intragroup conflict.

The table below summarizes the common themes depicted from the participants' responses about their experiences during gang membership.

Table 3. Experiences during gang membership

Themes	Participants	Descriptions	Sample Responses
1. Joining gang wars and carrying out violence	Cardo, Rowena, Andres, Isko, Maria, Anton, Juan, Danilo, Angelito & Jose	This means fights between gangs and violent acts done by gang members.	<i>"There was a gang war-serious fights that caused serious injuries; one of us even actually stabbed someone. I was, at that time, holding a big rock and I sued it in attacking the face of one"</i>
2. Committing vices and delinquent activities with the gang members	Rowena, Jose, Juan, Maria, Isko, Anton, Danilo, Cardo & Andres	This pertains to vices such as cigarette smoking, alcohol abuse, substance use and selling of substance and other delinquent activities such as vandalism, stealing and/or shoplifting.	<i>"I have imbibed all possible vices."</i>
3. Engaging in sexual activities with co-gang members and others	Cardo, Danilo, Andres, Anton & Juan	This shows sexual activities such as watching of pornography, kissing, and sexual intercourse.	<i>"There were lots of girls, various girls. What we did was initially we made the girls drink until they become intoxicated...and everything follows...the girls were not anymore conscious of what were being done to them after they became drunk and</i>

			<i>high with marijuana. What I after did was to bring in television where we could watch pornography.”</i>
4. Enduring social alienation by others	Isko, Cardo, Jose, Maria & Juan	This means dissociation of participants from significant relationships such as family, relatives, friends, authorities, etc.	<i>“My name was jeopardized. We were hotly pursued by many eyes, all those who know us were furious with us. We felt our world narrowed because we were able to just wander in a limited area. We could not go to places we liked because anywhere we went, we found people being antagonized by us. We felt that anywhere we went, we would possibly die because we were constantly causing trouble.”</i>
5. Dwelling in educational failure and unfulfilled dreams	Isko, Juan, Andres, Jose, Cardo, Maria & Danilo	This mirrors the inability of the participants to finish their studies and fulfill their dreams.	<i>“My life is ruined. I was not able to graduate. My dreams when I was young were never realized. I focused on my gang and this ruined my life.”</i>
6. Dealing with intragroup conflict	Danilo, Anton, Andres & Angelito	This refers to the conflict in the relationship between gang members such as betrayal.	<i>“Whenever there was a fight, though I did not participate, I was the one brought to the barangay. My gang mates were also called by the barangay but they refused to appear. Maybe they were shy or embarrassed. In the end I was the only one who owned up the fight. I did not involve them because I personally did not want to implicate them. So whoever was caught, he needed to take the blame alone not involving other members. That’s the real situation in a gang.”</i>

1. Joining gang wars and carrying out violence

From the participants’ responses, it can be inferred that one of their defining goal in gangs is to protect their gang from other gangs which is done through varied acts of violence. All of the participants narrated that they have experienced committing violence during their gang membership.

Three of the ten participants asserted that their gang does not start up fights but only retaliate. That is, when their gang and/or one of their members got hurt, that is the only time they will fight against the other gang.

According to Cardo:

“Pero hindi naman kami yung gang na palaaway. Kumbaga ang samin, pinoprotektahan lang namin yung isa't isa. Kumbaga hindi naman kami nangunguna sa gang na pinasukan ko.”

(But we were not that troublesome group. We were only there to protect each other. We were never the ones to initiate trouble).

“Kasi kumbaga away ng isa, away na ng lahat kasi kumbaga ganun kasi sa gang...”

(But we believed that trouble for one is trouble for us all.)

- Cardo (Male, 25)

The same sentiment was shared by Rowena and Andres who explained that:

“...kapag merong nasasaktan sa isa sa grupo namin, hindi pwedeng hindi kami gagalaw. Kasi nasaktan na nga yung isang kagrupong namin eh. Pero hindi kami gumagalaw hangga't walang nasasaktan sa amin.”

(If one of us was hurt all of us had to action. We were not that passive type, when one is involved, we have to move but we never initiated trouble.)

-Rowena (Female, 21)

“Basta samin di naman namin sila totally inaano...ang ano namin makaganti lang...”

“Kasi blackout na kami nung araw na yun kasi binastos niya yung mga tropa namin eh...ang alam namin kapag nagsumbong sa amin, talagang reresbakan namin. Ganun talaga yung gang namin.”

(We never did serious things to our enemies; we simply wanted to retaliate because that day was furious. They offended our group...when one of us reported an offense, we were determined to retaliate. That's how our group was.)

-Andres (Male, 24)

Isko, who is the founder of their gang experienced death of two of his members during an incident of gang war. The police reported that the two members died because of too much beating. Isko further narrated that the pain the group was experiencing worsened because the families of the deceased members rejected the gang's financial help and prohibited them from visiting the burial of the two. Since then, Isko stated that some of their members lost their heart and decided to leave the gang yet majority of their gang members became more raged towards other gangs. He said:

“Doon nagsimula yung halos lahat ng makita naming gang halos binabanatan namin, binabawian namin, kasi hindi namin alam kung sino kasi marami kaming kaaway eh. Kaya kung sino nalang yung makita naming mga kaaway naming grupo o mga bagong grupo, doon na lang kami gumaganti.”

(That's how our being highly sensitive started., every time we encountered another group, we were always ready to fight and we incurred numerous enemies . Hence, we were very offensive towards other groups because there's where we dumped our fury).

-Isko (Male, 25)

Maria, holding the position of *starter* of the gang shared that she started to become associated with fights when she attempted to defend one of the gang members. She narrated:

*“Kasi si ***** may kaaway...may posisyon ako sa gang na yun eh...starter...tapos yun, nakipag-away ako ng dahil dun...inabangan namin...binanatan namin....”*

(***** incurred an enemy...I was an authority in our group that time, that's why I involved myself in the fight.)

-Maria (Female, 20)

Anton also shared that:

“Sa gang, yun nga pag ka may problema yung isang tropa, pag gusto mambanat, tatawagin ako. Kung sino yung gustong banatan uunahan ko na tapos, siya na susunod. Para mawala lang yung galit niya”.

(In a gang, when one member has a problem with someone outside, he just calls us and we altogether attacks hat someone he was at odds with).

“Hindi kami pwedeng maapi, hindi kami pwedeng tapaktapakan, lalaban kami kahit mamatay”.

(We were not to be offended, not to be trampled upon...we will fight to the end).

-Anton (Male, 32)

Anton also explained how fights start in gangs:

“Yung iba kasi...tingin lang, mga titig na nakakatunaw, mga nakakalalaking tingin tapos yung iba naman kursonada lang kahit na walang atraso, trip niya lang ganun...kaya nagsisimula rin yung away. Inggit, yan kaya nagkakaroon ng away sa gang.”

(In some instances, mere glances offended us...glances which we interpreted as condescending...glances that implied as having power over us, glances that we attached negative meanings to...all these infuriates us and those would serve as motivation for us to start a fight.)

-Anton (Male, 32)

Some participants also reported experiences of using weapons during incidents of riots and gang wars.

Rowena stated that her group experienced using stones. She said:

“Yung talagang nagkasakitan na talaga...nagbasagan na ng ulo. Hanggang sa meron ng mga batong hawak...”.

(We really put up serious fights...we used stones, we broke heads).

-Rowena (Female, 21)

She also explained that their group possessed pointed materials like *balisong* not for use but only to threaten others. According to her:

“Yung mga balisong-balisong lang, hindi naman yung mga nasasaksak, mga panakot lang.”

(We always equipped ourselves with native knives, but actually, we didn't intend to use them to stab people, just for intimidation.)

-Rowena (Female, 21)

Isko shared another incident of gang war where one of his members used a knife and he himself used a stone. He shared:

“Ang nangyari gang war. Talagang grabe yung bugbugan na yun, daming duguan nun eh, tapos nakasaksak pa yung isang tropa. Kasi yung hawak ko, basag yung mukha kasi pinagpapalo ko ng bato eh. Habang nakatungo siya, may nasipa sa likod ko, may napalo sa batok ko.”

(There was a gang war - serious fights that caused serious injuries; one of us even actually stabbed someone. I was , at that time, holding a big rock and I sued it in attacking the face of one).

-Isko (Male, 25)

He added that he also experienced stabbing someone with a knife and through a knife, being hit and stoned many times.

According to him:

“Ilang beses na rin akong nakasaksak, ilang beses din akong napalo, nabato.”

(I have experienced several times, stabbing people. Several times, also, I was hit on the head with wood or stone.)

-Isko (Male, 25)

The following statements depicted the participants' experiences of using weapons and acts of violence during gang membership. The participants reported the use of stone, gun, knife, *balisong*, pillbox, bow and arrow, brass knuckles and others.

“Muntik na rin malagay sa ano yung buhay ko eh, dahil yung pinaka founder namin...meron siyang yung ginagawa lang na parang baril na parang pen gun...may inaabangan kami na grupo na talagang titirahin namin...so nilagay niya yung kaniyang pen gun sa daanan...tinago niya lang dun habang hinihintay namin yung isang grupo na dadaan. Kaya ang nangyari, bumagsak. Magkatabi kami...tumama yung pen gun sa ganito niya oh, yung bala talaga, pumutok. Talagang butas yung ganito niya, tapos kita ko bumubulwak yung dugo, talagang daming dugo bumubulwak, tinamaan siya dun.”

(There were times when my life was put to risk. Once, our founder fabricated a native gun - a pen gun...we were once waiting for an enemy group, he placed the pen gun on the way while we waited for the group to pass. Unfortunately, the pen gun fell and misfired. It hit him directly. We saw plenty of blood gushing out.)

“May mga naexperience ng baril”

(Some of us experienced being hit with guns.)

-Juan (Male, 31)

“May tropa pa kaming nasaksak ganun...napalo sa ulo...nabaril.”

(Another was stabbed and others were hit on the head and others were gunned down.)

-Cardo (Male, 25)

“Lagi kami batuhan pilbox, bote, mga pana, pana pa noon eh...di pa masyado talamak ang baril.”

(We always used pill box, bottles, bow and arrows as our weapons. There were no many guns yet that time.)

“May mga tropa din ako nasaksak eh sa tagiliran pero buhay naman”

(One of our members was stabbed but fortunately, he survived.)

-Anton (Male, 32)

“Kutsilyo...di ko pa nagamit pero lagi akong may dala nun. Ang madalas ko lang... asero...”

(A knife...but I was not able to use it. I always brought a knife with me and brass knuckles.)

“Asero...Pichokorno...kasi...mas malakas impact nun kaysa sa kamay.”

(Brass knuckles...because they have heavier impact in the hands.)

-Danilo (Male, 18)

“Comatose talaga siya...binaseball bat kasi namin siya eh...hinampas namin siya ng baseball bat sa batok hanggang sa makatulog. Hindi namin siya tinatantanan.”

(He was comatose...he was hit by a baseball bat on the back of the head until he feel unconscious. There was no let up in the attack.)

-Andres (Male, 24)

“Batohan...bato, bote tapos ano pillbox”

(With rocks, bottles and pill boxes.)

“Mga dalasang nanaksak.”

(Stabbing in most times.)

-Angelito (Male, 19)

“Magbato ng bato.”

(Throwing stones.)

-Jose (Male, 21)

It was observed that joining gang wars and carrying out acts of violence has been a collective activity of the participants' gangs since all of them reported experiences of this theme. One can argue that the themes of the present study are related to each other, as one theme advances another, as if forming a single story. More so, in considering the reason behind the participants' aggressive behavior towards others, previous themes that explain their reasons in joining a gang can be considered. Due to the participants' perception towards their gang as a proxy family unit which provides them with protection, love, care, attention, and belongingness they long, they would do everything for their gang, even if it can hurt others or themselves.

Additionally, aside from the many claims of direct relationship of gang membership and delinquency, Thornberry et al., (2003) further elaborated that there is general consensus that the connection of gang membership and delinquency is remarkable for more violent offenses. Based on statistical data in the United States, Egley, Howell and Harris (2014) stated that cases of gang-related crimes have been increasing rapidly. From 1, 824 cases of gang-related homicides in 2011, a twenty percent (20%) increase on 2012 was recorded. Moreover, they highlighted that nationally, 2,363 homicides were identified to be gang-related. From 2007-2011, the quantity of gang-related homicides extended roughly from 1,700 to 2,100 every year, expanding 20 percent to the latest count and that gangs were associated in about fifteen (15) percent of all homicides, underscoring the significant overlap of violent crime and gang activity.

Furthermore, the present theme parallels with a study done by Harris, Turner, Garrett and Atkinson (2011) which attempted to explain the gang members' experiences of violence. In the study, they discussed that one of the factors that motivate gangs to commit violence is pre-emptive protective violence. This refers to a sense of need of the group for protection from threats. In the present study, this can be reflected in the participants' experience of violence due to protecting their gangs from other gangs.

Accordingly, Harris, Turner, Garrett and Atkinson (2011) discussed further that their subjects experienced a sense of protection by carrying weapons. Gang members explained the thought of carrying weapons caused them protection and threat to others.

2. Committing vices and delinquent activities with the gang members

This is one of the most common activities experienced by the participants during their gang membership. Most of them reported that gangs taught them vices and that they were influenced by other gang members. Common vices experienced by the participants were alcohol drinking, substance use and selling of substance and delinquent activities were stealing and/or shoplifting and wandering around.

“Yung inuman halos araw-araw... ilang bote pa.”

(Almost everyday we drank several bottles of alcohol.)

“Meron kapag yung anniversary...yung monthsary ng grupo...nagsasalu-salo kami. Kainan, inuman...Nandun na lahat...marijuana”

(Often when there were occasions to celebrate like anniversaries, monthsaries of the group, we partake drinks, food and eventually marijuana.)

-Rowena (Female, 21)

“Minsan inaabot ng umaga pag nag-iinuman.”

(We kept drinking up to the wee hours in the morning.)

“Siyempre, natuto din magbisyo...mag-inom, magpuyat.”

(Of course, we engaged in vices...drinking, not sleeping at night.)

“Oo naranasan ko magyosi...”

(Yes, I experienced smoking.)

“(Marijuana) Oo, naranasan ko na...Tatlong beses sa isang araw.”

(Marijuana...three times a day.)

“Wari...mga isang beses sa isang buwan, kapag may party.”

(Once a month, we used wari when we had a party.)

-Jose (Male, 21)

“Minsan mga nasa 50 nag-iinuman tapos kasama mga babae...”

(Sometimes we were 50 in all in a drinking session, involving females.)

“Oo, drugs...kaso mostly marijuana. Marijuana talaga yung ano namin...kaya ang nangyari naranasan ko na nga rin yung magtinda...”

(Yes, drugs but mostly marijuana. It was marijuana that we often use. I even went to the extent of selling marijuana.)

“Mag-mamarijuana lang kami...binubuga namin sa bintana ng school yung marijuana...pag magkaklase yung teacher, di alam ng teacher na kami naka marijuana, mapula ang mata...”

(Even in school, we smoke marijuana, during our classes without our teacher knowing it. Nevertheless, it was evident we were into it because we had reddish eyes.)

“Sa mga gate, basta lahat ng pwedeng ma-vandalism. Sa gabi vinandal namin yung grupo namin, spray...”

(We often vandalized gates and all possible spaces we could vandalize. We did it

at night in groups using paint spray.)

-Juan (Male, 31)

“Lagi lang nakikipag-away...mag-inom...”

(I was always in fights...drinking alcohol.)

“Oo, tsaka may yosi...”

(Yes, and smoking.)

“(Marijuana) Oo, nagbebenta pa nga sila eh...”

(Marijuana, yes, even peddling.)

-Maria (Female, 20)

*“(Vandalism) Oo, marami rin, dito sa may *****, sa *****, sa may *****”*

(Vandalism, yes in many cases, in ***** and *****)

*“Tapos sa*****, marami rin kami naging vandalism...minsan nga nakapag-vandal kami sa kotse eh...spray paint at paint.”*

(In *****, we also committed vandalism, there were times when we did it on cars...spray paint.)

-Isko (Male, 25)

“Kapag mga birthday, inuman kami...mga durugan...nagmamarijuana kami...”

(When one of us has birthday we celebrate...drinking, taking drugs and smoking marijuana.)

-Anton (Male, 32)

*“(Marijuana) Oo...nung ***** nga kami. Impluwensiya lang ng tropa kasi araw-araw kaming magkakasama sa bisyo. KJ mo kung di ka ano...”*

(Marijuana yes...we were influenced by our group. We did it everyday. If one did not join, he was branded a KJ.)

“Matututo ka ng mga bisyo...”

(You imbibe vices.)

“Magnanakaw, nakasama din ako dun...”

(One time, stealing...I was involved in that.)

“One time lang yun nangyari, mga pabango lang.”

(There was even a time we stole bottles of perfumes.)

-Danilo (Male, 18)

“Inom, weeds...kung anu-anong alak yung iniinom namin.”

(Drinking, weeds...we tried various brands of alcohol.)

“Pupunta kami sa mall, sama-sama kami...shop lift...mga pabango...”

(We would enter a mall, altogether and steal bottles of perfumes.)

“Sa gang ko natutunan yung ganun...”

(I learned all these from my gang mates.)

