SOCIAL CONTROL AND SELF-CONTROL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE IN ADOLESCENT FEMALES

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the University of North Texas in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements For the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

By

Beverly J. Mavis, B.S., Ed.
Denton, TX
May, 1999
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Adolescent females are committing an increasing number of violent interpersonal acts. This study used the qualitative technique of focus group interviews to explore social control and self-control factors which impact such behaviors. Forty-seven girls aged 10-18 years described situations and events where interpersonal violence might be used and also what might prevent such acts. For the girls interviewed, social controls were the predominant means of controlling the use of interpersonal violence. Family and peer groups were the most powerful social controls, whether positive or negative. Self-control was deemed important but most girls lacked either the skills or desire to engage in self-control. Violence prevention programs need to teach techniques for improving self-control and increasing self-concept to be most effective.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Interpersonal violence, defined as the use of physical force to intentionally harm or kill another person (Page, Kitchin-Becker, Solovan, Golec, & Hebert, 1992), takes an increasing toll on the well-being of many segments of our population. Homicide rates are the most commonly applied index for estimating overall interpersonal violence since homicides are readily identifiable and have a common definition among all reporting agencies. The United States Department of Justice estimates that the number of injuries due to interpersonal violence may be up to one hundred times greater than the number of homicides (Page et al., 1992). Interpersonal violence resulting in homicide rose from 4.7 deaths per 100,000 persons in 1960 to 9.8 deaths per 100,000 persons in 1973 (Klebba, 1975). By 1980, homicides reached an all-time high of 10.7 per 100,000 persons and have remained around 9.0 per 100,000 persons since the early 1990s (Stevens, 1994).

Among youth aged 15-24 years, homicide is the second leading cause of death and has a disproportionate impact on males and minority youth (Mercy, 1993). Homicide rates for Black males, Hispanic males and Native American males are approximately eight times, three times and twice that of white males in the same age
females also face a disproportionate homicide rate when compared to either White males or White females. Rates per 100,000 persons aged 15-24 years, by race and sex, are as follows: Black males, 58.1, Black females, 13.2, White males, 7.9, and White females, 2.9 (Stevens, 1994).

Use of homicide rates as a measure of the total incidence of interpersonal violence is both inadequate and inaccurate since it does not reflect acts that wound, maim or intimidate without causing loss of life. The personal, economic and social costs of nonfatal acts of interpersonal violence cannot be accurately measured as those events are not always reported and the data which are available are not routinely collected and analyzed (Page et al., 1992). Data on acts of nonfatal interpersonal violence are inaccurate due to inconsistencies in classification between reporting agencies and differences in definitions established by regional and local law enforcement agencies.

Interpersonal violence of all types results in more than 696,000 potential years of life lost, 350,000 hospitalizations, 1.5 million hospital days, and over $638 million in health care costs each year (Page et al., 1992). Nearly 20% of violence-related injuries among persons 16-19 years of age are considered serious, i.e. broken bones, internal injuries, loss of consciousness, and injuries requiring hospital stays of up to 3 days. Added to this are individual costs such as loss of income, permanent disability and long-term psychological impact for victims and witnesses (Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993).

For the past two decades, interpersonal violence has been included in the United States Public Health Service health objectives for the nation. The most current
document lists Objectives 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 7.7, 7.8, 7.9, 7.10, 7.16, and 7.17 as objectives with the goal of reducing the incidence of some type of interpersonal violence. Relating to interpersonal violence by adolescents, the Objectives specifically state:

"Objective 7.1 Reduce homicides to no more than 7.2 per 100,000 people.
Objective 7.3 Reduce weapon-related violent deaths to no more than 12.6 per 100,000 people from major causes.
Objective 7.6 Reduce assault injuries among people aged 12 and older to no more than 10 per 1,000 people.
Objective 7.7 Reduce rape and attempted rape of women aged 12 and older to no more than 108 per 100,000 women.
Objective 7.9 Reduce by 20 percent the incidence of physical fighting among adolescents aged 14 through 17.
Objective 7.10 Reduce by 20 percent the incidence of weapon-carrying by adolescents aged 14 through 17.
Objective 7.16 Increase by at least 50 percent the proportion of elementary and secondary schools that teach nonviolent conflict resolution skills, preferably as part of quality school health education.
Objective 7.17 Extend coordinated, comprehensive violence prevention programs to at least 80 percent of local jurisdictions with populations over 100,000." (United States Public Health Service, 1990)

At federal, state and local levels, government officials regularly voice their concern about the effects of interpersonal violence on the American population. In the early 1990s, then U. S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop declared violence a public health issue (Stevens, 1994) and was joined in that declaration by numerous other public health officials. Secretary of Health and Human Services Louis W. Sullivan acknowledged that "homicide and violent behavior are nationally recognized, preventable public health problems" (Summary of Proceedings: Forum on Youth Violence, 1991).
The basic principles of public health—epidemiologic investigation including determining risk factors, surveillance, goal setting, and community-based action—can be applied to the problem of interpersonal violence. Identifying groups or persons most likely to commit acts of interpersonal violence, learning about motivations for committing acts of interpersonal violence, exploring the individual and combined risk factors which increase participation in interpersonal violence, and developing and implementing community-based interventions all fall within the realm of public health education and prevention activities (Summary of Proceedings: Forum on Youth Violence, 1991).

Review of the available statistics for female adolescent arrest rates for acts of interpersonal violence reveals a dramatic upswing in recent years. As classified by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), violent crime includes the offenses of murder/homicide, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault (Uniform Crime Reports for the United States-1993, 1994). The most recent national report shows a dramatic contrast between adolescent males and females. Based on arrests for adolescents under 18 years of age from 1984 to 1993, males show a 176.5% increase in the rate of murder and non-negligent manslaughter, an 8.6% increase in the rate of forcible rape, a 36.1% increase in robbery rates, and a 95.9% increase in aggravated assaults. For the same time period, arrests for females show a 78.0% increase in murder rates, a 44.6% increase in involvement in forcible rape, an 89.4% increase in robbery rates, and a 108.9% increase in aggravated assaults. While the absolute numbers for males are much greater than for females, the relative increase for females
is alarming (Uniform Crime Reports for the United States-1993, 1994). Figures 1 and 2 illustrate these data.

Figure 1. Total Arrest Rates-Males 1984 and 1993

Source: Uniform Crime Reports for the United States-1993
Overall violent crime rates for males under age 18 increased by 63.2% between 1984 and 1993. During the same period the rate for females in that age group increased by 103.0% (Uniform Crime Reports for the United States-1993, 1994).