- Cardo (Male, 25)

“Hindi ako dating nag-iinom pero nung sumali ako sa gang nandiyan yung natuto akong manigarilyo, mag-inom. Basta kung anu-anong bisyo natutunan ko.”

(I did not have any vice before but when I joined a gang I learned how to smoke, and drink. Now I have learned many vices.)

“Magyosi, mag-inom...”

(Smoking, drinking.)

“Lahat ng bisyo nga natikman ko.”

(I have imbibed all possible vices.)

“(Vandalism) Naranasan din namin yan, halos mahuli kami...sa mga malalaking pader. Minsan sa mga malalaking pinto ng tindahan. Sinusulatan namin hanggang sa mahuli kami...di pa rin kami nadadala...magiispray pa din kami.”

(We also experienced vandalism, we were almost caught during the act...we vandalized wide walls. Sometimes on gates of stores. We did the act until we were caught. But that did not prevent us from doing it again.)

“(Stealing) Naranasan din namin yan. Siyempre dati nung gang kami pag sinabi ng ano namin na kailangan ng gantong bagay, kukunin talaga namin yan. Lilinlangin namin yung bantay para makuha yung pinapakuha niya.”

(Stealing, we also did that. When our leader tell us to get a specific thing, we stole it by all means. We tricked the guard so we could get the thing that the leader wanted.)

-Andres (Male, 24)

Due to the amount of time they share with their gang and the degree of influence their gang has over them, participants tended to conform to regular activities of the gang without considering its consequences.

Mackenzie, Hunt and Joe-Laidler (2006) concluded that gangs have been consistently associated with drug use. While social notion of gang members as being drug addicted, only marijuana was a daily patterned occurrence. They further discussed that most people in the community see gang life as always hanging around and doing nothing, but in their study, gang life included a lot of activities like drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana. They discovered that marijuana use for gang members is a collective activity, and has become integrated into members' everyday lives.

On the other hand, studies of Swahn, Topalli, and West (2010) and Suh and Genkin (2016) proved the strong association between gang membership and alcohol drinking. Moreover,

Hunt (1999) explained that drinking is an essential component of gang life and that gang members use alcohol drinking with different symbolic ways such as a way to solidify and maintain the union of the gang and as a way of initiation or jumping in of new members.

However, Bjerregaard (2002) claimed that gang members are almost five (5) times more likely to have experienced robbery and over six (6) times more likely to have committed a break-in or to have stolen a car.

3. Engaging in sexual activities with co-gang members and others

Participants shared different sexual activities they experienced during their gang membership. Most of them experienced sexual activities during birthdays and parties and one of them shared an experience of using sex as an initiation to join their gang.

Cardo, Danilo, Andres and Anton experienced sexual activities during birthdays and parties. Based from their responses, it can be inferred that girls are being objectified and being used as a birthday gift to male gang members. They narrated:

“Kumbaga nagiging regalo nga sa tropa na ibe-bed time mo yung tropa mo...”

(It served as gift to the birthday celebrant. We called it “bed time”)

-Cardo (Male, 25)

Cardo added that aside from birthday sex, he also experienced another sexual activity they did in their gang which he termed as *passing candy*. He said:

“Dahil sa gang, natuto talaga ako...passing candy...”

(With the gang, I learned “passing candy”)

“Magkakasama kayo sa iisang kwarto, may bote papaikutin niyo, sino matapatan nung babae...lalaki, matik na yun na...magkikiss kayo ganun...literal talaga, binuksan ko yung candy, kinain ko yung candy, papasa ko sa babae...depende na sa inyo kung ganun...”

(You are all in one room, you rotate the bottle among the circle you formed, if it points to a girl and then a boy, they two would kiss. The male opens a candy and puts it in his mouth and transfers it into the girl’s mouth, then the two would talk what is next to be done.)

-Cardo (Male, 25)

Similarly, Danilo shared how birthday sex is done in their gang:

“Yung tipong birthday, “Par ikaw na bahala dun sa babae” tapos “Osige ako na bahala dun” tapos papapuntahin mo ngayon mga tropa mong babae. “Uy ano shot tayo” hanggang sa sila na yung magkakausap. Magkakaanuhan na kasi lasing na sila. Tapos ayun na, ikaw na bahalang kumarisma kung paano gagawin mo basta magdadala lang ako. Labas na ako dun kung ano gagawin mo, yun lang.”

(It’s one’s birthday: one would say it’s up to you what to do with the girl, and the celebrant would answer, “I’ll take care of her” Then you would send all the girls in your group to drink. Once they all get drunk, the chosen girl and the celebrant would then talk together about what comes next.)

“Birthday sex nga eh...yun tawag”

(It was called “birthday sex”)

-Danilo (Male, 18)

He further stated that as girls are being used as gifts, they were even wrapped as in usual gift. He said:

“Pero dito sa gang, bihira kasi tuwalya lang binabalot, hindi gift wrapper...parang lumpia eh”

(But in our gang, we did not use actual gift wrappers, we used towels instead, rolled around the girl’s body.)

-Danilo (Male, 18)

Furthermore, Danilo said that girls who were used as gifts often become romantic partner of their male gang member and eventually join their gang. He stated:

“Yung iba, pagkatapos nun, magiging syota na tapos sasali na sa amin”

(In some cases, after the event, both eventually became “sweethearts”)

-Danilo (Male, 18)

The same experience was shared by Andres as he narrated:

“Nung birthday ko kasi, nagulat lang ako sa tropa ko, pumunta sa bahay namin. Sabi sa akin, “pre wala akong maireregalo sayo, tropa ko lang na babae” tinanong ko naman yung babae. Sabi ko, “ikaw talagang payag ka ba? Kasi niregalo ka sa akin ng tropa ko.” Sabi naman nung babae sa akin, “Sige, wala naman akong magagawa eh kasi birthday mo.” Yun yung naging regalo niya sa akin, yung babaeng yun.”

(During my birthday, I was surprised by a gang mate when he came to my house and told me “I don’t have anything to give you on your birthday except a girl in my group”. But I asked the girl if she consents with the idea and she said, “Okay I could not do otherwise, anyway it’s your birthday” That was his birthday gift to me.)

-Andres (Male, 24)

Andres added that for females who wanted to join their gang, sex was also used as an initiation. He said that females get to choose between ‘*Sarap o Hirap*’ which pertains to *Sarap* as having sex and *Hirap* as being beaten. He even stated that sex is being done by the officials of the gang. He said:

“Kasi samin pag gang ka, tatanungin ka naman eh. Kasi kami yung kauna-unahan, tatanungin ka nung nagdala sayo, “Ano ba yung gusto mo, sarap o hirap?” Kapag sinabi ng babae, “Ganto na lang para di ako masaktan.” Ayun na lang ipapalit. Pero yung niregaluhan, maraming beses na kami niregaluhan”

(In our case, you are asked initially. You are asked which you prefer: Sarap (enjoyment) or Hirap (Suffering). The girl would rather prefer “Sarap” than “Hirap” But the person currently gifted with a girl often times before did the same thing to other members.)

“...para di na siya masaktan sa mukha...mga ganun...”

(So she would not be hit on the face.)

“Kasi salit-salitan yun. Kunyari, ikaw yung pinakamataas eh ikaw yung sunod sa pinakamataas...salit-salitan yun. Hindi yung sa isang babae lahat ay ganun?”

(It is done alternately. The leader does the first act, followed by the next in line. Until everyone has done it with all the other girls present.)

-Andres (Male, 24)

To Anton:

“Binibigay lang, nireregalo lang samin ng mga tropa naming babae na gangster...May dadalhin siyang babae para sakin. Parang regalo niya sakin”

(They were just given to us as gifts, girls from other gangs. They brought a girl to me as a gift.)

-Anton (Male, 32)

Juan on the other hand, shared that he experienced a lot of sexual activities with many girls before and that they usually become engaged in sexual activities after becoming drunk or high because of alcohol and substance such as marijuana. He also shared that they watch pornography which added to their urge to engage in sex. He narrated:

“Sobrang dami, talagang iba ibang babae. Kasi yun nga, ang gagawin namin...papainumin tapos sari-sari na...kapag nakainom na, naka marijuana na...kaya ang ang gagawin ko...maglalabas ako ng tv...hanggang sa manonood kami ng porn...”

(There were lots of girls, various girls. What we did was initially we made the girls drink until they become intoxicated...and everything follows. ..the girls were not anymore conscious of what were being done to them after they became drunk

and high with marijuana. What I after did was to bring in television where we could watch pornography.)

“...kaya mabilis na nasisindihan yung apoy ng pagnanasa...”

(This heightens their desire for sex.)

-Juan (Male, 31)

Furthermore, he even stated that females were being harassed during these incidents. He stated:

“Kaya yung iba totoo yun eh yung mga babae na sasama sa mag-iinom kung bakit na nare-rape, naga-gang rape? Yung gagawin pag lalasingin, aanuhan ng betsina ang inumin nila hanggang mahilo yung mga babae na makakasama namin. Syempre pag lasing ka na, syempre bilang kabataan, makakagawa ka talaga ng mga bagay na talagang minsan ay kawawa ang mga babae talaga na mainvolved sa ganyang mga gang, kasi ang gagawin ng iba sasamantalain, paiinum hanggang pag lasing na...yun na, dun na gagawin ang kanilang ano...”

(That’s the reason why most girls who joined gangs in drinking, oftentimes they ended up being gang-raped. There was even a practice of putting something they call “vetsin” in the drink of the girl. Consequently it facilitates the girl’s orientation of what was happening around. Usually, due to the girl’s youth, she is able to do anything that would make her end so pathetically. That’s what usually happens to girls involved in gangs, they were taken advantage of by the male members.)

“Minsan kasi may mga babae din na tinatawag na parang pakalawa din? Talagang di mo na kailangan na ano eh... talagang...”

(There are girls who are often loose morally. They don’t need any motivation anymore from a boy to do things sexually with them.)

-Juan (Male, 31)

It was alarming that sexual activities are one of the common experiences shared by the participants in the study. At a young age, participants were exposed to these kind of activities. As it was mentioned that sexual activities were done mostly during occasions such as birthdays and parties, it can be inferred that participants were in the influence of alcohol and/or substance (e.g.

marijuana) in the conduct of these activities.

Accordingly, a study of Voisin et al. on 2014 supports this theme by concluding that adolescents who have been reported joining a gang were 5.7 times more likely to have had sex, 3.2 times more likely to impregnate a girl, and almost four (4) times more likely to have been “high” on alcohol or other drugs during sexual intercourse, have had sex with a partner who was “high” on alcohol or other drugs, or have had sex with multiple partners concurrently.

Though no literature explained the activity of objectifying girls as birthday present to male gang members, it is seen as the most common sexual activity in the present study. However, Dickson-Gomez, Quinn, Broaddus, and Maria Pacella (2017) argued that gang members experience high-risk sexual behaviors (HRSB). These behaviors include gender-related expectations from gang members such as boys as being sexually insatiable and girls should be sexually available to satisfy boys.

On the other hand, Isko had a unique experience from other participants regarding this theme. While sexual activities were part of other participants’ gang activities, Isko stated that it is one of their gang rules not to touch any woman or any elderly. He stated:

“Ay bawal sa amin yun, kasi yun ang pinaka ano ko sa lahat eh. Okay lang na manggulpi kayo dyan, makipag-away, wag na wag lang kayo mangbabastos ng matanda saka ng babae. Yun ang ayaw na ayaw ko kaya hindi kami nag-aano ng ganyan.”

(Oh it’s prohibited with our gang because that’s what I hated the most. I allow my members to make troubles and hurt others but never to disrespect women and elderly, because I really hated those kind of activities.)

-Isko (Male, 25)

4. Enduring social alienation by others

Social alienation is seen as a result of the delinquent activities done by the participants with their gang. Because of their activities, they display a bad image of themselves towards other people including their family. Also, as an effect of the gang wars they have been associated with, their worlds have become smaller and narrow because they tend to hide from other gangs as well as from authorities for their safety. Some of the participants also shared that they experienced being rejected and thrown away by their own families.

The following responses prove and explain this theme:

*“Nasira yung pangalan ko...naging mainit kami sa mata, halos lahat ng mga tao na nakakakilala sa amin, galit. Tapos sumikip yung mundo namin kasi dyan lang kami sa looban, yung iskinita na to, kaaway namin. Yung sa kabilang kanto, kaaway namin. Yung ***** kaaway namin. Kumbaga kahit saan ka pumunta, sa tingin mo mamamatay ka na kasi talagang matinding gulo yung ginagawa namin, kaya napakasikip ng mundo namin.”*

(My name was jeopardized. We were hotly pursued by many eyes, all those who know us were furious with us. We felt our world narrowed because we ere able to just wander in a limited area. We could not go to places we liked because anywhere we went, we found people being antagonized by us. We felt that anywhere we went, we would possibly die because we were constantly causing trouble.)

*“Tapos pag nakita kami ng pamilya ng isang tropa, “**#@#\$#*(^\$@...gulo nanaman ang hahanapin niyo.” Ultimo ang mga barangay pagka nakita kami, wala pa kaming ginagawa, “Binabantayan na namin kayo.” Yun ang lagi niyang sinasabi, kaya masyadong maliit saka maiinit kami sa mata.”*

(If ever we were seen by the family of another group, they shouted expletives to us saying, “You are here again to cause trouble?” Even with the barangay officials, whenever they saw us they often told us, “We are in close watch over your group”)

-Isko (Male, 25)

“Dami rin naming naging pagkukulang sa ibang tao, nagiging masama na kaming tingnan sa ibang tao...pamilya mo lalayuan ka. Yun yung nawala sa akin...pamilya ko, mga mahal ko sa buhay.”

(We also were aware of our shortcomings to other people. We were looked at as people to be avoided...even our own family distanced themselves from us. That's the effect in me, I lost my family, I lost my loved ones.)

“Nagalit mga tiyuhin ko dati kasi halos umuwi ako ng madaling araw...tapos mga madaling araw din...gigisingin ng barangay tiyuhin ko, halos magalit sa akin. Tinaboy nga nila ako dati eh...tinataboy nila ako.”

(My uncles got mad at me due to my frequent going home late...often at wee hours in the morning. Barangay people often bugged my uncle at some unholy hour in the evening inquiring about me. This made them drive me away.)

“Talagang gusto ko na umalis kasi ang tingin sa akin ng pamilya ko suwail na ako...yun yung tingin sa akin. Yun lang yung sama eh, bad record ka...kumbaga lagi kang napuputukan ng pamilya mo. Iniisip sayo kung anu-ano, baka nagnanakaw na ako ganun.”

(Because of this, I wanted to stay away from them. I have become extremely disobedient to them. They perceived me as one irretrievably incorrigible.)

-Cardo (Male, 25)

“Parang pumapangit yung image ko”

(I tarnished my image.)

“Parang inaano nila na pag sumasali sa gang, masamang tao ganun...”

(They concluded that when one joins a gang, you would soon turn out to be bad.)

“Yung ano, nung nakasaksak yung kuya nya. Yung ang hindi ko makakalimutan kasi parang lumiit yung mundo naming, nagtago kami.”

(The one who did the stabbing was an older brother. We were forced to go into hiding. That was an unforgettable experience.)

- Jose (Male, 21)

“Lagi kang nasa gulo tapos parang ang tingin sayo ng mga tao masama. Kasi nagpapasama sila ng tao...sa lahat, sa pamilya pati sa ibang tao.”

(You were always in trouble, people look at you as a bad person. They actually are the ones who drive us to be worse in the eyes of everyone, and to our family.)

-Maria (Female, 20)

“Yung sa relasyon din...magulang, magiging lalong matigas ulo mo, palasagot, lalo kang magiging rebelde. Talagang kung aanuhin mo, wala talagang magandang naidudulot”

(In our relationships with our parents, we became more hard-headed, answering back, becoming more rebellious. If you could look at it, there is no good thing that can be derived from joining a gang.)

-Juan (Male, 31)

In relation to some of the previous themes discussed, social alienation is seen as a result of the delinquent activities done by the participants with their gang. Because of their activities, they display a bad image of themselves towards other people including their family. Consequently, their interpersonal relationships have been affected. They experienced receiving negative connotations and judgments from others, including their families.

Also, as an effect of the gang wars they have been associated with, their worlds have become smaller and narrow because they tend to hide from other gangs as well as from authorities for their safety. This, in turn, affected the participants' daily lives. They experienced inability to perform daily activities that require going out and to live normally due to threats and fears they associate with going out as other rival gangs can attack them and other people might judge them.

5. Dwelling with educational failure and unfulfilled dreams

Similar to the previous theme discussed, this theme is also seen as a result and/or consequence of delinquent gang activities the participants experienced. Participants stated that during their school age, they focused on their own gangs which they have seen as the reason why they were not able to finish their studies and reach their dreams.

Andres, Cardo and Maria accounted their academic failure to their gang involvement.

To Andres:

“Di na ako nakapag-aral...”

(I was not able to continue my studies.)

-Andres (Male, 24)

Cardo stated that his commitment to gang activities affected his education. He narrated:

“Kumbaga nag-aaral ako, kailangan mo umattend ng meeting, pag nagsabi yung founder niyo na may meeting, kahit anong mangyari aattend ka. Kumbaga ayun yung ayaw kong nangyari, kumbaga ang lakas maka impluwensiya.”

(I was studying that time when I joined. Whenever the founder said that we had to attend a meeting, by all means you have to attend. I was more inclined to obey the gang rather than go to school.)

“Naapektuhan talaga...tumigil ako sa pag-aaral dahil sa gang”

(It really affected my studies...I stopped schooling because of my gang.)

-Cardo (Male, 25)

Maria admitted that her studies became affected because of her focus in her gang as she said:

“Parang sa pag-aaral din...di ka nakakapag focus sa pag-aaral dahil sa tropa mo...”

(You could not focus on your studies if you are a gang member.)

-Maria (Female, 20)

Some participants also pointed out that their failure in education before caused them to have lack of career opportunities at present. This can be reflected in the following accounts:

“Hindi ko din naman sila sinisisi pero napatropa ako, hindi ko natapos yung pagaaral ko, hindi ako nakapagcollege. Kasi nakapagtrabaho agad ako e, parang na ano ako sa trabaho.”

(I’m not blaming anybody for my failure in my studies, I was not able to finish my schooling, wasn’t able to go to college. I was able to get a job then and got to like my job.)

-Jose (Male, 21)

“Kung nakatapos ako ng pag-aaral edi magandang trabaho ang mapapasukan. Saka di ka maghihirap sa construction.”

(If I were able to finish my studies, I would have settled on a better job. I would not merely settle working as a construction laborer.)

-Danilo (Male, 18)

Isko on the other hand, accounted not only his academic failure but also failures in his dreams and life in general due to his gang involvement. According to him:

“Nasira rin yung buhay ko. Hindi ako naka-graduate. Yung mga pangarap ko nung bata, hindi natuloy kasi nag-focus ako sa gang. Siguro parang sinira niya rin yung buhay ko.”

(My life is ruined. I was not able to graduate. My dreams when I was young were never realized. I focused on my gang and this ruined my life.)

-Isko (Male, 25)

To Juan, aside from academic failure, he also accounted his health due to different vices and sexual activities he experienced in joining gang.

“...hanggang sa dumating yung time naalala ko nung fourth year highschool ako hindi na ko makakagraduate talaga kasi ang ginagawa ko pasok lang ako, alam ng magulang ko napasok ako, bigay sila ng bigay ng allowance, baon, pero ako nasa mga iba't-ibang gawain na hindi kalugud-lugod sa Panginoon, at yung alam kong di na ko makagraduate, huminto nalang ako. Tumigil nalang ako. So hindi ako nakapagtapos ng highschool.”

(I remember when I was still in fourth year high school I failed to graduate because I was not attending classes. My parents knew I was attending classes, they gave me daily allowances. I was not into things pleasing to the Lord. When I realized I could not graduate I totally stopped my schooling.)

“...nasira yung buhay mo, nasira yung pangarap mo, nasira yung kinabukasan mo, nasira din yung kalusugan mo, hindi mo alam na baka sa iba't ibang babae na naano mo eh magkakasakit ka. Kasi yung kalusugan mo...grabe kasi 'pag kami kapag nag-inom kami yung inom na bumabaha talaga...”

(Life is ruined; my dreams, my future and even my health were ruined. I was not aware that in the process of having sexual relationships with various girls I could incur diseases and in my imbibing into various vices like drinking alcohol, my health was at stake.)

-Juan (Male, 31)

It can be observed that participants directly associate their educational failures to their gang membership. As they were studying during gang membership, they admit that gang life greatly affected their education. Participants also link their educational failure to their career at present. Today, they have realizations about the role of education in preparing for adulthood.

Based on the literature available, this theme was studied as a consequence and/or impact of gang membership towards transition into adulthood. Khron and Thornberry (2008) argued that longitudinal studies count for more accurate information about the impact of gang membership into life-course transitions such as completing education, getting married, getting a job, etc. An

example of a well established study about this was done by Thornberry et al, (2003) which found out that both male and female gang members experienced dropping out of school. Furthermore, they examined whether controlling eight background variables, including prior delinquency, would eliminate the significant relationship between gang membership and each of the transitions such as getting a diploma. The relationship between gang membership and dropping out of school remained the same.

6. Dealing with intragroup conflict

Even though participants shared how the gang and its members helped them in many ways, they did not deny their experience of having conflict with other members. As reflected in their responses, they experienced betrayal especially whenever they get caught by authorities. This can be proved by the following responses:

“Pag oras na ikaw naman yung nangailangan eh, magkakagipitan. Iiwanan ka sa ere.”

(Whenever you are in need, they just abandon you.)

“Nung nagkabarangayan na, ako lang naipit. hindi ko din sila tinuro, sila nga din nagturo sa akin eh...binaliktad nila ako, parang ganun.”

(When we were brought to the barangay, I was the only one who owned up the offense we did. I did not point at them, did not implicate them but they pointed at me.)

-Danilo (Male, 18)

“Kapag kinalaban ka nila, tinira ka patalikod, nilaglag ka, binenta ka...”

(Because if they turn their back from you, they would implicate you, sell you to the authorities.)

*“Naranasan ko na yun sa ***** kami nun eh...birthday ng tropa. Tapos, biglang akala namin okay lang kasi inimitahan kami. Tapos pinaabangan kami sa labas, hanggang sa sinugod kami, pag balik namin sa loob...puro taong bayan yung kalaban namin”*

(I experienced the same thing...it was on the birthday of a member so we thought everything was okay since we were invited but once we were there, there was a group who intercepted us outside, when we went back in we were met by community people.)

-Anton (Male, 32)

“Pero bandang huli, pag nagkakaroon din ng away...kahit wala akong ginagawa, ako lang yung napupunta sa barangay hanggang sa pinapatawag sila ng barangay, ayaw nila sumipot. Siyempre nahihiya rin siguro sila...ang nangyari ako na lang, siyempre isa rin akong gang...hindi ko na sila dinadamay, mag-isa na lang akong nasa barangay. Tatal ayoko rin naman maano sila, sinasalo ko na lang lahat ng problema nila. Ganun kahirap ang isang gang.”

(Whenever there was a fight, though I did not participate, I was the one brought to the barangay. My gang mates were also called by the barangay but they refused to appear. Maybe they were shy or embarrassed. In the end I was the only one who owned up the fight. I did not involve them because I personally did not want to implicate them. So whoever was caught, he needed to take the blame alone not involving other members. That's the real situation in a gang.)

“...tapos kapag nagka-barangayan, nagkahulihan, wala na... ituturo ka na lang nila. Iwan ka rin nila.”

(So when it comes to the confrontation in the barangay, they are nowhere to be found...they point at you and abandon you.)

“Nung bandang huli, pumangit na kasi nung nahuhuli sa barangay, ako lang pinapatawag. Siyempre kapag pinatawag ako sisipot ako dun. nakikita ko sila sa bintana tinatawanan lang ako. yun yung pinaka mahirap na nangyari sa akin. Halos saluhin ko kahit sila may kasalanan.”

(Since I was the sole member owning up to every offense done by my group, I was the only often called to appear and I did. I often saw them peeping at me, and laughing. That was a difficult experience for me, owning up to offenses which they did.)

-Andres (Male, 24)

Angelito, who joined his gang at the age of fifteen (15), shared that because of his age and inferiority within the group, he experienced being bullied by other members who were older than him. He said:

“Pagtritrip, pambubully...syempre ano bata pa kasi ako eh, matatanda na sila. Binabanatan nila ako eh. Talagang bugbug, tinitiiis lang naming”

(Bullying...I was very young then and they were much older than me. I was often hit by them, seriously hit, but I bore them all).

-Angelito (Male, 19)

He further narrated that his experience of bullying caused him wrath and anger towards the bullies. He said:

“Ano sobrang, ano galit nagalit.”

(I was extremely furious at them.)

-Angelito (Male, 19)

This can be seen as contrary to the previous theme discussed regarding the participants' reasons in joining the gang, that is receiving protection, emotional, and financial support from the gang. It is observed that as gang membership continues, the gang, as in other groups also experience conflicts within its members. It is also assumed that as time passes, gang members get to know each other in the group, and consequently build politics within the group, in which other become superiors and other become inferiors. Thus, the superiors take advantage of the inferiors in the group. It can also be understood in a way that as time passes, the solidarity of the group fades and eventually loosen up as they do not anymore satisfy their needs in the group such as belongingness, attention, care, and love.

Based on the literature, this theme was seen as more of a pull factor in leaving the gang. On the study of Decker, Pyrooz, and Moule Jr. (2014), when gang members start to perceive that they are being taken advantage by their gang peers, or that their gang is not supportive enough (i.e., not protecting each other from other gangs), they start to feeling disillusionment which causes them to leave their gang.

In addition to the findings discussed earlier, some participants was able to share experiences that are different from the others'. Isko, who as the president of his gang before narrated that despite their gang's delinquent activities, they also attempted to legalize their group in their community. He mentioned:

"...kasi nung tumagal, marami na kami masyado eh, kaya binalak namin na i-legal talaga yung pangalan ng grupo, e ayaw ng mga kapitan. Tinesting namin dito sa amin, sa kabilang barangay, ayaw talaga...hindi talaga kami pinagbigyan ng barangay. Kumbaga balak namin gumawa ng mga activity, yung mga maglilinis ng kanal, e wala ayaw eh...kasi marami na nga daw kami record, bala mamaya mai-legal, mas lalo kaming luamala..."

(As time passed by, our gang grew in number so we attempted to legalize the group, we planned to conduct activities like cleaning our community but the Barangay captains in our Barangay did not allow us. So we tried asking permission from other Barangay nearby our place, yet they also refused to legalize our group. They told us that our group already has records of delinquent activities, and they think that our group will just worsen if in case it has become legalized.)

-Isko (Male, 25)

Furthermore, it can be inferred that the length of gang membership of the participants did not contribute to the degree of their delinquent activities. In support to this, Jose, who spent a 1 year and 3 months in his gang had the same experience of using marijuana with Andres who spent 6 years of gang membership.

More so, difference in gender did not justify difference on the degree of delinquent activities committed. For instance, Rowena who is a female had the same experience of using weapons during gang wars as with the male participants. However, this claim was not consistent with the case of Maria, who is another female participant because she cited less delinquent activities than the male participants. Though, for some experiences cited like sexual activities, difference in gender roles can be traced. It can be observed that males as being sexually insatiable and girls as being sexually available to satisfy boys.

Reasons in leaving the gang

Based on the participants' responses about their reasons in leaving the gang, three themes emerged which are: (1) growing out of the gang life; (2) adopting a new role and/or responsibility and (3) adapting spirituality.

Table 4. Reasons in leaving the gang

Themes	Participants	Descriptions	Sample Responses
1. Growing out of the gang life	Jose, Cardo & Juan	This refers to the participants' feeling of jaded and being fed up with the gang life which consequently leads them to a desire for a new lifestyle.	<i>"To effect change, so I could fix my life, no trouble, no hanging out with friends...I wanted a new life."</i>
2. Adopting a new role and/or responsibility	Andres, Danilo, Angelito, Anton, Rowena, Cardo & Jose	This reflects the participants' transition from one role and responsibility to another.	<i>"I left the gang because I got married. I was given a great responsibility. I impregnated a girl, so since then I began distancing myself from the gang."</i>
3. Adapting a spiritually-focused life	Isko, Juan & Maria	This pertains to the participants' belief and dependence on a higher being in leaving their gang and dissociating from its activities.	<i>"Until one day I met a pastor of a religious organization who shared his experiences to me. Ever since I heard the word of God, I came to know God. I finally abandoned the gang. My former gang mates treated me coldly since I became a Christian."</i>

1. Growing out of the gang life

During gang membership, participants shared that they came to a point when they became fed-up and jaded by their gang activities and their lifestyle. Things were happening in a cycle and they got tired being in and out of trouble. This became one of their reasons in leaving the gang. Upon their gang exit, they shared that they wanted to live a new and better life. The following responses depict this theme:

“Para bago naman, para maayos naman yung buhay, hindi puro gulo hindi puro barkada...gusto ko na ibang buhay”

(To effect change, so I could fix my life, no trouble, no hanging out with friends...I wanted a new life.)

-Jose (Male, 21)

“Umalis na ako sa gang kasi nakakasawa din kasi...paikot-ikot lang yung buhay mo sa ganun. Asaran, pikunan, laughtrip. Lahat...bisyo, tambay, gulo...kumbaga nanawa na ako sa ganung buhay eh...kumbaga naipapasa namin yung panahon. Sa ibang kabataan naman. Kumbaga tapos na yung era namin sa ganung sitwasyon namin. Kumbaga naipasa na namin yung pagiging gangster namin sa kabataan.”

(I left the gang because I got fed up with gang life. Teasing, getting offended and laughter - all these vices, hang-out, doing nothing, trouble. I got fed up with all these activities in life. Time allowed us to realize these - to pass this stage to people younger than us. We realized we have gone out of this stage. Let the younger ones take over.)

-Cardo (Male, 25)

“Tapos that time lasing ako, meron akong tiyahing kristiyano tapos nung kausap ko yung tiya ko, tinanong ko yung tiyahin ko habang umiiyak ako. Sabi ko, sabi ko sa tiya ko, "tiya, paano po ba magbago?" sabi ko habang umiiyak ako. Sabi ko kasi... sabi ko kasi sawang-sawa na ako sa ganitong buhay. Sabi ko "ganito na lang buhay ko tiya, lagi akong lasing saan man akong lugar pupunta... nalalasing" tapos nagtanong ako sa tiya ko "paano ba tiya magbago?"...nagsawa na ako eh. Biruin mo...mula edad kinse hanggang ganung edad eh ganun pa rin ang buhay, alipin pa rin ako ng bisyo. Nagsawa ako. Kumbaga sabi ko, gusto ko naman ng ano... paano ba magbago? paano ba makawala? kumabaga wala ng

kapayapaan, walang kapanatagan, walang kadilatan, kasiguraduhan.”

(I was drunk that time when my aunt who was a Christian was talking to me. I was crying when I asked her, “Aunt, how can I change?” I told her, “Is this the kind of life that is intended for me...getting drunk always...wherever I go I always wanted to get drunk? How can I change? Since I was fifteen until now that I’m 31, should life always be this way for me?”. “I’ve long wanted to change. How can I free myself from this bondage? No place, no comfort, no realization to something better and no assurance?”)

-Juan (Male, 31)

It can be argued that as time passes, gang members get used with their gang life. Their delight and curiosity towards gang activities before joining the gang subsides. It can also be inferred that participants come to a realization that they are not anymore growing as a person and that they needed a change in their life.

This finding is in line with a study done by Decker and Pyrooz in 2011, among the push factors, or those factors that are internal to a group that motivate gang members to leave, growing out of the gang life dominated. Seventy three percent (73%) of the participants of the study reported growing out of the gang life. Accordingly, in the present study, this theme appears to be the only push factor that was identified as significant with the participants’ reasons in leaving the gang. In the same study by Decker and Pyrooz (2011), next to growing out of the gang life were involvement with the criminal justice system and harassment from the police. They observed that these three push factors indicated that participants experience the consequences of the gang life and so attempting to find a new lifestyle.

Similarly, Carson and Vecchio (2015) concluded that the most common push factor discussed by ex-gang members can be characterized as disillusionment - which is characterized by statements like “I just felt like it” and “It wasn’t what I thought it was going to be”. In the

study, they found out that 42 to 55 percent of former gang youth claimed disillusionment as a motive for leaving their gang.

This can also be observed in the present study. Jose, Cardo and Juan, all stated that they grew out of the gang life because things are going in a cycle and end up to the same thing which is trouble. It can also be inferred that from these consequences, they long for new and other ways of living.

2. Adopting a new role and/or responsibility

This theme refers to the participants' transition from one role and/or responsibility to another. Many of the participants adopted the role of being a parent and a spouse while some focused on their jobs. The participants shared how their new role and/or responsibility became one of their reasons in leaving the gang.

Andres, Danilo, Angelito, Anton and Maria shared that having a partner in life and/or starting up building their own family was their major reason in leaving a gang. This is shown in the following responses:

Andres proudly stated how his partner contributed to his gang exit:

“Umalis ako sa gang simula nung nakilala ko yung asawa ko...hanggang sa pinagbago niya ko, kaya hanggang ngayon di na ako sumasali sa gang. Di na ako nakikipag-away kasi nga...para sa asawa ko tsaka sa magiging anak ko...yung nagbabawal sakin...yung nagpapangaral sakin na huwag ko na gawin kasi may asawa na ako, magkakaanak na ako. Kaya di na ako sumasali sa ganyan...natuto na ako ngayon...malaki ang impact sa akin ng asawa ko...”

(I left the gang ever since I met my wife...she changed me into a better person that's why I don't anymore join a gang. I no longer create trouble...for my wife's sake and my future child. These were the reasons who keep reminding me not to

do things I used to do anymore. That's why I have totally distanced myself from gangs. My wife was greatly instrumental in my turnaround to a better life.)

-Andres (Male, 24)

Danilo stated how things have changed and how he handles his new role as a father and provider for his own family.

"Nagkapamilya, pero ngayon...syempre yung focus mo sa asawa't anak...trabaho, bahay. Di tulad dati, wala kang inaasikaso sa bahay niyo. Eh ngayon? di pwedeng di ka gagalaw, di ka magtatrabaho."

(I have had a family already. I have to focus on my wife and my child and our home. Unlike before I was idle at home but now I can't afford to be like that. I really have to work.)