Persons under the age of 18 years accounted for 18.5% of all arrests for violent crime in 1993. Males under age 18 made up 18.4% of all male arrests for violent crime while females in the same age group constituted 18.9% of total female arrests. Seventeen percent (17.1%) of all persons arrested were under age 18 and nearly one-third of all arrests (29.7%), including arrests for violent crimes (31.9%), were persons under age 21 years (Uniform Crime Reports for the United States-1993, 1994). As these statistics are based solely on arrests for the designated crimes, it is highly likely that the actual
rate of participation in such crimes is much higher and these statistics are only the "tip of the iceberg."

The 1995 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance data show an increased risk of involvement in behaviors which contribute to intentional injury for many adolescents who attend school. Because the school environment is a relatively protected one offering some elements of control and adult supervision, it is plausible that out-of-school youth (those who do not regularly attend classes or who are considered truant or drop-out) face greater exposure to behaviors that contribute to intentional injury. One-fifth of all students surveyed said they had carried some type of weapon during the 30 days preceding the survey. By gender, this included 31.1% of all males and 8.3% of all females. When the data were broken down by race and ethnicity, the differences became more significant. Hispanic students were more likely than White students to have carried a weapon — 24.7% and 18.9%, respectively. Black and Hispanic females were significantly more likely than White females to have carried a weapon — 15.7%, 13.2% and 5.5%, respectively (Kann et al., 1996).

When asked if they had been in a physical fight in the previous 12 months, 38.7% of all students responded positively (Kann et al., 1996). Not surprisingly, males (46.1%) were more likely than females (30.6%) to report physical fighting. Hispanic females were significantly more likely than White females to report fighting — 40.4% and 26.8%, respectively. As a group, female students in grade 9 (37.4%) were more likely than females in grade 11 (27.5%) and grade 12 (24.1%) to report fighting (Kann et al., 1996). Of all students reporting that they engaged in physical fighting, 5.7% of males and 2.5%
of females said they had sustained injuries serious enough to be treated by a doctor or nurse.

Overall, 4.5% of all students missed at least one day of school in the preceding 30 days because they felt unsafe either at school or while traveling to and from school (Kann, et al., 1996). Hispanic (8.3%) and Black (8.2%) females were significantly more likely to miss school because they felt unsafe than were White females (2.2%).

Nationwide, 9.8% of all students reported carrying a weapon on school property during the preceding 30 days. Nearly five percent (4.9%) of all females surveyed reported carrying a weapon while at school. For Hispanic and Black females (8.9% and 8.8%, respectively), the proportion carrying a weapon on school property was significantly higher than for White females (3.1%) (Kann et al., 1996).

Almost six percent (5.8%) of female students reported being threatened or injured with a weapon while on school property. In the previous 12 months, 9.6% of the females had been in a physical fight on school property. More Black and Hispanic females (14.3% and 16.6%, respectively) reported being in a fight than did White females (6.5%) (Kann et al., 1996). Female students in grade 9 (12.1%) were more likely than female students in grade 12 (5.6%) to have been in a fight on school property.

It is important to note that the absolute number of females involved in interpersonal violence remains small when compared to males. It is the dramatic increase of female participation in interpersonal violence that has raised concerns in recent years. Clearly, females are participating in acts of interpersonal violence more often than ever before. It is significant for the purpose of this study to note that nearly
all of the previous research on interpersonal violence has focused on males. Only in recent years has attention turned to the involvement of females in behaviors such as serious crime and interpersonal violence and not solely on offenses such as runaway, delinquency, or other "soft" crimes. Little is known or understood about the motivations for female adolescents to commit acts of interpersonal violence (Ageton, 1983; Berger, 1989; Cernkovich & Giordana, 1979; Figueria-McDonough, 1992; and Sommers & Baskin, 1994).

In the past 10 years, movement toward addressing issues related to interpersonal violence as a public health problem has been restricted primarily to legal intervention in the form of increasingly harsh penalties for committing such acts. Programs that focus on secondary prevention or intervention at either the community or individual level are hampered by a number of factors. First, there is a prevalent attitude that violence is not preventable--but inevitable (Stevens, 1994). This attitude is carried forth by all segments of our society including the news and entertainment media, political leaders, celebrities and other public figures, and in the average person's "make my day" approach to conflict resolution (Prothrow-Stith, 1993).

Second, violence and the reduction of violent interpersonal acts is seen largely as a criminal justice problem (Page et al., 1992). While isolated communities in high crime areas proclaim the desire to "do something," the answer is most often judicial and does not address long-term responses to escalating adolescent crime. To be effective, programs that propose to reduce the incidence of violent behaviors must change community norms. Heroes and heroines need to be redefined, the
consequences of violence must be accurately conveyed, and attitudes that accommodate
the use of violence and accept violence as inevitable need to be addressed. As a nation
and as individuals, we must adopt a mindset that sees violence as preventable and
violent behavior as susceptible to change through the methods of epidemiology and
health promotion (Prothrow-Stith, 1993).

Purpose

This study described the impact of social control and self-control on
participation in acts of interpersonal violence by female adolescents.

Research Questions

The questions from the literature that formed the basis for this study are:

1) What social control and self-control factors are associated with
   participation of adolescent females or their peers in acts of interpersonal
   violence?
   a) How do social control and self-control factors affect participation
      of adolescent females in acts of interpersonal violence?
   b) How are social control factors manifest in the environment of
      adolescent females?

2) What are significant social control and self-control factors for
   adolescent females? How are self-control factors manifest in individual
   adolescent females?
Significance of the Study

This study generated knowledge about the effect of social control and self-control on the decision by adolescent females to participate in acts of interpersonal violence. Learning more about how these factors relate to the frequency of participation, seriousness of the behaviors and motivations of adolescent females to commit acts of interpersonal violence is useful in developing intervention or prevention programs as part of a solution for long-term reduction of interpersonal violence.

Operational Definitions

Adolescent/Youth: persons aged 12 and 18 years, inclusive.

Aggression: any forceful action—such as an unprovoked attack—intended to dominate or master; hostile, an injurious or destructive behavior or outlook especially when caused by frustration. Further, it may include hitting and hurting, pushing and shoving, injuring and irritating, unprovoked physical aggression such as starting a fight, and mildly provoked verbal aggression (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

Bio-social factors: genetic and environmental factors that may be associated with participation in interpersonal violence (poverty, family history, racism, and social acceptance of violent behavior, for example).

Delinquent Activity/Delinquency: behavior consequent to the failure of personal and social controls to produce conformity in behavior with social norms for which legal penalties are attached (Reiss, 1951). The most extreme form of delinquency is involvement in interpersonal violence.
Interpersonal violence: use of physical force with the intent to inflict injury or death upon another person (Page et al., 1992).

Physical force: use of hands, feet or other body parts or use of an acquired weapon such as a knife or gun.

Positive social controls: factors such as religious teachings, going to church, family expectations of good behavior, peers, recognizing the consequences of one's actions, knowing right from wrong and acting appropriately, and having positive alternatives for activities which influence behaviors in a positive direction.