"Hindi na ako binata...tatay na ako para maging matured na yung utak ko. Kapag ba... nawalan ng gatas makakahingi ba ng ano.."

(I am no longer a bachelor. I'm already a father. I have matured in thoughts. If you see your child not having milk would there be someone to provide him with milk?)

-Danilo (Male, 18)

The same sentiment was shared by Anton as he stated:

"Kaya ko umalis sa gang nagkaasawa na ko. Nagkaresponsibilidad na ko. Nakabuntis ako eh. Kaya ayun, lumayu-layo na ko..."

(I left the gang because I got married. I was given a great responsibility. I impregnated a girl, so since then I began distancing myself from the gang.)

"Umalis...lumayo-layo na. Tas hanggang sa ayun nagkaanak nako dun na ko tuluyang umalis. Di na ko bumabarkada, di na ko natambay. Nagtatrabaho nalang ako."

(I left...I distanced myself until I beget my child and consequently detached myself totally from my group.)

-Anton (Male, 32)

To Angelito, he shared how being a father changed how he looked at his life.

“Dahil po naka pamilya na po ako. Syempre po, andun sila na yung priority ko.”

(Because I have had a family, then...my family was then my priority.)

“Simula yung ano lumabas anak ko parang, parang sobra ng halaga ng buhay ko...parang ano bilang ama...para sa anak ko.”

(Ever since my child was born, I felt and began to realize a great meaning in my life - being a father to my child.)

-Angelito (Male, 19)

Maria felt that her journey with her gang has ended and that she was given a new role to play.

“Parang feeling ko time ko na na sarili ko naman yung intindihin ko. Kasi nagampanan ko na yung part ko para sa kanila. Tsaka yung binigyan ako ng Panginoon ng magiging kasama ko sa buhay parang dun na ako nagsimula, nagdesisyon na rin ako sa buhay ko na tapos na yung misyon ko para sa kanila, na meron namang bagong misyon na para sa Panginoong Jesucristo.”

(I realized that I have to do something for myself and that I have already done something for them. God has given me a companion in life. There's where it all began. I firmly decided to carry out another mission in my life which Jesus Christ has given me.)

“Syempre iba na yung buhay mo dun tsaka dun mo na mararanasan yung mabuong muli yung pamilya.”

(There is great difference between my life before and now. I have rejoined my family.)

-Maria (Female, 20)

However, Cardo and Jose who haven't started having their own families, focused on their jobs instead.

“Nagbago lang ako kasi...kailangan ko talaga. Mas pinili ko yung trabaho kaysa sa gang talaga.”

(I changed because I needed to change, really. I chose to work than staying with the gang.)

-Cardo (Male, 25)

“Parang umiwas na ko ganun, kailangan ko rin magbago. Takaw trabaho na ko ganun.”

(I intentionally avoided them because I needed to change. Right now, I am working hard.)

-Jose (Male, 21)

From the responses, it can be assumed that having a new role to play and a new responsibility to fulfill made the participants shift their focus in life. Changes and turning points in their lives such as being a parent, committing to a partner in life, and having a career also changed their lifestyle. Thus, deciding to finally leave the gang.

In agreement with Radbo (2015) using role exit theory of Ebaugh (1998), this finding is consistent with Radbo's claim and elaboration that an individual can only disengage from a role when he/she engages into a new role. This can be traced from the participants' responses, those who have become parents and who have committed themselves in their new career.

Accordingly, Decker, Pyrooz and Moule (2014) framed their study using Ebaugh's theory about role exit. In the study, they discussed the stages of Ebaugh's role exit theory. The first stage is called 'first doubts', wherein the individual experiences doubts about his/her gang. These doubts intensify in the individual and this him/her to finally leave the gang. The subjects of the study of Decker, Pyrooz and Moule (2014) contained doubts about the morality of the gang, gang lifestyle, the individual's future with his/her family and gang violence towards themselves and others.

The second stage is the anticipatory socialization in which an individual experiments and begins to try out new role. Third, Decker, Pyrooz and Moule (2014) also included central turning points as a specific event or time in the life of an individual which caused him/her to leave the gang. In their study, majority of the subjects cited family as a major variable for change. Lastly, the post-exit validation wherein the individual validates his/her new role from within or from external reference such as members of the former gang, rival gangs, family, or the police. This is a key part in moving into a new role because without this validation, the individual may drift back to the gang.

These stages were consistent in the present study. The first stage may account with the previous theme. Participants of this study experienced doubts about the gang lifestyle. It was mentioned that they stated that they had thought about the repetitive cycle of their gang life and that they wanted to try a new role. The second stage can be reflected through the gang members' attempt to dissociate from the group and its activities. Thirdly, the present finding is still consistent with the discussed literature because it can be observed that majority of the participants experienced having their own family and/or becoming a parent as a specific event or their turning point in leaving the gang. Accordingly, validation of their new roles both came from within - from realizing on their own that they now have a new role/responsibility to fulfill and from the people around them specially their own family.

3. Adapting a spiritually-focused life

This refers to the participants' dependence and reliance to a higher being upon leaving gang. Isko, Juan and Maria share the same sentiment with their statements.

Isko admitted that even though he started his own family and despite the influence of his wife, he still continued joining gangs as he said:

“Ayun, nagka-asawa ako, nagka-anak. Kasi yung salita ko sa sarili ko, pagpinangako ko na talaga na kung ako magkaka-anak, ayoko na maging katulad ko, lalaki pa tapos lagi kaming nag-aaway ng misis ko na kung hindi ka hihiwalay sa mga tropa mo, maghiwalay na lang tayo. Ayoko naman mangyari sa pamilya at sa mga anak ko yun, kaya sabi ko, “sige, kakalas na ko.” Pero patuloy pa rin ako, sumisimple lang ako, hindi alam ng asawa ko...”

(I got married and had a child. I promised to myself that the moment I have a child, I would not allow him to experience the same thing I experienced. I often quarreled with my wife while I was still continuing seeing the group. She threatened me with separation. I did not like that to happen to my family. So I told her I would leave the gang. But, at the time my wife was not aware that I was still seeing my gang mates).

-Isko (Male, 25)

He only ended up the gang life when:

“Tapos ayun, nakilala ko si pastor, nag-share siya sa akin. Simula nung nakarinig ako ng word of God, nakilala ko yung Diyos. Tuloy na akong umiwas. Pati tropa nanglamig na sa akin kasi alam na nila na Christian na ko.”

(Until one day I met a pastor of a religious organization who shared his experiences to me. Ever since I heard the word of God, I came to know God. I finally abandoned the gang. My former gang mates treated me coldly since I became a Christian.)

-Isko (Male, 25)

Similarly, Juan shared that he once had his first family, yet he continued with the gang life which caused her partner to leave him. He narrated:

“Unang naging pamilya. Ang nangyari, umuwi ng probinsiya yung una kong naging (asawa)...so dun ako naano... parang lalo pa nung nalaman ko na naghanap ng iba talaga. Talagang kasalanan ko pero nung 2010, inabot ako ng salita ng Diyos. Yun nga nakilala ko si Jesus, may nagbahagi sa akin na isa ring pastor. Binahagi sa akin yung...mabuting balita ng kaligtasan. Nung tinanggap ko si Jesus bilang Panginoon, Tagapagligtas, dun nagtuluy-tuloy, nagbago. Nagulat ako, yun...tinatawag na ako ng Diyos sa...buhay pagpapastor. At nung

ako'y tinawag ng Diyos buhay pagpapastor kasi nangangaral na ako eh. Sa jeep, sa bus, saan man ako mapunta, nangangaral na ako. Kapag pupunta na ako sa trabaho, sa bus bibiyahe ako mangangaral ako sa bus. Sa jeep, mangangaral ako. Papangaral ko si Jesus, ipapatotoo ko yung buhay ko at ipinapangaral ko din kung ano yung aking napakinggang, kung paano ako binago, paano ako pinalaya ng Diyos sa iba't ibang uri ng bisyo."

(What happened to my first family was that my first wife went home to the province. This greatly affected me especially when I learned that she found another man. I was to blame on what happened. In 2010, I get to know the word of god. I learned to know Jesus, a pastor shared to me about salvation. That's when I accepted Jesus as my savior. That was the start of change in me. It surprised me to know that God was giving me a vocation, being a pastor. I was preaching the Bible, then, on a jeepney, in a bus, whenever I went I was preaching. Every time I went to work, whenever rode on a bus, I was preaching the word of God. In preaching, I shared them to the story of my life as evidence of change. I shared to them how God changed me, how He freed me from sin.)

-Juan (Male, 31)

Maria, on the other hand, left the gang life since a church worker conducted a Bible Study in their community. She said:

"Simula nun (Bible Study), pero di naman agad agad nagbago. Pero unti-unti napaano... napahiwalay na ako sa kanila."

(Since I attended a Bible Study, I started changing for the better though not right away...I gradually distanced myself from the group.)

"(Bible study) Oo, na dapat talikuran na yung mga ganung klase."

(I learned from the Bible study that I should turn away from that kind of life.)

-Maria (Female, 20)

In a way, this theme is contrary to the previous one. As some participants left the gang because of adopting a new role and/or responsibility, in this theme, though participants adopted a new role and/or responsibility, participants still continued their gang life. It was not until they adopted a spiritually-focused life that they finally left the gang.

This is in accordance with the study of Brenneman (2010) in which he found out that evangelical-pentecostal religion contributed to the intent of gang members in leaving their groups. He further explained that one of the reasons that some of the former gang members have become attracted to Pentecostalism is because of the highly emotional experiences it offers during services. Former gang members felt that they were able to express their remorse emotions due to a social group which encourages vulnerability even among men.

Deuchar (2018) further explained how religion and spirituality contribute to the gang members' formation of a new masculine identity through strengthening their abilities to project change about their perception, values and attitudes which in turn progress their desistance from gang life.

Experiences after leaving the gang

After leaving the gang, participants underwent changes and adjustments from their past behavior and activities as well as their consequences. While their experiences during gang membership appeared to be negative, themes which emerged from their experiences after leaving the gang appeared to be all positive which are: (1) living a better life; (2) becoming independent; and (3) acquiring better social relationships. The table below summarizes these themes.

Table 5. Experiences after leaving the gang

Themes	Participants	Descriptions	Sample Responses
1. Living a better life	Isko, Maria, Jose, Angelito, Rowena, Juan & Anton	This refers to a change and/or betterment of the participants' lives in general.	<i>"I am happier now."</i>
2. Becoming independent	Danilo, Andres & Anton	"This signifies the participants' adjustment from depending on their group to working on their	<i>"I learned to stand independently on two feet. It's hard to depend on your parents, they reproach you for</i>

			own.”	<i>a single thing they give you. They say, “You married young and you have to accept your responsibilities. So I learned to work on construction; I learned to paint, now I am painting houses.”</i>
3. Acquiring better social relationships	Cardo, Isko, Jose & Anton	This means regaining of the participants’ reputation, reconciliation with their broken relationship towards friends, community and authorities.		<i>“I am happy that people do not look at me as some enemy. Even the barangay captain who used to be furious at me treats me now differently especially now ;that he knows I am already attending religious activities. I am now happy being a member of a barangay, being with relatives. My life is happy now.”</i>

1. Living a better life

After leaving the gang, participants experienced a better life in general. The change in their lives manifested in many ways.

Isko, Maria, and Jose share the same sentiment in having a better life in general when they left the gang. This can be reflected by the following responses:

“...mas masaya ang buhay ko ngayon...”

(I am happier now.)

-Isko (Male, 25)

“Ang layo ko na sa mga gulo, sa mga problema...”

(I am no longer involved in any trouble or any problem.)

-Maria (Female, 20)

“Mas ok na yung ngayon kesa dati.”

(This is better now than before.)

-Jose (Male, 31)

Angelito, Rowena, Juan, and Anton related their experiences of living a better life with starting up a new family.

To Angelito, he is happy with his new life because he is now with his own family.

He said:

“Masaya po, ang saya ng buhay....Kasi may pamilya ako kasama eh”.

(I am so happy now that I have a family.)

-Angelito (Male, 19)

Rowena admitted that even though she lost some of her friends, she is happy at present. According to her:

“Kahit malayo na yung mga dati kong tropa...masaya na din ako ngayon.”.

(I am happy now that I am away from my former gang mates).

-Rowena (Female, 21)

She added that when she started having her own family she experienced and found the love she longed before. She stated:

“Maayos na ngayon kaysa noon, yung parang magulo pa yung isip ko, magulo pa yung buhay ko...pero nung nagkaroon na ako ng pamilya, dun ko na naranasan yung pagmamahal ng isang pamilya...”

(This is better now than before when I didn't have peace of mind, when I had troubled life. When I finally had a family I experienced love coming from my family.)

-Rowena (Female, 21)

Juan, who is a church worker at present, is happy that despite his past delinquent behavior, he is still blessed with a wife and a family he can call his own. He narrated:

“Sa ngayon, mabuti, maganda. Kasi una, siyempre nung ako'y nagbalik loob sa Diyos siyempre sino ba naman tatanggap sa akin na matinong babae...yun binigyan ako ng makakasama ko sa buhay. Yung eto ngayon yung asawa ko, kinasal kami, nagkaanak kami ngayon ng dalawa. Magkasama kami ngayon na naglilingkod sa Panginoon at masaya kasi di kami pinababayaan ng Diyos...”

(Right now, it's good, it's beautiful. I went back to God ever since He gave me a partner in life...my wife. We got married and now we have two kids. We are now together serving the Lord. We are happy that God is not letting us alone.)

-Juan (Male, 31)

Furthermore, he shared that his past experiences became his testimony to others as to how his beliefs changed his life. He said:

“Kaya masaya una dahil yung buhay ko noon, ngayon na ginagamit ako ng Diyos na may mga buhay ding nabago. Yun, nabago din ng Panginoon, nakalaya din sa ganung buhay. Meron din akong isang driver din, nabahagian ko din, dati ring alipin ng bisyo na nagbago. So ginagamit ka ng Diyos sa maraming buhay na kung paano ka binago, ganun din binabago ng Diyos yung mga tao.”

(It is happy because first, now I realize that God is using me to change the lives other people; and second that I was freed from the kind of unfortunate life before. I met someone, a driver whose life also was changed because I shared to him the word of God. He used to be a slave to vices.)

-Juan (Male, 31)

To Anton, he argued that he was happy during and after his gang involvement but comparing how his happiness was before and now after there is great difference. According to him:

“Pagkakaiba lang...nung dating gang member ako, magulo pero masaya. Magulo kasi puro away, puro rambol. Masaya kasi, barkadahan. Tropa-tropa,

inuman. Ngayon masaya, may asawa na ko. Ang kakaibahan niya, masaya rin kasi tahimik...wala ng gulo, wala ng rambol. Ang responsibilidad nandyan. Tsaka...masaya para sa pamilya.”

(The difference was that when I was formerly a gang member it was troublesome but happy - full of trouble due to frequent fights, riots; happy because we were in a group doing together things typical of a gang. Now I am happy because I already have a partner in life - far from troubles and riots.)

-Anton (Male, 32)

Participants directly associate their experience of having a happier and better life to their desistance from their past gang activities, such as getting into troubles and riots. On the other hand, participants also did not deny that they too experienced happiness during gang membership, however at present, they have come to a realization about the difference of happiness they experienced during gang membership and the happiness they experience now with their family.

In the study of Goodwill (2009), living a new and better way of life was cited as one of the consequences and/or experiences of gang exit. This incident was evident in the ex-members' day to day change in choices and lifestyle.

2. Becoming independent

Participants became independent and self-reliant when they left the gang. Because of their disengagement from the group, they were forced to act and work for their own.

Because of his new role and responsibility as a father, Danilo shared how he adjusted from being single to having his own family. He stated:

“Matututo ka kung ano yung di mo pa mga nagagawa kasi nung binata ka...kasi ikaw magpapalit ng pampers ng anak mo, matututo ka maglaba... di ka marunong. Mga damit ng anak mo kailangan mo labhan...”

(You’ll learn about things you have not done yet in life, when you were still single. Now you have learned to change pampers of your child, and to wash his clothes.)

-Danilo (Male, 18)

He added that upon his disengagement from the gang and starting up his new family, he could not depend on anyone even on his parents. There was nothing he could do but to accept his new role and responsibility independently. He said:

“Patutunawin yung pala, tumayo sa sariling paa. Mahirap kasi umasa sa magulang eh...madaming isusumbat sayo. Sasabihin, maaga kang nag-asawa kaya kailangan mo tanggapin mo. Kaya yun...natututo ako mag construction. Labor ako nung una eh tapos natuto ako mag pintura... yun pintor na ako.”

(I learned to stand independently on two feet. It’s hard to depend on your parents, they reproach you for a single thing they give you. They say, “You married young and you have to accept your responsibilities”. So I learned to work on construction; I learned to paint, now I am painting houses.)

-Danilo (Male, 18)

To Andres, he said that whenever he gets into trouble at present, he is now independent enough to face it on his own and that there is no need to depend on his group. He said:

“Ngayon kapag ako napapaaway, di na ako...para tumawag pa ng mga naging ka-gang ko dati...kaya ko na sarili ko ngayon. Kasi di kagaya dati kapag ako napaaway, tatawagin ko sila para pagtulongan. Ngayon, di ko na sila kailangan. Kaya ko na sarili ko, kaya ko na tumayo sa sarili kong paa.”

(Now, if ever I encounter a fight, I never ran to my former gang mates for help. I could already manage on my own, unlike before I had to rely on my gang mated to help me settle troubles I encountered.)

-Andres (Male, 24)

On the other hand, Anton shared that he no longer depended on the gang's support and help and that he became self-reliant and independent in providing for his family.

He stated:

“...nagtrabaho ako para sa pamilya ko. Di na ko lumapit sa kanila.”; “(Nagsikap ka?) Oo. Sa sarili ko...naging independent ako.”

(I worked for my family. I never went to them anymore. I persevered on my own. I became independent.)

-Anton (Male, 32)

From the responses discussed, it can be interpreted that the gang exit of members equate with their complete dissociation from the gang life as well as its members. It can also be observed that adopting a new role and/or responsibility such as being a parent, served as an indication that it is time for them to work on their own. It is also seen that seeking help from former gang mates and even from their families has not been their option.

In line with this was the study of Goodwill (2009) in which he concluded that after leaving the gang, former gang members experience a sense of acknowledgement of their ability to stand on their own in every aspect of their life. In effect, former gang members see themselves as able and apt to fulfill their needs apart from their group.

3. Acquiring better social relationships

From the social alienation they experienced during gang membership, the participants started to acquire better social relationships after leaving the gang. They reclaimed their reputation and their image towards others and their former enemies became friends. They also

reported their dissociation from delinquent activities. This can be depicted through the following accounts:

“Ayun na, nakikisalamuha na ako sa tao...kumbaga...naikukwento ko na lang sa iba yung dati kong buhay na dati ganyan ako, dati gawain ko yan pero ngayon wala na. Kumbaga kinalimutan ko na.”

(Right now, I am already socializing with people. I often told them about the life I had before. Now I have forgotten about that stage in my life.)

-Cardo (Male, 25)

“Mas um-okay kasi hindi na ako laging napapa-away o hindi na ako napa-away simula nung umlis ako sa gang. Yung mga dati kong kaaway na nakikita ko, pare na tawag sa akin. Dati, pag nakikita ako, nagtatakbuhan at kukuha ng bato...”

(It was okay now. I no longer involve myself in fights since I left the gang. Those people I was at odds with before are now calling me “pare”, a friendly term. Unlike before when they saw me they ran away from me or they threw stones at me.)

“Masaya kasi hindi na masama ang tingin ng tao sa akin. Kumbaga dati, pag nakita ako nung kapitan namin, mainit na ang ulo. Ngayon, pag nakikita ako lalo pa’t alam niya na dumadalo ako sa gawain, alam niya na na kristyano na ako, pagnakikita niya ako e siya pa ang unang nabati sa akin ngayon. Pati yung mga barangay, mga kamag-anak ko, mas masaya ang buhay ko ngayon.”

(I am happy that people do not look at me as some enemy. Even the barangay captain who used to be furious at me treats me now differently especially now that he knows I am already attending religious activities. I am now happy being a member of a barangay, being with relatives. My life is happy now.)

-Isko (Male, 25)

“Ok na. Wala nako kaaway, lahat halos pag pumunta ako ng lugar hindi nila aanuhin, kaibigan na ngayon. Parang yung dati ko ng maliit na mundo lumawak na ulit.”

(I’m okay now. I don’t have enemies whatsoever. Wherever I wanted to go I am in friendly terms with people. My narrowed world has unbelievably expanded.)

-Jose (Male, 21)

“Ngayon...nakakaalis na ko, nakakalabas na, nakakagala na ko ng maayos, walang gulo. Walang manghahabol sayo kahit saan ka dumaan. Wala kang kaaway.”

(Right now, I could already go places, wandering anywhere without any concern about people who might hurt you.)

-Anton (Male, 32)

In relation to the social alienation experienced by the participants during gang membership that was discussed earlier, this theme is seen as a result of the participants' gang exit. As they disengaged from the gang life, their image towards other people also changed. To this, they were able to redeem themselves and their interpersonal relationships with their community as well as with their families.

Based on the study of Carson and Vecchio (2015), consequences of leaving the gang may also result in positive experiences. These experiences can be in the form of a more positive sense of self and involvement in prosocial activities. This theme is in accordance with the study of Padilla 1992 as cited in Carson and Vecchio (2015). The study claimed that former gang members experience more respect from individuals outside the street and the gang. Thus, building improved social relationships.

However, Decker and Pyrooz (2011) found out that seventy-four percent (74%) of former gang members in their study reported that the police, even with their disengagement in gangs, continued to treat them as if they were still gang members. This literature contradicts the case of Isko who experienced having better relationship with the authorities in their community.

In addition, no relationship between the experiences after leaving the gang to the number of years since gang disengagement at the present time can be observed. Instead, it can be

inferred that their experiences after leaving the gang is in relation with their reasons in leaving the gang. In support to this, Danilo, Andes and Anton who all cited adopting a new role and/responsibility as reason in leaving the gang likewise experienced being independent after leaving the gang. From this, one it is arguable that their experience of being independent rooted from their experience of adopting a new role and responsibility, that is, having their own family.

Implications to Psychology and Counseling

Based on the findings of the present paper, **Figure 2** implies how street gang members set in motion from joining a street gang throughout leaving it. Also, it aims to highlight transitions as indicators of change in their lives.

First, as a human person, street gang members go through developmental periods in their lives where they exhibit specific needs. In this study, participants were all adolescent when they joined a gang. Accordingly, common to their need was parental and familial support. As stated by the participants, this need was not fulfilled by their parents and/or relatives. Furthermore, some of them came from a broken family and experienced being taken care by other relatives. This, in turn, lead them to look for other social agents which could fill in their needs, which was from their peers. In support to this, according to Quinn and Oldmeadow (2012) companionships assume an urgent part in the development of personality. It is during adolescence that youngsters invest an expanding measure of energy with peers, instead of families and different grown-ups.

Second, after joining a gang, street gang members start to identify themselves with the identity of the group, which is based from its activities. From the study, it was inferred that street

gang members engage with delinquent activities within their group collectively. To this, gang activities has become part of the participants' daily routine and lifestyle. It was observed that a sense of duty to protect the gang, peer pressure and conformity motivated the participants in committing delinquent activities.

Third, it is when an individual face a transition in their lives that they leave their gangs. In the study, having a new set of roles, responsibilities, beliefs, and wants in life provoked the participants to leave their gangs. These transitions helped them to dissociate their identity from gang as they dismiss its activities and lifestyle and dwell unto new ones.

Fourth, as soon as street gang members move out from their gangs, they start to have improved life experiences. In the present study, though participants endure the negative outcomes of their delinquent activities, they claimed that it was because of their new set of roles that they now have better life experiences. They asserted that dissociating from the gang focusing on their new roles, responsibilities and lifestyle helped them to become independent and depend on themselves.

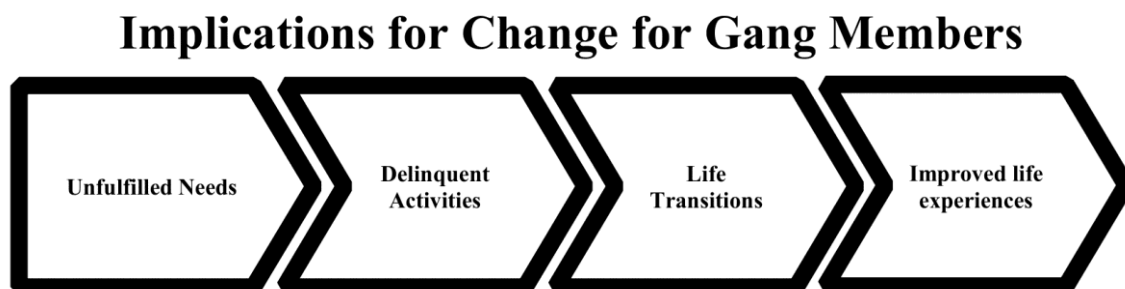


Figure 2 *Implications for Change for Gang Members*

CHAPTER IV

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This section presents the important features of the present study. These features are presented in five (5) sections. The first section contains the summary of the background, objectives and methods of the study. The second section includes the summary of the findings of the study. The third section exposes the limitations of the study. The fourth section presents the conclusion of the study, and the fifth section presents the recommendations of the present study.

Summary of the Study

The study is the result of the researcher's observations which she transformed into academic interest. Linking this interest to available literature about gangs, it was found that study of gangs transcends a number of disciplines such as criminology, sociology and psychology. In effect, the number of literature available became overwhelming. Yet most of the literature discusses contexts of gangs in American and/or Western countries. Lack of studies done in the context of the Filipino setting was seen as a gap.

In the hope of filling this gap, the present study aims to capture life stories of Filipino gangs using four (4) main questions such as: (1) What are the participants' reasons in joining a gang?; (2) How do the participants describe their experiences during gang membership?; (3) What are the participants' reasons in leaving the gang?; and (4) How do the participants describe their experiences after leaving the group?

In fulfilling the objectives of the study, qualitative research design was used, more particularly, the life narratives approach. As such, the utilization of interview provided an extensive amount of data about the participants' experiences and insights. The generation of initial and final codes from the raw data paved the way to the development of themes that captured the answers to the objectives of the study.

Each of the ten (10) participants experienced gang membership at the age of twelve (12) to twenty-one (21) for at least one year and also experienced leaving the gang for at least three (3) years at the present time.

Summary of Findings

The following findings are revealed in the present study:

First, in discovering the participants' reasons in joining a gang, four (4) themes were developed and receiving protection, emotional and financial support dominated. Seven (7) out of ten (10) participants shared that they joined a gang because they perceived it as a group which can give them protection from other rival gangs and enemies and that the group can help them in many aspects, even in financial needs.

Second, in citing the participants' experiences during gang membership, it was found that one of the most common experiences of gang members during gang membership is committing acts of violence and joining gang wars. In the present study, all of the ten (10) participants experienced violence and gang wars. Furthermore, committing vices such as

drinking alcohol and substance use, and shoplifting and/or stealing were also common in their experiences which was cited by nine (9) out of ten (10) participants in the present study.

Third, in uncovering the participants' reasons in leaving the gang, it was showed that most of the gang members leave their gang because of adopting a new role and/or responsibility, and more specifically being a parent and starting to build a new family. Seven (7) among ten (10) participants left their gangs because of a new role and/or responsibility. Five (5) of them adopted the role and responsibilities of being a parent and being a partner and two (2) of them adopted the role and responsibilities in their jobs and careers.

Fourth, in specifying the participants' experiences after leaving the gang, it was revealed that most of the participants experienced having a better life in general. Seven (7) participants said that they had a happier and better life with their family upon leaving the gang.

Limitations of the Study

The present study underwent empirical processes and utilized scientific approaches in the course of fulfilling its objectives, yet the findings of the study have to be seen in light of some limitations.

The first limitation concerns the insufficiency of local data about gangs. Most of the literature and data are foreign-based. In the search of literature and data about gangs, there were no statistical data about the number of gangs, its prevalence, gang-related crimes, violations and cases. Should there have been available researches and literature about gangs in the Philippines, it could have been more apparent to contextualize the study.

The second limitation regards the number of participants and groups and larger scope of research site. Though the present paper is qualitative in nature, having a larger number of participants and larger scope of the research site could have contributed to the generalizability of findings since few numbers of local literature are available at present time. Furthermore, most of the participants in the study belonged to the same group. In effect, there was a high probability that experiences and stories of the participants are similar.

The third limitation involves the selection criteria about the sex of the participants. The study had eight (8) male subjects and two (2) female subjects, which could have affected the findings regarding differences in experiences for each sex. Should the study have equal number of participants from each of the sexes, richer and extensive insights could have been gathered from the data.

Lastly, the fourth limitation concerns the time frame of the whole course of the study. Time is an important element in research and discovery. Every idea, insight, and interpretation takes time to process. It ought to have more time in the conduct of the study, so the researcher could have dwelled better in data, and interpreted data more deeply and concisely.

Conclusion

In the light of the conduct of the study, the following are concluded.

First, gang life often starts during adolescence. Gang life becomes influential towards adolescents when certain developmental needs are not being satisfied. In the study, it can be seen that participants needed their parental and familial support, a sense of protection and

belongingness. In a sense, adolescents perceive gang as a group which serves as a substitute agent that satisfies their need. Participants claimed that gangs somehow satisfy their needs yet it can be argued that gangs only serve as a first-aid to their needs and do not necessarily provide them optimal development.

Second, during gang membership, adolescents get hooked up with the gang life due to collective acts and behaviors they share with the group. Gangs become the adolescents' constant companion and they share almost their whole in the group. In effect, they are also willing to do anything for the gang such as protecting and promoting the gang and its members through fighting and getting into troubles with rivalry gangs; building and maintaining the group solidarity through organizational activities and agreements such as regular meetings, collecting funds, using uniform in clothing; and committing with other activities that could satisfy their needs and wants such as sexual activities.

Third, involvement in gangs heavily affect the education of the youth. During gang membership, gang life consumes most of their time and take away their focus and attention from their academic journey. In relation to this, gang members' experience of failure in education, gang membership prevents gang members from pursuing their career and eventually may turn to teenage parenthood. They are being hooked up into sexual relationships and premarital sex which result into cohabitation.

Lastly, through time and set of circumstances, young adults come to a turning point in their lives where they have to adopt a new role and/or responsibility that they decide to leave

their gangs. These new set of roles and/or responsibilities push young adults to finally face maturity which means standing on their own and stop depending on their group.

Recommendations

The findings of the present study shall be used for recommendations in the field of counseling, particularly in school counseling which are as follows.

First, parental guidance and strengthening of family relationships are highly recommended. The family, being the basic unit of society, is also seen as having the major responsibility for the adolescent's optimal growth and development.

Second, aside from families, other institutions in the community such as schools and churches are encouraged to provide meaningful activities for the youth. These activities may help in preventing the youth in engaging in delinquent activities with peers.

Third, policymakers should draft out interventions for the youths who are still engaged in gangs. Authorities should not only sue delinquent youths but also provide them interventions they need in order to stop gang life.

Fourth, a wide range of topics can be recommended for future research are to better understand the state of gangs in the country. A further inquiry about the gender differentials among former gang members will cater an amount of insights into the gang life.

Fifth, further study and validation of the framework for implications for change must be considered in studying gangs in the Philippines. Validation of the framework can open doors to drafting out interventions for gang members and other deviant groups.

My Personal Journey

Looking back to the days when we were asked to think and decide of our thesis topic, I remember me being so overwhelmed and at the same time pressured because of the many topics I wanted to explore back then. I remember listing down my topics of interest and arranging them in order according to a number of considerations such as my level of interest, the feasibility of the topic and the number of related literature available. I can still recall how difficult it was for me to eliminate other topics and stick to remaining ones, but ending up with the topic I have studied, I could not recall anymore. What I remember next is how shocked I was with the result of my Title Defense. Honestly, before my Title Defense, I did not have any idea of the amount of risk I am taking with my chosen topic of research. I know that my thesis adviser and other professors did not fail in notifying me of this risk, yet I was alarmed only after my Title Defense. I can still recall the reactions of my panelists on my Title Defense. They reacted not after my presentation, but right after they have read my working title which says, *“Filipino Youth Gang Involvement: A Case Study”*. They were asking me if I really wanted to pursue the topic and I remember one of my panelists saying, *“As much as you want to do this study, we will not allow you”* Not only did they concern my topic, but also the research design I chose. One of my panelists asked, *“Gusto mo ba talagang mag-case study? Unless gusto mo maging Octoberian or Summer Grad.”* I was frightened by this question yet was also relieved as my panelists helped me by giving suggestions to make my research more feasible. From the working title, *“Filipino*

Youth Gang Involvement: A Case Study”, it was changed to “*Life Narratives of Former Gang members*”.

My entire thesis journey was in conjunction with our OJT, which means that while we have three (3) different OJT’s, we also have to write our thesis. This made it difficult for me to finish my thesis writing because I did not have the luxury of time to focus on it without thinking of other requirements for our OJT.

Meanwhile, it was a number of weeks or days before our colloquium, it came to a point where my thesis adviser convinced me to change my topic because she was worried that I may not be able to have an ample time to conduct my research. She suggested that I switch to quantitative study from qualitative since it will be more convenient and less time consuming for me to gather data. Yet, I did not take her suggestion since I already set my mind to my topic and I also did not want to go back again to writing the first chapters of it. So my colloquium was scheduled and I was so grateful that my panelists really helped in making my study more concise especially my research questions. Through the colloquium, it has been made clear to me how my thesis would be conducted.

After colloquium and ethics review, I started preparing everything I need in data gathering - informed consent, interview questions, validation forms for interview questions and tokens for participants. Also, I started scheduling my interview with my participants. Before conducting interviews with the participants, I was a bit anxious and excited. I was anxious because I think I do not have good questioning skills and that I may miss some important aspects of the data needed. Also, I was anxious because I will talk to strangers - and given the fact that they were gang members before, I have no idea how they treat people, or a stranger like me.

On the other hand, I was also very grateful because for the most number of my participants, I got a contact person and I was able to conduct the interviews with her. She was once schoolmates with one of the active gang members in the place. So she asked this active gang member to convince some of his friends and neighbors who were already former gang members to be interviewed. I was blessed to meet this active gang member because he was very willing to help in my study. Also, I was blessed that these former gang members also agreed to participate in the study. More so, I can say that this part of my thesis journey is the one I enjoyed the most.