Negative social controls: factors including family sanctions such as beatings, legal consequences such as a loss of probation, arrest or jail, peers—especially males who may encourage negative behaviors and the opportunity to engage in illegal or violent behaviors.

Social Control Theory: a theory used to explain delinquency developed by Hirschi (1969) and expanded by other researchers; the components of this theory are: 1) attachment to conventional others such as teachers and parents, 2) commitment to conventional goals and activities such as school, 3) involvement in conventional activities, and 4) belief in conventional norms. The amount of attachment or commitment is considered directly and inversely related to the level of delinquency.

Self-control: defined by a number of factors and characteristics that affect the ability to calculate the consequences of one's acts. Persons who lack self-control tend to be impulsive, insensitive, physical (as opposed to mental), risk-taking, short-sighted, and non-verbal (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).
Social Learning Theory: a behavioral theory that stresses that social behavior is acquired through direct conditioning and through imitation or modeling of another person's behavior. Behavior is strengthened through reward and avoidance of punishment and is based on evaluative definitions that may vary from group to group within an individual's social setting (family, church, school and friends, for example).

Social skills: include, but are not limited to, healthy or appropriate responses to anger, how to handle stress in a prosocial manner, negotiating skills, problem-solving skills, channeling aggressive behavior, decision-making, and strategies for non-violent conflict resolution.

Triangulation: a research method used to corroborate information gained from different research techniques or methods. Triangulation allows for comparison of information from different sources and increases the reliability and validity of the study (Van Maaen, 1983).

Violent youth: youth who participate in acts of interpersonal violence that have resulted in or could have resulted in arrest, enrollment in rehabilitation programs or incarceration.

Assumptions and Limitations

A convenience sample (sites responding positively to the researcher's request to interview subjects) was used for the study. Study sites that allowed the researcher access to adolescent females may have differed in some way from those that did not allow access.
The choice of female adolescents as participants reduced the transferability of any findings to other groups. As this was not a random sample, the results obtained may not be representative of all female adolescents and may differ from the general population.

Selection of sites and participants for the focus group interview was not random. The data collected from these interviews cannot necessarily be applied to a larger population. In addition, individuals who agreed to participate in a focus group interview may differ in significant ways from those not participating.

The overall level of violence in the environment affected perceptions about and involvement in acts of interpersonal violence. Female adolescents living in locations where interpersonal violence was commonplace may have exhibited more tolerance for or use of such behaviors.

Some language or cultural barriers existed between the study participants and the researcher. These barriers were identified and clarified during the researcher's time at each site. To minimize these barriers, focus group participants were asked to explain any expressions (including slang or idioms) the researcher did not readily understand or that appeared to be incongruous with the context of the conversation.

The difference in age between the researcher and the participants had a small effect on type and quality of information provided by the participants during the focus group interview.
The level of trust between participants and the researcher may have impacted the type of information provided in the focus group with less trusting participants being less candid.

Some selection bias may have occurred in allowing these adolescents to determine whether or not they would participate in the focus groups. Those who self-selected and returned signed consent forms may have had different characteristics than those who did not participate.

The data may have been influenced by conducting the interviews in a group format rather than an individual session. Remarks and attitudes conveyed by some participants may have affected subsequent remarks or participation by others in the group.

The history effect of participants having past and current relationships (friendships and acquaintanceships) may have affected the topics discussed, how participants responded to the researcher and the details shared in the focus groups.

Another limitation of this study was that only girls who were bilingual or monolingual English speakers were included in the study.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Violence as a Public Health Crisis

For the past twenty years, references to interpersonal violence as a public health crisis have increased. Violent crime, interpersonal violence resulting in death and other consequences of violence such as long-term disability represent an increasingly serious health problem in this country (Huasman, Spivak, Prothrow-Stith, & Roeber, 1992). In 1983 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention initiated a program to study the causes of violence (Stevens, 1994). The following year, then U. S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop declared interpersonal violence a public health issue that should be of as much concern to modern-day physicians as smallpox was to previous generations (Stevens, 1994). Interpersonal violence, particularly among adolescents, is a public health issue that is reaching epidemic proportions in this country. As noted in a recent report by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, a male aged 14-17 years was three times more likely to kill in 1993 than in 1984. (Federal Bureau of Investigation: Crime in the United States [FBI], 1995). That same individual is also fifty percent more likely to be killed than someone twice his age (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 1994).
Issues related to stemming the rise of interpersonal violence at all levels have been included in goals and objectives for the health of the nation for the years 1990 and 2000 (Page et al., 1992; United States Department of Health and Human Services, 1990). In several addresses made during the Forum on Youth Violence in Minority Communities, one of the recurring themes was that violence is preventable and that the incidence of violence can be reduced by applying the principles of public health. There was also consensus that traditional methods of violence reduction—namely the criminal justice system—are not an effective means of decreasing interpersonal violence (Summary of Proceedings: Forum on Youth Violence, 1991).

Earls (1991) noted that "an uneasy, yet cogent, analogy might be drawn between the current response to violent behavior and the comprehension of and reaction to infectious diseases a century ago." Existing data is drawn largely from sources within the criminal justice system such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U. S. Department of Justice and do not adequately address issues of ethnicity, socioeconomic status or gender (Prothrow-Stith, 1993).

In a study released to the press in October of 1994, experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicated that while the overall rate of homicide remained static, the rate for males between the ages of 15 and 19 years increased by 154 percent between the years 1985 and 1991 (CDC, 1994). In addition, while overall violent crime rates for males under age 18 increased by 63.2% between 1984 and 1993, the rate for females increased by 103.0% during the same period (Uniform Crime Reports for the United States-1993, 1994). Data on arrests from 1984 and 1993 for
males and females under the age of 18 years also show staggering increases in participation in acts of interpersonal violence by youth. Males showed a 176.5% increase in the rate of murders and non-negligent manslaughter, an 8.6% increase in the rate of forcible rape, a 36.1% increase in robbery, and a 95.9% increase in aggravated assaults. Females showed a 78.9% increase in murders, a 44.6% increase in forcible rape, an 89.4% increase in robbery, and a 108.9% increase in aggravated assaults (Uniform Crime Reports for the United States-1993, 1994). It is important to note that while the percent increase in these crimes was dramatically higher for females than for males in most categories, the absolute numbers of females involved in violent crime, while increasing rapidly, is still small when compared with males.