During the interview with my first participants, I was really shocked about the experiences they revealed to me. Though I observed that they were a bit hesitant to disclose these experiences, they were still able to cite these experiences. As I thought, they were a bit hesitant because they felt so vulnerable to share what has been their world or lifestyle before to someone who is totally different from them. I felt like they think that I can not fully comprehend them simply because I do not share the same experiences with them.

On the other hand, I also experienced conducting an interview inside a church. Since one of my participants is the Pastor of the church and the other, an active member of the church, the Pastor initiated that the interview be conducted in their church since it can be more quiet and conducive to conduct the interview.

Meanwhile, before I conducted the data gathering procedure, I was told by my thesis adviser that transcribing the interview from audio to text can be too stressful and draining. So I decided to ask somebody to transcribe all the data since I also do not have time to do that

because of the demands of our Practice Teaching. I was blessed to have somebody to do that without asking for a high fee.

After the data gathering and transcription of data collected, I remember feeling stuck in writing my thesis. Back then, I have no idea how to start analyzing my data. Gladly, my thesis adviser didn't let me get stuck. She, together with Ma'am Tessa helped us with data analysis - from coding to thematic analysis. Also, I was guided by my thesis adviser in writing the results and findings - from formatting, discussing the results and rephrasing the themes. Also, I remember during the days of our data analysis, I got some health issues because I was diagnosed with dengue and it was sad because I was diagnosed on my birthday. It was that time that my thesis adviser would check on me and ask me if I can really push through my thesis or if I can't, it's better not to compromise my physical health. Yet God allowed me to be healed and I was able to reclaim my health.

Further, it was during Christmas break that I really took the time not to celebrate the holidays with my family but to write my thesis. The previous year, for me has been one of the challenging years of my life. On 2018, aside from the requirements of our Practice Teaching and thesis writing, it was also during this year that we lost our two dogs and my mother underwent an operation and eventually diagnosed with cancer.

More so, earlier this year, our class has been through a lot concerning our graduation. We were so desperate to graduate yet did not have time to finish our thesis. However, God has been so good to us that we were able to finish our Oral defense and attend the graduation. Today, I am grateful that I was able to have these experiences and that I was able to experience them

with the good people that surround and support me. Surely, I would treasure this journey and use this as a motivation to keep going no matter what.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

Narratives

Isko

Isko came from a broken family. He lived with his mother but was taken care by his aunts because her mother was always busy with work that time. Isko shared that he often had conflicts with his aunts before. He said that he often got blamed by his aunts with wrongdoings he did not even commit. He admitted that these experiences made him feel lacking and longing for his parents as a child. To this, he decided to search for attention and happiness from others and he found them when he entered a gang.

He was 17 years old when he was recruited and invited to the gang's gatherings. It was also the time when he entered his gang. Months after his membership, he became the president of the group. He shared that his gang had organizational aspects like assignment of positions (founder, co-founder, president, vice president, master D.A (Disciplinary Action) and OG (Original Gangster); expanding the group into different chapters (by town); recruitment of members in high schools near their place; initiation rites like giving tests and/or challenges and 30-seconds massacre; rules like attendance to regular meetings and respect for women and elderly; and collection of funds for uniform, gatherings and financial assistance to members in need.

Isko spent eight (8) years in his gang and experienced a lot such as drinking alcohol, use of substance (e.g marijuana and methamphetamine hydrochloride) and varied acts of violence.

Once, he started building his own family, yet this did not stop him from associating with his gang and gang life.

It was not until a Pastor shared Biblical teachings to him that he stopped the gang life. Since then, he experienced having better social relationships including his spouse and their community. Today, at the age of twenty-five (25), he now works as a tricycle driver to support and provide for his family.

Danilo

Danilo shares the same experience and sentiment with his sister, Rowena. At his young age, his parents separated and their family has never been the same. He shared the same struggle with Rowena as they longed for their parents' attention, care, and love. Danilo joined his gang not just because he found attention, care, and love from them but also he perceived the gang as a way to be protected from his enemies and from other people whom he perceived as superior than him. He also wanted to be seen as a typical cool guy who belonged in a gang. Danilo was influenced by his very own friends to join their gang, and he saw the gang as also a way to get girls. He wanted to have a chance to have a romantic relationship with the girls who joined their gang.

For three (3) years of his gang involvement, he learned and adopted different vices such as cigarette smoking, drinking alcohol, and consumption of weeds. He was also influenced to carry out violence during riots and troubles. He shared that his gang had organizational aspects like assignment of positions (treasurer and master D.A (Disciplinary Action)); rules like attendance to regular meetings, respect for women and elderly, avoiding of third parties within co-gang members and giving punishments to violators of rules; and collection of funds for food, uniform, and financial assistance to members in need.

When Danilo met Betty and started having a family with her, Danilo also started to dissociate and leave his gang. He realized that he is no longer a teen who can simply live on his own but that he is now becoming a father who has a new set of responsibilities to fulfill for his family. Since then, he started to become independent because there was no one he could depend on not even his own parents. At present, Danilo came to realization that if only he did not join

his gang and if only he was able to finish his studies, he could have had a better job to provide better for his own family. Nevertheless, Danilo is currently being productive in fulfilling his responsibilities as a spouse and a father.

Juan

Juan was at his very young age of fifteen (15) when gangs became a trend in their school. According to him, he joined a gang because during that time, gang membership equates with prestige and protection. He said that he felt the need to have a gang to protect him from other groups and from his enemies. He narrated that he was invited to join and was not able to refuse the invitation because of the influence of the group.

During his gang membership, he shared that he experienced a lot including sexual activities. He shared that his gang had organizational aspects like initiation rites such as burning of fingers using cigarette, giving tests and challenges and massacre in which the new member will be blindfolded and will be beaten by old members for a certain period of time; organization of regular meetings; and recruitment of members.

He also shared that because of the gang life, he was not able to finish high school. Once, he also experienced fatherhood at the age of eighteen (18), yet this did not stop him from associating with the gang. This has become the conflict between him and his spouse and became his spouse' reason for leaving Juan.

Years after, he got tired and fed up with the gang life. He realized how miserable his life has become. He opened this concern to his relatives who invited a Pastor to share Biblical teachings to him. Since then, Juan practiced his new set of beliefs faithfully and today, he is now a Pastor in a church community. At the of age thirty-one (31), he claimed that his courage which he used in gang wars before has now turned to courage in sharing Biblical teaching in different places such as markets, buses, and jails.

Anton

Anton was fourteen (14) years old when he entered a gang. He needed some company to bond with so he decided to join the group. He shared that gangs became beneficial to him because his gang showed him support in many aspects. Yet gang membership also became disadvantageous to him when he experienced conflict within the group. He shared that he was betrayed by his co-gang members before. During almost ten (10) years of gang membership, he experienced committing violence, vices such as drinking alcohol and substance abuse and sexual activities.

Additionally, he shared that his gang had organizational aspects like initiation rites like such as burning of fingers using cigarette until a burn mark will be made; expanding the group into different chapters (by town); organization of regular meetings and events such as celebration of gang's anniversary.

When he became a father and started his own family, he decided to leave the gang. From then, he experienced better social relationships. He shared that after leaving the gang, he became free to go other places without worries of gang fights and wars. He also chose to focus on his job as a painter to provide for his family. He became more independent by trying to fulfill his needs without depending on his gang before.

Angelito

Angelito was fifteen (15) years old when he got interested with gang activities he observed in their community. Upon entering the gang, he shared that the gang became his inspiration to work hard to help his co-gang members. He admitted that his gang membership taught him courage to live his life.

Throughout one and a half years of his gang membership, he experienced different acts of violence and sexual activities. He even narrated that he experienced being bullied by the superiors in their gang. More so, he shared that his gang had organizational aspects like setting of uniforms; and rites when leaving the gang such as hazing using a belt.

Angelito also experienced fatherhood at a very young age. According to him, this became his reason in leaving the gang. From then on, his family became his top priority. He even stated that by the time he saw his first child, he knew how important his life as a father to the baby, so he decided to stop the gang life. Upon leaving the gang, he shared that he had a better and happier life with his family.

Jose

Jose was seventeen (17) years old when he got curious about the gang life. He said that gang life was on trend in their community that time. He shared that he was encouraged to join a gang because of the support it gives to its members, specifically emotional support. He stated that he enjoys the company of the gang every time he hangs out with them.

Throughout one year and three months of gang membership, he shared his experiences of different acts of violence, alcohol drinking, substance use and social alienation. However, during his gang membership, he realized that he needed a change in his lifestyle. He stated that he grew out of gang lifestyle and looked for opportunities of change.

From then on, he chose to focus on his career. After leaving the gang, he also shared that he experienced better social relationships, that he somehow redeemed his self image in their community.

Cardo

Cardo joined his gang because he looked at a gang as not just a group but also a family. He was fifteen (15) when he was influenced to join a gang. He was influenced because he had conflicts with his own family. In effect, gangs served as his substitute family. In his gang entry, he experienced the 30 - seconds massacre as his initiation rite in joining the gang.

Cardo shared that his gang had organizational aspects like assignment of positions such as starter; initiation rites such as 30-seconds massacre; recruitment of members; and organization of regular meetings.

During his gang membership, he did not just experience delinquent activities, but also financial and emotional support from the group. He also received protection from potential victimization. Yet he also narrated that he was attending school during his gang membership. Furthermore, he admitted that his gang life became a distraction from his education and consequently he failed finishing high school.

As time passed by, he admitted that he grew out of the gang life. He realized that because of his gang life, he was not able to fulfill his duties to other people and that he had already wasted a considerable amount of time with his gang. After five (5) years of gang membership, he left the gang and focused on his work instead. He even shared that he struggled at the initial stages after leaving his gang, yet somehow he found his own way to start again.

Andres

At the age of fourteen (14), Andres needed to join a group to protect him from his enemies. He shared that during that time, he was forced to join a gang to fight with him and help him with his fights. He also stated that not only protection, but his gang provided him the help he needed - emotionally, financially and even with the household chores.

On the other hand, he also narrated how he experienced conflict within the group. He shared that there were times when his co-gang members abandoned him once they were caught by the authorities. According to him, he experienced admitting all his gang's wrongdoings. Andres also would not forget his experience of being imprisoned due to beating a boy who offended one of his female co-gang member. Furthermore, Andres openly admitted that he experienced all kinds of vices during gang membership.

More so, Andres shared that his gang had organizational aspects like assignment of positions such as seven warriors; initiation rites like hazing using a paddle and a question of *Sarap o Hirap* to girls; organization of regular meetings; collection of funds for financial assistance to members in need; and recruitment of members every week.

Until he met his spouse who had a major impact upon him. Andres shared how his spouse influenced her to stop gang life. Upon leaving the gang, Andres became more independent, being able to stand on his own and fulfilling his own needs without depending on his former gang.

Rowena

Rowena, at her young age witnessed the separation of her parents. Since then, their family has never been the same. Rowena does not ask for anything but attention, care and love from her mother. When she was still a teen, she found no significant activity in their home so she always went out to hang out with her friends. Spending most of her time with friends, she realized that they went through the same battles. Her friends also came from broken families. Consequently, they understand each others' feelings and sentiments. To this, she decided to form a gang. During the span of three (3) years of being the founder of the gang, she experienced acts of violence and vices such as drinking alcohol and substance use.

She also shared that her gang had organizational aspects like initiation rites such as hazing using a paddle for boys and slapping for girls; organization of events such as celebration of gang's anniversary; and rites when leaving the gang such as hazing using a paddle.

Rowena met Jojo who became his partner in life. Jojo encouraged Rowena to leave the gang and start a family with him. Today, Rowena spends most of her time in taking care of her family. She stated that after leaving the gang, she experienced a happier and better life in general.

Maria

Maria grew up in a simple family. Her father passed away when Maria was still young. Her mother left her with her grandmother because of work. Her mother had to stay from afar to be able to provide for the family. She was happy living with her grandmother yet she longed for her mother. Growing up, she met some friends in their community who were also her schoolmates. Every night, they hang-out and went to different places. One of her friends is Rosa who influenced her to join her gang.

During her gang involvement, she experienced happiness and love which she longed from her mother. She also experienced different vices such as cigarette smoking and drinking alcohol. She also shared that her gang had organizational aspects like assignment of positions such as starter; initiation rites such as hazing using a paddle for boys and slapping for girls; and organization of regular meetings. Rowena admitted that she could not focus with her studies that time. Due to these activities and her association with the group, Rowena's image was ruined. She looked bad to her family, relatives and their community.

Until one day, a church worker reached out to their community. There, a Bible Study was conducted regularly which was attended by the youths in their community. Rowena, becoming interested with the teachings that were shared by the church worker, decided to leave the gang and adhere to her new set of beliefs. From then on, she slowly quitted her vices and her association with the gang. She also shared that upon leaving her gang, even though she lost some of her friends, what made her happy is the return of her mother.

Today, she is doing better in school, she does not cut classes anymore and attended church regularly.

APPENDIX B

Interview questions

Global questions:

1. What are your reasons in joining a gang?

Probing question:

A. In your own experiences, what are the advantages and disadvantages of being a gang member?

2. What are your experiences at the time of your involvement in a gang?

Probing question:

A. How are these experiences helpful or not helpful to you?

3. What are your reasons in leaving the gang?

Probing question:

A. Can you cite some stories that support your answer?

4. Can you tell me stories about your experiences after leaving the gang?

Probing question:

A. How did you cope up in life after leaving the gang?

5. Can you tell me your situation now?

Probing question:

A. What is your status now as an ex-gang member?

In Filipino

Global questions:

1. Ano ang naging dahilan mo sa pagsali sa *gang*?

Probing question:

A. Batay sa iyong mga karanasan, ano ang mga pakinabang at pinsalang dulot ng pagiging parte ng isang *gang*?

2. Ano ang iyong mga karanasan habang kabilang sa isang *gang*?

Probing question:

A. Paano nakatulong o hindi nakatulong sa'yo ang mga karanasang ito?

3. Ano ang naging dahilan mo sa pag-alis sa *gang*?

Probing question:

A. Maaari ka bang magbahagi ng mga kwento na sumusuporta sa iyong sagot ukol sa pag-alis mo bilang miyembro ng *gang*?

4. Maaari mo bang ikwento ang iyong mga karanasan matapos mong umalis sa *gang*?

Probing question:

A. Paano mo hinarap ang buhay matapos mong umalis sa *gang*?

5. Maaari mo bang ibahagi ang iyong sitwasyon sa kasalukuyan?

Probing question:

A. Ano ang kalagayan mo ngayon bilang isang dating *gang member*?

APPENDIX C

Informed consent

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: Life Narratives of Former Gang Members

Researcher: Stephanie L. Saladaga, Philippine Normal University

Contact No.: 09289131750

E-mail address: stephaniesaladaga@gmail.com

Introduction

- You are being asked to be in a research study of former gang members.
- You were selected as a possible participant because you demonstrated interest in participating and qualified with the following criteria:
 - ✓ individual who has been part of a street gang which is durable, street-oriented and whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity
 - ✓ has become part of the gang at the age of twelve (12) to twenty-one (21) for at least one (1) year
 - ✓ has left the gang for at least three (3) years
 - ✓ at least eighteen (18) years old at the present
 - ✓ residing in the province of Cavite
- The researcher asks that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study

- The purpose of the study is to understand your life story as a former gang member. It seeks to explore your reasons in joining a gang; your experiences in gang membership; your reasons in leaving the gang; and your experiences after leaving the gang.
- This study aims to develop inputs to school-based counseling which are expected to help preventing the youth in joining delinquent groups such as gangs.
- This study is being conducted as a research requirement for the researcher's master's degree in psychology and counseling.

Description of the Study Procedures

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:
 - ✓ Answer questions through interview that will last for about an hour
 - ✓ Answers to the interview questions will be recorded using voice recorder

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study

- The study has little foreseeable risk but will be asking you to recall past experiences in gang membership.
- Feel free to decline to answer any question, or even end the process early if it causes you discomfort.

Confidentiality

- Your information will be kept confidential.
- The researcher will be the only person who will know about your participation.
- The data of this study will be kept strictly confidential.
- Data will be destroyed after the mandated five (5) years.
- All research materials including encoded data, transcriptions, analyses and consent documents will be stored in a secure location. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will also be protected during the storage period.
- The researcher will not include any information in any report which may be published that would make it possible to identify you.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by the researcher before, during or after the research.
- If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact the researcher.
- If you would like a summary of the study results, one will be sent to you once the study is completed.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you.
- Your decision to refuse will not result in any loss of benefits.
- You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely.
- If you choose to withdraw, the researcher will not use any of your information collected for this study.

Consent

- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above.

I certify that I have explained the purpose of research to the participant and consider that she/he understands what is involved and liberally consents to participate.

Researcher's signature:

Date:

I, _____ being over the age of 18 years old (legally independent) hereby certify that I have read and understood the information provided above. I therefore consent to participate/ be a respondent in this project titled: *Life Narratives of Former Gang Members*.

Participant's signature:

Date:

APPENDIX D

Sample Transcription

P1 Isko

Interviewer: S

Interviewee: P1

S: Sir *****, ano po yung naging dahilan niyo po sa pagsali sa gang?