Interpersonal violence takes a disproportionate toll on the African-American community. It is the leading cause of death for Black males between the ages of 15 and 24 years (Page et al., 1992; Wood, 1990). The rate of homicide deaths for Black males is twice as high as for White males, and in 1991 was 85 per 1000 persons (Prothrow-Stith, 1993). As many as fifty to sixty percent of all homicides take place in the context of an interpersonal relationship of some sort where the parties are known to each other (Page et al., 1992; Prothrow-Stith, 1993). Further, a major contributor to an act of interpersonal violence is an argument combined with access to a weapon—particularly a gun (Prothrow-Stith, 1993). These two facts suggest that the appropriate use of interpersonal social skills is one way to de-escalate a confrontation and avoid violence. Identifying risk factors or deficiencies, developing audience-specific programs, and teaching individuals social skills for reducing the likelihood of involvement
in interpersonal violence involves behavior change techniques that fall within the scope of public health practice.

Cultural Factors in Interpersonal Violence

When addressing an issue as complex as interpersonal violence, it is not easy to separate the contributing factors from one another. The interaction of a multitude of personal, social, cultural, and historical components within the context of a specific situation forms the unique set of bio-social factors that will ultimately determine an individual's method for resolving interpersonal conflict. Figure 3 summarizes many of these factors and illustrates the possible types of interactions. Cultural factors include the acceptance, and even expectation in some instances, of violent response, the influence of the media and regional differences in response to conflict.

Americans have generally become desensitized to violence and accept it as inevitable (Summary of Proceedings: Forum on Youth Violence, 1991). From a very early age American children are exposed to the use of violence to resolve conflict in the cartoons they watch on television, the movies they pay to see and in many of the books they read (Prothrow-Stith, 1993). This attitude carries into the leadership of the country. In recent years, the President of the United States has been quoted as saying "Make my day" during an international conflict and, with respect to the Gulf War, that we would "kick butt." These anecdotes demonstrate that even persons whose personal culture may not overtly encourage violence may still condone it.
The media play a unique role in contributing to violence in our society. Its influence is felt by young and old, rich and poor, and in every community. Both the news and entertainment media provide messages about the acceptable ways to handle conflict and, very often, the message is that violence is the "manly or womanly" way to resolve conflict (Prothrow-Stith, 1993). Further, the media increase the tendency to idolize the reckless and the violent, to provide the illusion that guns do not really hurt and that dying is just part of the story, and to desensitize us to the consequences of violent interactions (Sorrells, 1977; Summary of Proceedings: Forum on Youth Violence, 1993). This effect has become part of our cultural and personal background as well as a strong environmental influence and is one that children and youth are exposed to on a
regular basis. The glamorization of violence and the reinforcement of the concept of violence as the means to resolving conflict can be seen on any television or movie screen on a daily basis. The true impact of such messages on children and youth is not fully understood.

In our culture there are geographic regions that are traditionally more violent than others. It is widely accepted that highly urbanized regions have a higher rate of interpersonal violence than less populated regions (Page et al., 1992). Historically, persons from the Southern region of the United States have been regarded as more violent than their Northern or Midwestern counterparts. This impression has been borne out in research which indicates that in small cities the ratio of homicides among Whites is three times higher for the South than for New England and for medium-sized cities it is twice as high (Nisbett, 1993). When poverty differences among regions are taken into account, Southerness (being from the Southern region of the United States) retains importance as a predictor of homicide (Nisbett, 1993).

Racism contributes to violence both directly and indirectly. The experience of racial discrimination may increase the anger already present in many youth from low socioeconomic status situations. The deprivation of certain segments of society of the opportunities to be successful in school and work often serves to further the sense of frustration (Summary of Proceedings: Forum on Youth Violence, 1991).

A youth subculture that endorses violence as a method of resolving interpersonal conflict also exists. For many youth, reliance on a "code of the streets," which has at its heart the issue of respect, involves the threat or use of violence to
maintain one's status within the community (Anderson, 1994). Youth who belong to this subculture of violence are familiar with conventional expectations of interpersonal behavior but appear not to accept or be committed to those expectations (Austin, 1980). These youth are also more likely to show allegiance to machismo values, be less committed to moral principles (Austin, 1980) and are more likely to express contempt for conventional society (Anderson, 1994).

Access to weapons, particularly guns, also plays a role in the severity of the outcome in interpersonal conflict. Accessibility to a weapon plays a primary role in determining whether or not conflict will escalate into homicide, an injury will become a death or attempted crimes will be completed (Summary of Proceedings: Forum on Youth Violence, 1991). The lethal use of violence during nonfelony activity is a significant problem for adolescents—especially males and non-whites (Durant, Pendergrast, & Cadenhead, 1994). Weapons such as guns and knives are used in more than 80 percent of youth homicides and are an important cause of disabling injuries as well (Summary of Proceedings: Forum on Youth Violence, 1991). The use of alcohol and other drugs often leads to impaired judgment and results in risk-taking behavior that may not occur under other conditions.

In a study comparing Seattle, WA and Vancouver, British Columbia, limiting access to weapons, especially firearms, was shown to reduce the severity of outcome in interpersonal conflict (Sloan et al., 1988). These cities were chosen not only because of physical proximity and comparable demographics but because the two cities also approach handgun control in markedly different ways (Sloan et al.). When relative risk
for being a homicide victim in either city was studied, residents of Seattle had a 1.63
times greater risk than residents of Vancouver and virtually all of the risk was due to a
more than fivefold higher rate of homicide by firearms. Equally important was that
Vancouver’s rate of homicide with weapons other than guns was not significantly
greater than that in Seattle (Sloan et al., 1988).

Social Factors, Social Control and Self-control

Social factors include not only those factors mentioned previously but also
community norms and values; the family with its role models, norms and values; the
influence of peer groups; race and ethnicity; and socioeconomic conditions. As with
cultural factors, considerable overlap exists in the influence of social factors. While it is
appropriate to address each of these factors separately for the purpose of discussion,
they should be thought of as interacting components that shape an individual’s response
to interpersonal conflict and violence. Cohen and Felson (1979) theorized that social
structure can influence the rate of interpersonal violence. Of the three components of
this theory—motivated offenders, suitable targets, and absence of capable guardians
against a violation—the element of social control is deemed to be most critical to
reducing illegal predatory activities (Cohen & Felson, 1979).

When individuals with low levels of personal control find themselves in
environments where there are low levels of social control, there is likely to be an
increase in violent interpersonal encounters (Cohen & Felson, 1979). The lack of social
controls is most obvious in poor, highly urbanized neighborhoods which bear a
disproportionate share of death, disability, and violence-related social disintegration in a
cycle where disempowerment breeds violence and violence breeds even greater powerlessness (Summary of Proceedings: Forum on Youth Violence, 1991). In such a society, even persons who accept mainstream values and are willing to work within "the system" may be forced to use interpersonal violence to protect themselves and their property (Anderson, 1994). For youth who do not accept conventional rules and restraints, communities with either a real or perceived lack of control provide support for their violent interpersonal actions (Anderson, 1994).

The central premise of Social Control Theory, as developed by Hirschi in 1969 and elaborated since then by Hirschi and colleagues, is that adolescent delinquent behavior is influenced by four factors. The four factors are: 1) attachment to conventional others such as teachers and parents; 2) commitment to conventional goals and activities such as school; 3) involvement in conventional activities; and, 4) belief in conventional norms (Patterson, in Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1980, p. 74). Because of the bond formed between parents and children early in the child's life, and assuming that the parents embody acceptable cultural expectations and norms, there is an increased likelihood that the child will be committed to investing time and energy in society's goals. This theory also assumes that the child will be involved in activities such as school and work that will fulfill society's goals (Patterson, in Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1980). Conger states that the social control theory assumes that juveniles are bonded to society at several different levels and to varying degrees. He notes that delinquent behavior is unlikely to occur if it risks punishment through loss of valued outcomes associated with conventional activities. For adolescents who do not experience such
important ties with conventional order, deviant activities are more likely to occur because they do not endanger those rewarding bonds (Conger, in Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1980).

In the late 1980's, Hirschi and Gottfredson revised the social control theory to place more emphasis on personal control over one's actions within the context of the social environment. Concerned that too much emphasis was being placed on the crime and not enough on the person committing the crime, they suggested that people vary in their propensity to use force and fraud. They further stated that this variance has implications for the way crime is measured, the kinds of crimes that occur, understanding the relations between crimes and social problems, proper design of research, and the creation of useful public policies (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

The characteristics of legal sanctions to criminal activities include certainty, severity and celerity. If all other things are equal, acts that have immediate consequences will tend to be more pleasurable than those whose consequences are delayed; acts that are mentally and physically easy are more pleasurable than acts that require mental and physical exertion; and risky and exciting acts are more pleasurable than routine or dull acts (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Based on the previous assertion, the nature of criminal acts is easy to predict: they will tend to require, on the whole, little foresight, planning or effort; little time will elapse between thought and deed; targets will be selected based on ease of victimization; targets will provide immediate benefits but little profit (i.e. robbery and petty theft); and targets posing little
risk of detection and resistance will be chosen over those with greater risk (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

Self-control is the individual characteristic most relevant to the commission of criminal acts. According to Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), criminal acts provide immediate gratification of desires and a major characteristic of people with low self-control is a tendency to respond to tangible stimuli in the immediate environment -- to have a concrete "here and now" orientation. By comparing the nature of criminal acts to characteristics of people with low self-control, it is easy to see how those individuals may be drawn to criminal behaviors under the right conditions. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) outlined a list of such correlations. Criminal acts provide easy or simple gratification of desires; people lacking self-control tend to lack diligence, tenacity or persistence in a course of action. Criminal acts are risky, exciting or thrilling; people lacking self-control tend to be adventuresome, active and physical. Crimes provide few or meager long-term benefits; people with low self-control tend to have unstable interpersonal relationships and tend to be unprepared for long-term occupational pursuits. Crimes require little skill or planning; people lacking self-control do not need or value cognitive or academic skills. Manual skills for most crimes are minimal and do not require training or apprenticeship. Crimes often result in pain or discomfort for the victim (property lost, bodies injured, privacy violated and trust broken); people with low self-control tend to be self-centered, indifferent or insensitive to the suffering and needs of others although they are not routinely unkind or antisocial. Crime involves the pursuit of immediate pleasure; people lacking self-control also tend to pursue
immediate pleasures that are not generally criminal such as smoking, drinking, drug use, gambling, or sex. The major benefit of many crimes is pleasure or relief from momentary irritation; people with low self-control have minimal tolerance for frustration and little ability to respond to conflict through verbal rather than physical means. Crimes often involve the risk of physical injury, violence and pain on the part of the offender; people with tolerance of physical pain or who are indifferent to physical discomfort will be more likely to engage in criminal acts regardless of their level of self-control.

To summarize, people who lack self-control will tend to be impulsive, insensitive, physical as opposed to mental, risk-taking, short-sighted, and non-verbal. Since these traits can be identified prior to the age of responsibility for crime, tend to come together in the same people, and tend to persist through life, it would be reasonable to consider them as comprising a stable construct useful in the explanation of crime (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) identified four general elements of low self-control that have an impact on criminal behavior. They are: 1) the basic stability of individual differences over a long period of time; 2) great variability in the kinds of criminal acts engaged in; 3) conceptual or causal equivalence of criminal and non-criminal acts; and, 4) the inability to predict specific forms of deviance engaged in, whether criminal or non-criminal. The dimensions of self-control are factors affecting the ability to calculate the consequences of one's acts (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Further, all of the characteristics associated with low self-control tend to show themselves in the absence of nurturance, discipline or training. Variance in these
characteristics may have an impact on the prospects for effective socialization of the individual (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

The influence of family on the establishment of norms and the development of values in children has been well accepted by social scientists, psychologists and the public. Early experience has a lifetime impact. Children who are born into homes where violence is the accepted way of dealing with intense feelings—especially feelings of anger and frustration—soon learn that this is the best way to solve any kind of interpersonal problem (Anderson, 1994; Summary of Proceedings: Forum on Youth Violence, 1991). When violence is modeled as a problem-solving strategy, it becomes a learned response to conflict and frustration on the part of the child (Page et al., 1992). Children who find no alternative role models for coping with interpersonal conflict, and whose perception of violence as the accepted method of resolving interpersonal conflict is reinforced by the community, are more likely as teens to engage in interpersonal violence (Anderson, 1994). Parents who are ambivalent about discipline, who inconsistently apply and enforce rules, and who are either aversive or neglectful in their interactions with their children are more likely to have children who respond in a violent manner to interpersonal conflict (Anderson, 1994; Page et al., 1992).

With respect to self-control, the major "cause" of low self-control appears to be ineffective child-rearing (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Research indicates that discipline, supervision and affection tend to be missing in the homes of delinquents and that the behavior of the parents is often poor (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). For adequate child-rearing (i.e., that which leads to the child learning a reasonable level of
self-control) to occur, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) identified a "minimum" set of conditions that must be in place. They are: 1) someone must monitor the child's behavior; 2) deviant behavior must be recognized when it occurs; and 3) deviant behavior must be punished. To meet these conditions, all that is required is an affection for or investment in the child (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). This system can go wrong if the parents do not care for the child, the parents do not have the time or energy to monitor the child's behavior, the parents do not see anything wrong with the behavior, or the parents do not have the inclination or means to punish the child (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). The connection between parental supervision as a form of social control and the child's level of self-control may be related, in part, to the powerful sanction of avoidance of disapproval by people (the parents) about whom the child cares (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