P1: Siguro yung kakulangan sa atensyon, kasi parang lagi kasing nasa trabaho yung magulang ko saka doon ako naging masaya.

S: Pwede niyo po bang ikwento kung paano kayo nakasali?

P1: Nung una kaaway namin yung isa sa miyembro ng kaaway ko tapos meron akong mga kakilala, parang ni-recruit nila ako tapos nung napasali ako, unti-unti, kami na yung nagkakilala ng gang na yun. Pinilit nila akong sumali, naging okay rin naman yung pagsali ko. Napasali ako kasi marami rin naman akong kakilala na taga sa amin, mga kamag-anakan ko kaya sumali na lang din ako.

S: Tapos paano po kayo ni-recruit?

P1: Kumbaga niyaya lang nila ko sa mga inuman, kasi-kasiyahan. Pag may mga gulo sila kasi naging hobby ko rin talaga yung makipag away, kaya pag may mga away sila, nasama ako hanggang sa nagka-okay-an naman nung dati kong kaaway na miyembro nila kaya sumali nalang din ako kasi lagi ko rin naman silang kasama.

S: Ilang taon po kayo non, 17?

P1: 17

S: Kulang po sa atensyon ng?

P1: Magulang.

S: Magulang. Bakit po kaya ganon, kulang sa atensyon?

P1: Kasi lagi silang wala tapos hiwalay yung mama ko saka papa ko. Si mama laging nasa trabaho wala nang nag-aasikaso sa akin, mga tiyahan ko nalang tapos konting mali ko laging pinapagalitan. Tapos yung mga bagay na hindi ko naman ginawa, sa akin pa rin ang sisi kaya naghanap lang din ako ng kung saan ako sasaya.

S: So nung sumali po kayo sa gang, nakuha niyo yung atensyon? Yung kasiyahan po nahanap niyo?

P1: Oo. Doon ko nakuha kasi naging opisyal nga ako tapos yung mga gusto ko nagagawa ko pag kasama ko sila masaya kami pagkanapapa-trouble yun ang pinaka ano namin non eh.

S: Naging opisyal po kayo. Paano pong opisyal?

P1: Naging presidente ako ng gang na dito namin tinatag tapos pinalaki namin yun dito sa lugar lang ng ***** saka sa ***** para kahit saan kami mapadpad kilala na rin kahit papaano.

S: Nung naging presidente po kayo, paano na kayo nag-recruit ng iba?

P1: Nababa kami sa mga iskul, sa mga highschool.

S: Sa mga shool po kayo nag rerecruit

P1: Oo, nababa kami sa mga highschool tapos meron kaming mga miyembro na nag-aaral doon, tropahin mo muna yun, pag tropa mo na yun, yakagin mo mag-iinom tayo tapos dalhin mo dito lagi isama mo tumambay para makasama natin tapos unti-unti namin silang inaakay.

S: Mga gaano po katagal bago kayo naging presidente?

P1: Nung pagsali ko mga ilang buwan lang din eh kasi nga sa aming lahat ako ang pinakamainit eh.

S: Paano pong mainit?

P1: Yung kung baga pag nalalasing...yan yang lugar na yun dyaan, pinapasok ko yan ako lang mag-isa, naghahanap ako ng gulo, nakikipag-away kaya kinuha nila ako sabi nila, "Pre ikaw na lang humawak ng tropa kasi kaya mo naman." "Sige kung ayan naman ang gusto niyo" edi pumayag na rin ako.

S: Bali nagpresidente po tas merong mga vice, may secretray, ganon po ba yun?

P1: Oo, nagsisimula kami sa founder, tapos co-founder, tapos president, tas vice president, tapos yung master DA, OG, yun yung mga ganon.

S: Ano po yung DA?

P1: Disciplinary Act. Ganon din yun. Kunyari, may pagkakamali ka, yung master DA, siya yung gagawa nung para sayo. Kunyari pag nagkamali ka, papaluan ka, yun ang papalo sayo, yung master DA.

S: Pag po sumali sa gang niyo noon, may ano parang "Bago ka sumali, gawin mo muna to." Parang initiation?

P1: Oo. Ang sa amin naman, meron kaming mga test na papagawa sa kanya pagtapos non saka namin sila susuntukan, yung tinatawag na hazing.

S: May hazing din po pala sa inyo. Ano po yung mga test? Example ng test?

P1: Uutus-utusan lang namin sila. Kapag ka yung mga utos na di sila nagrereklamo, mga dalawa o tatlong araw, pagka-okay na, doon na sila papasok sa hazing.

S: Ano po yung mga inuutos niyo? Simple lang o...example

P1: Simple lang din. Kunwari, bili mo ako ng ganito, kunyari nasa akin ka ngayon, isang buong araw uutusan kita. Pagka gusto kitang paglabahin, maglalaba ka. Pagkakunyari naman meron akong nakursunadahang tao, ayan banatan mo yan. Kapag hindi mo nagawa, wag ka na umasa..

S: Na makakasali?

P1: Oo, o kaya pag gusto mo pa rin sumali, pagbibigyan kita pero balik ka sa umpisa.

S: Bali hanggang tatlong araw, kapag okay na po yun, hazing na?

P1: Oo.

S: Ano pong ginagamit niyo sa hazing?

P1: Massacre, kamao lang. Ayun yung tinatawag na massacre, susuntukin ka sa hita.

S: Ah, may iba't iba po pala. Akala ko po pag hazing yun talagang may...

P1: Paddle? Yun ang paddle. Ang 30 second massacre naman, 30 seconds bubugbugin ka ng nakatalikod, sa tagiliran, sa hita...

S: Nakadapa po iyon?

P1: Nakatayo ka lang.

S: Ahh, bawal po lumaban, ganon?

P1: Oo. Yun namang laban, pwede rin yon kaya lang nakapiring ka. Makikipagsuntukan ka sa isang miyembro ng nakapiring.

S: Ah, may choice ka kung ganon? Nung pumasok po kayo, dumaan po kayo sa ganoong proseso o hindi?

P1: Hindi.

S: Wala pong ganon?

P1: Wala, kasi ano lang yun eh, kumbaga winelcome lang nila ako kasi nga gusto nila yung yabang ko.

S: Hmmm, nakitaan ka nila...

P1: Yung yabang talaga yung..

S: May ano po kayo...parang mga rules o may meeting tayo ganyan...may mga schedule?

P1: Meron din, ah kumbaga yung rules na yun na di naman din napapatupad yung kagaya nung mga...yung meeting talaga automatic yun every Friday, nagmimmeeting talaga kami.

S: Saan po?

P1: Dito sa may *****. dun lang naman eh. Tapos habang nagmimmeeting, yung pinaka meeting lang naman namin mag-iinuman, magkikwentuhan, tapos kakamustahin yung kabilang grupo.

S: Yung sa *****?

P1: Oo, kung sakaling may nakaaway yung isa, pagpaplanuhan natin, "Sige, dre, ganto, anong araw mo gusto mo babain yan, san ba laging natambay yan, mga ganon lang."

S: Tapos ahmm di ba meron po sa ***** , may presidente din po doon o ano?

P1: Ano, yun naman yung nandon na chapter, OG naman ang tawag doon.

S: Original Gangs?

P1: Oo, yun yung pinaka ano nila kumbaga pinaka official nila doon. Dalawa lang naman ang nandon, OG saka master DA.

S: Bali kayo pa rin po ang talagang head, yung president?

P1: Oo, kaming apat. Apat kaming humahawak talaga.

S: Ahh batay po sa ano, mga karanasan niyo noon sa gang, ano po ba yung advantage o pakinabang kapag gang member ka?

P1: Parang syempre, kampante ka kasi marami kayo eh. Marami kung sakali mang madehado ka, kasi bilang gangster, para sa akin ah, ang lahat ng nasa isip ko away, pati yung mga miyembro ko, yun lang. Parang gusto lang naming iangat yung pangalan ng gang. Ngayon, ang advantage doon, kung sakaling may maka-away man kami o may mangdehado sa amin, kung hindi mo kaya, marami kaming babawi. Marami akong susumbungan.

Kung may problema man ako, tatakbo ako sa tropa, makikipag-inuman, doon naman ako magsasabi-sabi ng problema. Yun ang nagiging advantage para sa akin.

S: Ano pong mga problema? Kahit ano? Kahit personal?

P1: Oo, kahit personal. Kasi meron din dyang mga ano dyan eh...yung mga best friend, best friend diba? E kaming apat na opisyal, kami-kami lang din ang nagkakaintindihan. Kunwari may mga problema kami, kami lang din ang nagsasabihan.

S: Yun po ang nakita niyong advantage? Ano naman po yung nakita niyong disadvantage?

P1: Yung ano, naging mainit kami sa mata, kumbaga halos lahat ng mga tao na nakakakilala sa amin, galit. Tapos sumikip yung mundo namin kasi dyan lang kami sa looban, yung iskinita na to, kaaway namin. Yung sa kabilang kanto, kaaway namin. Yung *****, kaaway namin. Kumbaga kahit saan ka pumunta, sa tingin mo mamamatay ka na. Kasi talagang matinding gulo yung ginagawa namin, kaya napakasikip ng mundo namin. Yun ang nagiging disadvantage.

S: Lahat ng tao po na kakilala niyo, galit sa inyo?

P1: Oo

S: Kasama na po yung pamilya niyo...

P1: Oo, tapos pagnakita kami ng pamilya ng isang tropa, “***#@\$#,*(^\$@...gulo nanaman ang hahanapin niyo.” Ultimo ang mga barangay pagkanakita kami, wala pa kaming ginagawa, “Binabantayan na namin kayo.” Yun ang lagi niyang sinasabi, kaya masyadong maliit saka maiinit kami sa mata.

S: Maaari niyo po bang i-share kung ano pa yung mga karanasan sa gang, yung iba niyo pang mga ginawa sa gang.

P1: Dumating yung punto na yung tipong napalaban kami na sa tingin ko wala na kaming matatakbuhan, tapos pinagpapalo ako, bugbog sarado ako nung time na yun. Parang lahat ng tropa nawala nung araw na yun. Sabi ko, “Nasaan yung mga inasahan ko na katuwang ko, kadikit ko, kasi ang bumugbog sakín siguro mahigit kumulang 30.

S: Trenta na tao po?

P1: Oo, pinagpapalo nila ako. Di ko na alam kung anong gagawin ko nun eh tapos yung isang hawak-hawak ko yun naman ang pinagpapalo ko rin. Doon lang ako na kawala nung sumigaw ko yung hawak ko ng “Tama na, tama na! Di ko na kaya!” doon sila nagpulasan. Tapos babaril pa ako ng security guard, buti nakatalon ako kaya hindi ako naka ano. Tapos yung mga time na tipong gustung-gusto mo nang bumitaw sa gang, kaya lang di mo maiwanan kasi parang silang lahat, sayo umaasa. Kasi nga opisyal ako tapos yung tipo na may tatakbo samin na...kasi ayoko nung may nadedehado sa tropa eh. May tatakbo sa akin sasabihin na, “Pre, dinadarag ako ni ganto.” Na di naman ako papayag nun kasi tao kita eh, kaya kahit na sabihin kong ayoko na, nagsasawa na ako, eh wala akong magagawa, hawak ko na ito eh. Buti nga ngayon eh may mga pamilya na rin sila tapos nakakakilala na ko sa Diyos, kaya salamat na lang din na nakakilala ako sa Panginoon.

S: Yung sinabi niyo po na may bumugbog sa inyo, ano pong meron non? Ano pong nangyari non?

P1: Nung isang tropa namin, napagtripan dito sa palengke tapos ang ginawa noon tumakbo siya sa akin e natutulog ako non. Ang ginawa ko sumugod ako roon, ako lang mag-isa. E wala akong naabutan. Pagdating nung gabi, hindi ko alam nakahanda na pala ang tropa, susugurin nga yun. E ang alam ng kumbaga pinaka-asset naming, isa o dalawa lang ang nakatambay, kaya bumaba kami.

S: Ilan po kayo noon?

P1: Siguro walo. Pagbaba namin, kasi apat-apat ginawa namin, hinati namin yung grupo saka paikot lang naman dito eh, yung apat nasa kabila, kaming apat nandito. Pagdating namin dito, hindi namin alam, nakasuksok lang pala sa tabi yung iba kasi meron din pala silang alam na susugod nga kami, kasi nung tanghali sumugod nga ako non mag-isa, kaya iniisip nila ako lang din ang susugod nung time na yun. Ang nangyari *gang war*. Talagang grabe yung bugbugan na yun, daming duguan nun dyan eh, tapos nakasaksak pa yung isang tropa. Kung hindi nga lang dahil doon sa hawak-hawak ko, sabi nga nung nanay ko, “Tara sa ospital.” E hindi nga ako non pwede kasi yung hawak ko, basag yung mukha kasi pinagpapalo ko ng bato eh. Habang nakatungo siya, may nasipa sa likod ko, may napalo sa batok ko.

S: Ano po yung pinapalo?

P1: Sari-sari eh. May mga kahoy, kawayan, ang kagandahan lang non wala silang pwera sa palo kasi nga madami na sila eh

S: Ah masikip na.

P1: Oo, nag-aagawan na sila ng pwesto. Ang akin naman, nilamang ko kasi may hawak nga ko na isa, yung hawak ko naman nagsisisigaw na hindi na niya kaya. Pagtayo ko, yung hawak ko hindi na makatayo, parang hinimatay na. Doon lang sila nagpulasan. Bumaba yung guard, babarilin ako, buti nalang nakatakas ako.

S: Dyan lang po yun?

P1: Dyan sa kanto mismo.

S: Pero yung hawak po ninyo hindi naman po namatay yun?

P1: Hindi naman, kritikal lang.

S: Ah kritikal lang. Buti hindi po kayo nahuli.

P1: Hindi, nagtago kami non eh.

S: Mga gaano katagal po?

P1: Hindi naman katagalan, mga ilang buwan lang, tatlo, dalawang buwan ganon, tapos bumalik na ulit kami.

S: Saan po kayo nagtatago pag ganon?

P1: Sa *****, minsan sa *****.

S: Basta hindi dito?

P1: Oo, kasi meron akong mga tropa roon na doon naman yung ibang mga gang ko sa *****.

S: ***** rin po kayo?

P1: Oo.

S: Bukod po doon, ano pa po yung activity niyo sa gang na naranasan niyo po?

P1: Wala, puro basag ulo, inuman. Insan may mga party-party kami pag may mga birthday, yun lang. Binalak namin i-legal, kaya lang hindi talaga kami pinagbigyan ng barangay. Kumbaga balak namin gumawa ng mga activity, yung mga maglilinis ng kanal, e wala ayaw eh.

S: Bakit daw po?

P1: Kasi marami na nga daw kami record, baka mamaya mai-legal, mas lalo kaming luamala.

S: Pero talagang gusto niyo mag...

P1: Maging legal, kasi nung tumagal, marami na kami masyado eh, kaya binalak namin na i-legal talaga yung pangalan ng grupo, e ayaw ng mga kapitan. Tinesting namin dito sa amin, sa kabilang barangay, ayaw talaga.

S: Nakapag vandalism po kayo?

P1: Oo, marami rin, dito sa may *****, sa *****, sa may *****.

S: Sa ***** po?

P1: Hindi, sa *****

S: A malayo po.

P1: Oo, tapos sa *****, marami rin kami naging vandalism. Minsan nga nakapag-vandal kami sa kotse eh.

S: Di niyo po alam kung kanino?

P1: Hindi.

S: Ano pong gamit niyo?

P1: Spray paint at paint.

S: May pondo po kayo?

P1: Meron, sa isang araw, limang piso kada isang tao, Tapos monthly, titignan namin yun, papagawa kami ng t-shirt, tapos pang-inom yung matitira. Tapos kung sino naman yung madedehado sa tropa, yun naman yung...

S: Ah nagtutulungan din po kayo sa pinansyal?

P1: Oo.

S: E yung drugs po naranasan niyo?

P1: Oo.

S: As in shabu?

P1: Oo.

S: Hindi lang marijuana?

P1: Oo.

S: Paano niyo po yung nagagawa?

P1: Dito lang din. Kasi may mga tropa din talagang gumagamit ng ganyan eh, tapos syempre napapasama. Ano yun eh, sinabi ko sa sarili ko na kahit minsan hindi ako titikim drugs pag shabu. E habang tumatagal, nagiging curious ako eh, iniisip ko kung ano kayang tama nito, ano kayang lasa nito, bakit di sila natutulog. Tinesting ko isang beses, tapos nung tinesting ko parang natuwa ako. Matagal-tagal din akong gumamit non eh, mga dalawang taon siguro

S: Buti may pambili po kayo non.

P1: Oo, kasi kahit papaano naghahanap-hanap din kami ng pambisyo namin, kasi sarili na lang din naman ang iniintindi namin eh. Nabiyahe ako ng hopia tapos pag-uwi ko binibigyan ko lang ang mama ko kung magkano lang ang gusto ko tapos pang-iinom ng tropa, pangtitira namin.

S: Hopia? Nagbebenta po kayo? Dyaan lang din?

P1: Oo.

S: Di ba nag-interview na ako nung nakaraan, pag may birthday daw, may nireregalong babae.