One of the earliest predictors of deviant behavior is attendance at and performance in school. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) theorize that this is because the school is a powerful socializing institution and, as such, poses restraints on the individual. Individuals with low in self-control may not learn to function well in such an environment. By design, schools can be more effective in monitoring behavior with one teacher overseeing several children. Teachers generally have no difficulty recognizing deviant or disruptive behavior and, since the school has a clear interest in maintaining order and discipline, appropriate actions will be taken to control disruptive behavior based on the authority and means to punish lapses in self-control implicit in the school structure (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). For children with low self-control, the
restriction of unfettered pursuit of self-interest and the requirement for accomplishment may activate external controls not applied to or felt by everyone with resultant differences in attitude toward school. Truancy has been documented to start as early as first and second grades and, whatever its source, it is highly predictive of low self-control later in life (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

Self-control theory applies across the life course and, although it manifests itself in different ways as individuals age, it applies from the point of decision-making back to the origins of differences in the degree of self-control (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). In infancy and pre-adolescence, it is a theory of socialization and social control accounting for a variety of deviant acts such as defiance, truancy and school failure. In adolescence and the early adult years, the socialization declines and the theory focuses largely on social control accounting for an even greater variety of deviant and criminal acts such as truancy, dropout, drug use, theft, assault, accidents, and pregnancy. As adulthood approaches, natural controls (biological and physiological) play an increasingly larger role and there is a tendency for the rate of deviant behavior to decline (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Many of the traditional causes of crime are consequences of low self-control. There is evidence that participation in crime can be correlated with low self-control at any earlier stage in life (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). As stated by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), "It is important to note, however, that self-control is only one element in the causal configuration leading to a criminal act, and criminal acts, are, at best, imperfect measures of self-control."
Socioeconomic status also impacts interpersonal violence. Violence, along with money and knowledge, is considered one of the three fundamental sources of power (Trafford, 1992). When individuals are limited in money and knowledge, there is an inclination to use violence to obtain that power (Trafford, 1992). As stated in the Summary of Proceedings: Forum on Youth Violence (1991), "Poverty, joblessness, and the lack of real employment opportunities promote violence by generating a sense of frustration, low self-esteem, and hopelessness about the future." It is becoming increasingly clear that socioeconomic status is a greater predictor of violence than race or ethnicity (Page et al., 1992). It has been suggested that some members of youth cohorts may experience an increased sense of economic deprivation because they have unrealistic expectations of income from their employment and increased aspirations for material goods (Smith, 1986). This perception of deprivation, combined with a need to gain and maintain respect from peers and the community, can lead to conflicts that end in interpersonal violence (Anderson, 1994; Smith, 1986).

Peer groups influence the extent to which many youth engage in interpersonal violence. When bonds are not formed at home or with a positive role model from the community, youth will turn to peers for support. Self-control is a major factor in determining membership in adolescent peer groups and in determining the quality of relations among members of such groups (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Adventuresome and reckless children who have difficulty making and keeping friends tend to end up together thereby creating groups consisting of individuals who tend, to one degree or another, to lack self-control. Adolescents who commit delinquent acts
show less inclination to live up to the expectations of their peers (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Participation in such groups may also lead to the escalation of delinquent acts into crimes that would otherwise be too dangerous or difficult to carry out alone -- robbery or some thefts, for example (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

The more unconventional the peer group—in terms of violent interpersonal behavior and disregard for conventional rules and restraints—the more likely the youth will be involved in interpersonal violence (Austin, 1980; Page et al., 1992). Peer groups may also exert influence during an interpersonal conflict by becoming an ally of the youth, instigating the youth to fight on their behalf or defining the situation as one in which violence is the appropriate solution (Felson & Steadman, 1983). Although peer groups also have the power to mediate an interpersonal conflict and aid in a non-violent settlement (Felson & Steadman, 1983), the "code of the streets" often dictates a violent response that will command respect (Anderson, 1994). If the necessary degree of respect is not gained, it becomes essential to stage a retaliation or "pay back" encounter to rebuild the respect that has been lost (Anderson, 1994; Felson & Steadman, 1983). This type of escalation is often seen in gang warfare where most incidents are linked to revenge for insults or previous violence (Stevens, 1994).

Characteristics of Violent Youth

In the last three decades, researchers from a variety of disciplines have attempted to identify specific characteristics that are typical of youth who are involved in interpersonal violence. One recurring theme is that violent youth are often at the extremes in terms of expressing and controlling their emotions. In interviews with
thirty-one teens who had committed homicide, Sorrells (1977) found that they were "clearly afraid of their own shadow or maintained the facade of being afraid of nothing." He also found that some were too entangled with a delinquent peer group while others appeared to dislike almost everyone. Some had almost no impulse control while others seemed over-controlled and lacked channels for release of frustration (Sorrells, 1977). Diaz, Belena and Baguena (1994) found that delinquents are more dogmatic, neurotic and generally less intelligent than non-delinquents.

Another characteristic of many violent youth is poor academic performance. King (1975) found that homicidal youth were deficient in their ability or were disinclined to master the prevailing language. If it is accepted that the first level of coping is being able to understand society's codes of written communication (King, 1975) and that these skills are fundamental to social survival, many youth who employ violence in interpersonal interaction are handicapped in this regard. The social and academic handicap of decreased ability to communicate can lead to poor performance in school and, by association, a reduced interest in remaining involved in school (Hindelang, 1973). In work done by Travis Hirschi and reported by Hindelang (1973), 35% of youth who rated themselves as below average in school and two-thirds of those who reported disliking school were involved in delinquent behavior (which may or may not have been violent) with much greater frequency than their peers who felt positively about school. For youth who are unable to communicate effectively, school generates disharmony, stress, a lack of understanding of what is expected of them, and the inability to appropriately respond when they do understand expectations (King, 1975).
It becomes easier and more gratifying to use violence as a means of communication when faced with adversity (King, 1975).

Youth who use violence in interpersonal conflict were found by Davis and Beverly (1991) to be inordinately concerned with maintaining a "good name" and personal respect in their neighborhoods. As noted earlier, this concern leads to developing a violent attitude on the street and may leave no room for non-violent resolution of conflict. The need to "save face" in such instances does not allow room for actions that will make the individual appear weak, foolish, inept, unmanly, incapable or otherwise stigmatized (Hepburn, 1973). Youth involved in delinquent activity are more likely to reside in a situation that lacks social controls over violent behavior, are less likely to accept the influence of groups which enforce conformity behavior, and are more likely to have immature ego ideals and flexible rational controls of their behavior (Reiss, 1951).