P1: Ay bawal sa amin yun, kasi yun ang pinaka ano ko sa lahat eh. Okay lang na manggulpi kayo dyan, makipag-away, wag na wag lang kayo mangbabastos ng matanda saka ng babae. Yun ang ayaw na ayaw ko kaya hindi kami nag-aano ng ganyan.

S: Ah hindi po. Pero may member po kayo na babae?

P1: Meron, kaya lang wala kaming pakialam sa kanila kasi meron kaming binigay na opisyal doon eh. Kapag yung mga may mali lang sila na sobra na, doon na lang kami magsasalita. “Sis, parang mali na yang isang ano mo...”

S: Sis ang tawag? Pag sa kapwa niyo lalaki, bro?

P1: Oo.

S: Okay po. Pero yung mga nakaka-away niyo, gang din sila?

P1: Oo. Yun naman ang mga sikat na sikat din dito. Kaya namin kinalaban para malaman namin kung kaya namin sila kasi sikat sila rito eh.

S: Sige po. Nag shoplift na po ba kayo, nagnakaw?

P1: Hindi. Isang beses, bike naman yun. Hindi naman totally ninakaw, kumbaga napagtripan lang namin hiram, di naman namin kilala yung may-ari, pinasok namin sa bahay, dinala namin yung bike. Kinabukasan, nagkatakutan na isauli kasi nga opisyal na ata ng pulis yung pinasok namin na bahay.

S: Ah pinasok niyo yung bahay?

P1: Oo, kinuha lang namin yung bike para mag-stroll, kasi mahilig nga kami sa paikot-ikot eh tapos nung ibabalik na namin kinabukasan, wala na, nagtuturuan na lahat ung sino magbabalik. Sabi sa akin, “Ikaw pumasok eh,” sabi ko, “kayo naman gumamit eh bakit ako papasuliin niyo nyan.” Tapos pina-barangay kami. Yun lang ang kaso namin na nakaw pero wala na, kasi para sa akin ayaw ko din ng ganong kaso eh, nakakahiya yung nakaw.

S: Talagang ang focus niyo bugbugan, mga rambulan?

P1: Trouble.

S: Pero bukod doon meron kayong mga saksakan?

P1: Oo, ilang beses na rin akong nakasaksak, ilang beses din akong napalo, nabato. Wala naman kahit papaanong reklamo. Ilang beses na rin nakulong.

S: Kayo po?

P1: Oo, hindi rin naman nagtatagal sa loob.

S: Paano po kayo nakakalabas?

P1: Merong naglalabas.

S: Kagrupa niyo rin po?

P1: Oo.

S: Ano yun parang may koneksyon sa ano...?

P1: Piyansa. Pondo. Pagtapos lie low. “Wag ka muna magpakita dito, pre.” Ganon nalang ginagwa namin.

S: Meron di po ba kayong memorabilia sa gang? Kunwari picture niyo?

P1: Picture sa facebook. Meron pa kasi kaming grupo sa facebook, sa gang namin. Minsan nagcha-chat kami. Meron kaming picture doon na kaming lahat nung meeting, anniversary namin yun eh, yun lang. tapos yung iba wala na, binura na nang binura ng asawa ko.

S: Okay lang po ba na kung sakaling hingiin sa thesis ko, kunin ko din po yung picture?

P1: Okay naman.

S: Yung mga karanasan niyo po na iyon, paano nakatulong at hindi nakatulong sa inyo? Unahin po natin yung kung paano nakatulong sa inyo.

P1: Nakatulong yun sa kin kasi natuto akong tumayo sa sarili kong mga paa, natuto akong lumaban. Kumabaga yung karanasan na yun ang naging dahilan kung paano ako tumibay. Yun lang. naranasan ko din maging masaya saka maging bata.

S: Tumibay...

P1: Sa lahat, kasi may mga tao na sa konting problema lang aayaw na, may mga tao na mabilis sumuko. Pero sa gang kasi, para sa akin, ang gang ay usapang matapang yan eh, kaya hindi ako basta-basta sumusuko. Gagawa ako at gagawa ng paraan para pagtagumpayan yung mga dapat kong pagtagumpayan.

S: Yun po yung naging dulot sa inyo? Paano naman po hindi nakatulong sa inyo?

P1: Nasira yung pangalan ko tapos nasira rin yung buhay ko. Hindi ako naka-graduate. Yung mga pangarap ko nung bata, hindi natuloy kasi nag-focus ako sa gang. Siguro parang sinira niya rin yung buhay ko.

S: Parang kung paano ka niya pinatibay, ganon din nasira yung buhay mo. Ano naman po yung dahilan kung bakit kayo umalis sa gang?

P1: Ayun, nagka-asawa ako, nagka-anak. Kasi yung salita ko sa sarili ko, pagpinangako ko na talaga na kung ako magkaka-anak, ayoko na maging katulad ko, lalaki pa tapos lagi kaming nag-aaway ng misis ko na kung hindi ka hihiwalay sa mga tropa mo, maghiwalay na lang tayo. Ayoko naman mangyari sa pamilya at sa mga anak ko yun, kaya sabi ko, “Sige, kakalas na ko.” Pero patuloy pa rin ako, sumisiple lang ako, hindi alam ng asawa ko tapos ayun, nakilala ko si pastor, nag-share siya sa akin. Simula nung nakarinig ako ng *word of God*, nakilala ko yung Diyos. Tuloy na akong umiwas. Pati tropa nanglamig na sa akin kasi alam na nila na Christian na ko.

S: Bali nung nagka-asawa po kayo, member pa rin kayo?

P1: Oo, buo pa rin kami, kaya lang lie low-lie low na kasi may mga pamilya na rin sila eh.

S: Ilan na po ba anak niyo?

P1: Dalawa.

S: Parehas po lalaki?

P1: Oo.

S: Ano naman po yung mga karanasan niyo pagtapos niyo umalis sa gang?

P1: Mas um-okay kasi hindi na ako laging napapa-away o hindi na ako napa-away simula nung umalis ako sa gang. Yung mga dati kong kaaway na nakikita ko, pare na tawag sa akin. Dati, pag nakikita ako, nagtatakbuhan at kukuha ng bato. Naging malaya ako tapos naging masaya kami ng pamilya ko, kasi hindi na namin pinagtatalunan yang gang na yan. Nagampanan ko yung obligasyon ko sa pamilya ko, sa mga anak ko.

S: Paano niyo po hinarap ang buhay matapos umalis sa gang? Syempre parang ilang taon din po kayo sa gang tapos parang ngayon na wala na, may mga pagbabago po. Paano niyo po iyon hinarap?

P1: Wala, nag-fous lang ako sa mga anak ko, sa asawa ko, tapos nakikinig-kinig lang ako sa mga sinasabi ni Pastor, kasi si Pastor yung naging ano ko, kumbaga siya yung nagko-omfort sa akin pag nakikita niyang may mga pagkukulang ako, nanghihina ako, pumupunta sa bahay tas may mga shini-share siya sa akin na salita ng Diyos. Ayun, pinagpatuloy ko, pinakinggan ko, tapos sinapuso ko, isinabuhay. Kaya hindi naging kawalan sa akin, kumbaga lumamang pa ako nung nawala ako sa gang, kasi may mga natuklasan ako na hindi ko dapat ginawa yung mga yon nung time na yun. Dapat pala, kung di ko ginawa yun, malamang hindi ganito buhay ko ngayon, hindi ako nakilalang ganito.

S: Pero nung umalis po kayo sa gang, nahirapan ba kayo o parang may mga times po ba na nami-miss niyo yung mga dati niyong ginagawa?

P1: Minsan-minsan bumabalik din sa isip ko na ano kaya kung hanggang ngayon gangster pa din ako, tapos may mga makikita akong mga kabataan na maghahabulan, ganyan din ako dati eh. Ayun lang, hanggang ganon na lang, pero yung sasabihin na nagbabalak pa ako, hindi na.

S: Ano pong stand niyo ngayon?

P1: Okay naman. Masaya kasi hindi na masama ang tingin ng tao sa akin. Kumbaga dati, pag nakita ako nung kapitan namin, mainit na ang ulo. Ngayon, pag nakikita ako lalo pa't alam niya na dumadalo ako sa gawain, alam niya na na kristyano na ako, pagnakikita niya ako e siya pa ang unang nabati sa akin ngayon. Pati yung mga barangay, mga kamag-anak ko, mas masaya ang buhay ko ngayon.

S: Kung bibigyan po kayo ng pagkakataon na maka-usap yung mga kabataan na nagbabalak sumali sa gang o mga gang na talaga, ano po ang masasabi niyo sa kanila?

P1: Sa mga kabataan, wag niyo nalang ituloy kasi sa una masarap, kumbaga syempre nagsisimula ka, kabataan, dala ng init ng ulo, masarap. Pero habang tumatagal, pagsisisihan din nila eh, kasi mahirap lumabas. Kasi sa gang, dalawa lang ang pupuntahan mo, yung pangatlo tsamba na lang. Kung hindi ka makukulong, mamamatay ka. Tsamba na lang kung makakaabot ka ng pagbabagong-buhay. Yun lang ang masasabi ko sa kanila, wag nalang nilang balaking pasukin kasi hindi talaga dapat.

S: May mga kamiyembro po ba kayo na namatay, nakapatay?

P1: Namatay dalawa. Wala naman kaming nakapatay.

S: Yung namatay po sa inyo dahil sa riot?

P1: Oo, pinalo yun eh.

S: Ng?

P1: Hindi namin malaman basta nakatali na yun eh.

S: Nakatali sa?

P1: Nakatali lang yung dalawang kamay niya tapos dalawang paa. Nung sinabi ng mga pulis, bugbog daw ang ikinamatay.

S: Yung isa po?

P1: Parehas sila.

S: Ah magkasama? Iisang event yun?

P1: Oo

S: Nandoon din po kayo non?

P1: Oo. Wala, nakita nalang namin sila mga ano na e, kasi nagtatago kami nung time na yun eh.

S: Yung mga ganon, tinulungan niyo po sila sa burol?

P1: Oo, pero hindi kami pinapunta nung magulang non. Kumbaga nung nalibing sila, pag-alis nung magulang at saka nung mga nakipaglibing, doon lang kami tumayo.

S: Ano po yung epekto sa inyo non?

P1: Syempre masakit din yun para sa kaibigan kasi patay yung isa sa mga tropa mo o dalawa sila tapos hindi ka pwedeng sumilip o ano man yung mga tulong na binibigay namin halos ayaw nilang tanggapin. Syempre mahirap din sa amin kung paano kami didiskarte makapunta doon sa lamay, kumbaga sa huling hantungan makasama lang namin sila sa kasiyahan.

S: Pero nung namatay sila naisipan niyo na po bang huminto o naisipan niyong maghiganti?

P1: Lalo kaming umiinit.

S: Ginantihan niyo yung...

P1: Doon nagsimula yung halos lahat ng makita naming gang halos binabanatan namin, binabawian namin, kasi hindi namin alam kung sino kasi marami kaming kaaway eh. Kaya kung sino nalang yung Makita naming mga kaaway naming grupo o mga bagong grupo, doon na lang kami gumaganti.

S: So mas lalo kayong nag-init?

P1: Oo, may mga miyembro na gusto na umayaw kasi pinanghinaan sila kasi nga may namatay tapos hindi kami makabawi sa sino man yung umano pero mas lamang sa amin yung uminit.

S: So yun lang po. Salamat.

APPENDIX E

Sample Initial Coding Per Participant

P1

Research problems	Interview questions	Responses/Significant statements	Codes
1. What are the participants' reasons in joining a gang?	1. What are your reasons in joining a gang?	*Siguro yung kakulangan sa atensyon, kasi parang lagi kasing nasa trabaho yung magulang ko saka doon ako naging masaya. *Nung una kaaway namin yung isa sa miyembro ng kaaway ko tapos meron akong mga kakilala, parang ni-recruit nila ako tapos nung napasali ako, unti-unti, kami na yung nagkakilala ng gang na yun. Pinilit nila akong sumali, naging okay rin naman yung pagsali ko. Napasali ako kasi marami rin naman akong kakilala na taga sa amin, mga kamag-anakan ko kaya sumali na lang din ako. *Kumbaga niyaya lang nila ko sa mga inuman, kasi-kasiyahan, pag may mga gulo sila kasi naging hobby ko rin talaga yung makipag away, kaya pag may mga away sila, nasama ako hanggang sa nagka-okay-an naman nung dati kong kaaway na miyembro nila kaya sumali nalang din ako kasi lagi ko rin naman silang kasama. *Kasi lagi silang wala tapos hiwalay yung mama ko saka papa ko. Si mama laging nasa trabaho wala nang nag-aasikaso sa akin, mga tiyahin ko nalang tapos konting mali ko laging pinapagalitan. Tapos yung mga bagay na hindi ko naman ginawa, sa akin pa rin ang sisi kaya naghanap lang din ako ng kung saan ako sasaya. *oo. Doon ko nakuha kasi naging opisyal nga ako tapos yung mga gusto ko nagagawa ko pag kasama ko sila masaya kami pagkanagapapa-trouble yun ang pinaka ano namin non eh.	*kakulangan sa atensyon *doon ako naging masaya *parang ni-recruit nila ako *pinilit nila akong sumali *marami rin naman akong kakilala na taga sa amin mga kamag-anakan ko kaya sumali na lang din ako *niyaya lang nila ako sa mga inuman, kasi-kasiyahan *naging hobby ko rin talaga yung makipag-away *kasi lagi ko rin naman silang kasama *wala ng nagaasikaso sa akin *konting mali ko lang pinapagalitan *sa akin pa rin ang sisi *naghanap lang din ako ng kung saan ako sasaya *yung gusto ko nagagawa ko kapag kasama ko sila *masaya kami

APPENDIX F

Sample Categories of Codes and Emerging Themes

I. Reasons in joining a gang

Codes	Categories of codes	Emerging Themes
*kapag ako nandun ang saya-saya ko *parang kumpleto *sa bawat oras, ang saya saya mo kapag kasama sila *doon ako naging masaya *naghanap lang din ako ng kung saan ako sasaya *masaya kami *masaya *hindi ka naboboring kapag kasama sila *masaya	Search for happiness	Receiving protection, emotional and financial support from fellow gang members
*tinutulungan din nila ako *binibigyan nila ako...para magkaroon kami ng solusyon *nakadiskarte ako kapag nandyan sila *nandun sila para tulungan ako sa lahat ng problema ko sa bahay *pag sila tinawag ko marami kaming babalik *tulungan at hatakan *tinulungan nila ako *nagbigay din sila ng konting tulong, pagkain *tulungan *susuportahan ka nila kahit anong mangyari *marami akong susumbungan *Kung may problema man ako, tatakbo ako sa tropa...doon naman ako magsasabi ng problema *kami lang din ang nagsasabihan *kami-kami lang din ang nagkakaintindihan *kampante ka kasi marami kayo *kung hindi mo kaya, marami kaming babawi *Nagtutulungan kami *doon namin lahat naaappreciate yung mga nararamdaman namin sa pamilya namin *marami kang mahihingian ng tulong *para hindi ka tapak-tapakan ng mga mayayabang na tao *proteksyon *marami kang pwedeng tawagin sa oras na magulpi ka man	Gangs provide emotional and financial support Availability of the group in times of need Protection from the group	

*magtatanggol sayo *talagang matutulungan ako *sila yung tutulong sa'yo *may mga kaibigan ka na handang tumulong sayo pag nangangailangan ka, pag may kaaway ka, pagpinansyal *may kakampi		
*barkadahan, tropa *para may makasama rin ako *bonding *may katuwang ka *marami kang tropa *maghahanap ng mga kasama mo *Kailangan namin ng makakasama *mayroong ding mga tao na makakatulong, makakasama mo	Belongingness in a group/ Kinship, camaraderie and companionship, fellowship	Struggling to belong
*gustong mapabilang sa ganong samahan *gusto ko sila makilala ng lubusan *gusto ko rin maranasan yung narasan yung nauna samin *gustong makakilala pa ng iba't-ibang kaibigan *gusto ko ring ma-experience yung gang kasi nauso	Curiosity towards gang members Curiosity towards others' experiences	
*wala ng nagaasikaso sa akin *kakulangan sa atensyon *konting mali ko lang pinapagalitan *sa akin pa rin ang sisi *walang nag-aaruga *kulang kami sa atensiyon *hindi rin talaga nagabayan ng magulang *doon ko hinahanap yung pagmamahal, yung relasyon na pagkukulang ng magulang *kulang sa aruga ng magulang *kulang sa pagmamahal *yung pagkukulang ng magulang mo, dun mo nakukuha sa tropa mo *hindi ko naranasan yung pagmamahal ng mga pamilya ko, parang naghanap ako sa iba *ang mama't papa ko, di kami inalagaan *maraming problema sa pamilya kaya nalabas ako	Lack of parental support/ Search for attention	Perceiving low levels of parental support

*impluwensiya *malakas yung impluwensiya *Naimpluwensiyahan din ako *Niyaya nila ako na sumali...maimpluwensiya talaga yung tropa ko *na BI din ako ng mga tropa	Power of influence of the group Peer pressure	Bearing peer pressure within the gang
*narami rin naman akong kakilala na taga sa amin mga kamag-anakan ko kaya sumali na lang din ako *niyaya lang nila ako sa mga inuman, kasi-kasiyahan *kasi lagi ko rin naman silang kasama	Conformity	



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