In a study of sixth-grade boys who had not yet been involved in delinquent behavior and were rated as "good boys" by their teachers, Reckless, Dinitz, and Murray (1956) examined factors which appeared to insulate the boys against delinquency. One factor that stood out was the presence of a socially acceptable concept of self. The lack of positive self-concept in youth who are involved in interpersonal violence has been documented in several sources including Anderson (1994), King (1975), and Rosenberg, Schooler, and Schoenbach (1989).
Adolescent Females and Violent Behavior

Historically, research on females has been ignored due in part to the persistent orientation that female deviation is infrequent and innocuous compared to males. While it is true that males commit a greater number of offenses, it is well documented that males and females commit the same types of offenses (Cernkovich & Giordano, 1979). Prior to the 1970s, researchers treated females as marginal to the study of juvenile delinquency (Berger, 1989) and most delinquency theories have evolved to explain male behavior and have been tested almost exclusively with male samples (Figueria-McDonough, 1992). Sommers and Baskin (1994) note that there is a virtual absence of studies concerned with non-domestic female violence. Due to these oversights there is a lack of adequate theorizing regarding female involvement in crime and delinquency and a paucity of representative behavioral data on females (Ageton, 1983).

The research that has been done indicates that in many respects female delinquents do not differ drastically from their male counterparts. There is, however, a great difference in the socialization of males and females and in the way the criminal justice system handles males and females. It is important to note that official statistics give no indication of the extent to which arrest or court referral rates, for example, are influenced by factors such as over- or under-processing of females depending on the offense (Cernkovich & Giordano, 1979). Females may also be involved in the court system more than males due to the tendency of the family to be more protective and watchful of girls' activities and to more closely scrutinize the behavior of girls than that
of boys (Datesman & Scarpitti, 1975). A greater proportion of females are now involved in more serious crimes such as armed robbery, gang activity and drug trafficking (Calhoun, Jergens, & Chen, 1993). Further, while women represent less than 5% of the U. S. prison population, the women's crime rate in all categories is rising between three and five times more rapidly than males (Calhoun et al., 1993).

According to Berger (1989), the most significant pattern for participating in criminal activities is being involved with a mixed group of boys and girls. Such a group affords the greatest opportunity for successful execution of theft and other crimes. Females take an active role in the planning of and participation in serious criminal acts (Berger, 1979). In many cases the females not only initiate the plan but are prepared to carry it out with or without the assistance of male companions. What seems to differentiate male and female delinquent or criminal activities is the frequency of involvement rather than the type of behaviors in which they engage (Cernkovich & Giordano, 1979). The most significant sex differences tend to be for offenses that are more serious personal and property offenses with males reporting higher levels of involvement (Cernkovich & Giordano, 1979). In the past decade, however, this difference seems to be getting smaller.

Cernkovich and Giordano (1979) found that Non-white females reported less overall delinquency than White females but significantly higher rates of involvement in more serious, personal offenses. These offenses included fist fighting, using a weapon to attack someone, gang fighting, extortion, and weapon carrying. It is of interest that a
common characteristic of all these offenses is that they are personal and potentially violent acts.

Figueria-McDonough (1992) suggests that women and girls who live in an environment where they know they cannot depend on men and who lack formal and informal support systems will develop characteristics of competence, independence and aggressiveness usually ascribed to males. Together with the need to protect oneself or provide for one's immediate needs, these characteristics may increase the likelihood of females participating in criminal activities. These same females may join a gang in an attempt to attain a common destiny, have a sense of belonging, gain an identity, have a support group and cohesiveness, or to gain revenge (Harris, 1994). Harris also found that gang members have weak bonds to family and school, low aspirations and tend to feel isolated from dominant institutions. The gang members share a commitment to the use of physical aggression as a major mode of personal interaction and as a device for problem solving--fighting rather than fleeing, assaulting rather than articulating, and killing rather than controlling aggression (Harris, 1994).

When examining the family environment of delinquent females, the characteristics of those families are similar to Gottfredson's and Hirschi's description of families that produce children with low self-control. Figueria-McDonough (1992) finds increasing evidence of no direct association between belonging to a family headed by a single parent and engaging in delinquent behavior. Rather, it appears that the skills and ability of the parent are more important. Rosenbaum (1989) found a poor relationship between parent and child, passive or irresponsible parents, a lack of constant
supervision and a lack of nurturing relationships in homes with delinquent children. Parents did not have supports or resources needed to cope with their environment, were often socially isolated and distrusting of those who attempted to help, lacked parenting skills, were inconsistent authority figures and lacked the emotional resources to instill a sense of trust and security necessary for self-esteem and growth in their children (Rosenbaum, 1989). Also consistent with self-control theory was the finding by Sommers and Baskin (1994) that individual-level factors related to the onset of violent crime patterns change as youths progress through adolescence and that early initiation into violent crime was accompanied by participation in a wide variety of other offending behaviors.

Interpersonal Skills of Violent Youth

Interpersonal skills are an important factor in determining whether or not youth will become involved in acts of interpersonal violence. Youth who are lacking personal control, are less skilled verbally, are more impulsive, and are emotionally unempathetic and insensitive to the needs of others are more likely to be involved in delinquent behavior and interpersonal violence (King, 1975; Mak, 1991). Youth who lack concern for the negative consequences of their aggressive actions, and may even anticipate positive consequences, are more likely to continue using aggression in interpersonal conflict (Guerra & Slaby, 1989).

In a study of second and third grade boys, Guerra and Slaby (1989) found that, even at a relatively early age, children who exhibit aggressive tendencies are less able to generate effective (non-violent) solutions to social problems. One explanation for this
tendency is that aggressive children may not have enough nonaggressive solutions in their repertoire. The authors also suggest that aggressive children make the evaluative judgment that aggressive solutions hold a higher priority than other solutions (Guerra & Slaby, 1989). If the child has been raised in an environment where interpersonal violence is modeled as the means for solving problems, these children are not prepared to deal with stress and frustration when they leave home (Page et al., 1992).

The use of interpersonal violence to resolve conflict often occurs not because the individual is deficient in problem-solving skills but because he or she does not recognize the situations in which those skills can be used (Cunliffe, 1992). When studying social skills in juvenile offenders, Long and Sherer (1984) found that youth who had the lowest frequency of offending behavior had better social skills than their high frequency counterparts. The extent to which the individual lacks basic skills for dealing effectively with everyday problems and the frequency with which he or she encounters such problems has great bearing on how competently (nonviolently) the problem will be solved. Frequent encounters allow the opportunity to develop a competent response or repertoire of responses (Freedman, Rosenthal, Donahoe, Schlundt, & McFall, 1978).

The combination of deficient social skills in any one individual involved in interpersonal violence will vary. Prevention programs do not attempt to isolate individual deficits but rather focus on what are termed "life skills." Life skills training assumes that basic skills of communication, decision-making, negotiation, and conflict resolution are needed for effective interaction on all levels. If an individual has these skills, he or she is more likely to find interpersonal encounters a positive experience.
and develop prosocial behaviors toward others (Hawkins & Weis, 1985). This training, in combination with consistent positive reinforcement for making competent choices, may reduce the individual's level of interpersonal violence over time (Hawkins & Weis, 1985).
CHAPTER 111

METHODS

Study Design

The design of this cross-sectional study used qualitative research methods. These methods were best able to answer the research questions posed in Chapter I as the questions sought in-depth information about factors underlying adolescent female violence. The researcher chose the qualitative method of focus group interviews. The focus group interview was best for providing in-depth information about beliefs held by the population regarding interpersonal violence, motivations for participating in acts of interpersonal violence and the influence of social control and self-control on individual behaviors.

Fielding and Fielding (1986) state that qualitative work can assist in providing a theoretical framework and offering case study illustrations of data. Qualitative research is often used to produce a general picture of the population under study. This method helps fill gaps in knowledge that cannot be answered by surveys and provides a more complete account of the desired information (Bryman, 1988). Qualitative evidence can also help identify the processes that link the variables under study and facilitates the interpretation of relationships between the variables in question (Bryman, 1988).
For a deeper understanding of the motivations and circumstances that lead to participation in interpersonal violence, it is important to discuss such issues in detail with a sample of the subjects. Qualitative methods assist in uncovering and understanding what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Based on the literature review there is much to be learned about female adolescents and interpersonal violence. The depth of information provided by qualitative research methods enabled the researcher to gain insight about social control and self-control factors associated with participation in interpersonal violence, the possible interactions of social control and self-control factors as an influence in the participation in interpersonal violence, and which social control and self-control factors may have the greatest influence on participation in interpersonal violence. This information can be useful in the development of interpersonal violence prevention and intervention programs for female adolescents.

Triangulation was the guiding research model for this study. In brief, triangulation is the use of multiple measures that ensure that any variance reflected in the data is that of the trait being assessed and not associated with the measures themselves (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Triangulation allowed comparison of information from different sources and thereby increased the reliability and validity of the information gathered in the study. Patton (1990) states that one important way to strengthen a study design is through triangulation, combining methodologies in the study of the same phenomena or programs. A basic assumption of triangulation is that
the weaknesses in each single research method are compensated for by the counterbalancing strengths of another method or through the use of multiple data sources (Van Maanen, 1983). Triangulation strengthened the study by increasing the accuracy of data and judgments by collecting from multiple sources data bearing on the same phenomenon. Miles and Huberman (1984) assert that the basic purpose of triangulation is to support a finding by showing that independent measures of it agree with or, at least, don't contradict it.

Triangulation can be achieved in a number of ways. The types of triangulation most commonly used are triangulation of methods, triangulation of researchers and triangulation of data from different techniques (Fielding & Fielding, 1986). Triangulation of data sources is an additional method (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Data triangulation allowing comparison of data from multiple locations or groups (Fielding & Fielding, 1986) was employed in this study. Site triangulation (comparison of data between sites) was used to identify similarities and differences in attitudes and behaviors of the participants at the various locations. The use of multiple sites provided for replication of the study by collecting information on the same topics from new subjects in different settings. Triangulation further allows verification of the information obtained from those multiple sites (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Triangulation increased the researcher's confidence by relating different sorts of data to counteract various possible threats to the validity of the study so findings may be better imparted (Fielding & Fielding, 1986).

As with all research, qualitative methods pose questions of reliability and validity of data. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) stated that validity of qualitative research has to do
with description, explanation and whether or not a given explanation fits a given description. In other words: is the explanation credible? By looking at multiple actors (subjects) in multiple settings, external validity is extended and the generalizability of the study is enhanced by testing key processes, constructs and explanations in several different configurations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Each configuration or setting can be considered a replication of the process or question under study. When the information obtained in multiple settings is similar, the validity of the study is increased (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Internal validity is strengthened when the researcher spends enough time in the field to get to know the participants’ views and situations and when the researcher’s actions and interviews are conducted in the idiom of the participants. In qualitative research, construct validity is a demonstration that the categories used by the researcher are meaningful to the participants or reflect the way the participants actually experience reality (LeCompte, Millroy, & Preissle, 1992).

Reliability of qualitative data depends on explicitly described observational procedures (Kirk & Miller, 1986). In this study, the techniques used for the focus group interview have bearing on the reliability of the data. Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggested several techniques for improving the reliability of the data. These techniques include: maintaining careful records of all activities related to the data gathering; keeping original notes, tape recordings and transcripts; tracking all editing and changes made; documenting how the transcripts were organized and analyzed; documenting follow-up on ideas and concepts which appear inconsistent with the rest of the data; work with
"first-hand" examples from the participants whenever possible; look for consistency across cases or sites; and, present data in clear, concise and descriptive terms (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Rather than test-retest reliability or replication, qualitative research calls for something akin to an internal consistency measure of reliability. Consistency of data looks at stable patterns of interaction in more than one setting. Complexity of data, as measured by participant observation or interviews, uncovers the patterns of the interactions (Fielding & Fielding, 1986). When these concepts are combined, they provide the critical element of ensuring that there is a minimum of inconsistent evidence in the data.

The sites chosen for the study were within Dallas, TX. Specific sites were a convenience sample and included locations associated the Dallas Challenge (a community-based program for high risk youth) and Nexus (a substance rehabilitation program for adolescent females) facilities. Positive Directions, a program of Dallas Challenge, was created as a support and advocacy agency for youth ages 10 to 17 years old in selected ZIP code areas within the city of Dallas, TX. Positive Directions integrates clinical, educational and recreational services for both males and females who are at risk of substance abuse or criminal behavior and who often lack the experience and structure to successfully negotiate life's challenges. The population enrolled in Positive Directions programs may be there voluntarily, at the request of a parent or guardian or by dictate from the legal system. Participants in Positive Directions are officially enrolled for as long as eighteen months although many participants continue to frequent the program after that time period.
Nexus, also located in Dallas, TX, serves adolescent females who have been identified as having substance abuse problems. In addition to substance abuse problems, there may be involvement in criminal behavior. The primary purpose of Nexus is to provide short-term intensive counseling and long-term counseling for substance abuse recovery. Nexus clients may be referred by other health professionals, the legal system or a parent or guardian. The age range for Nexus clients is 12 to 18 years of age.

Nexus services consist of a two-part program. The first is an intensive, short-term intake program limited to new clients and lasting approximately one month. Approximately 10-12 individuals are enrolled at any one time. Clients who "graduate" from this portion of the program go into a less intensive long-term program designed to maintain behavior changes begun in the first portion of the program. The number of clients in this portion of the program is variable.

For each study site the researcher examined the data for consistency of information provided by the participants and searched for prevalent themes and ideas within the data. When the data were analyzed for recurring themes and consistency of information provided by the focus groups, a data-based "picture" of the participants' opinions and experiences emerged. By looking for consistencies and discrepancies when comparing information from each of the study sites, it was possible to identify existing differences in the levels of social control and self-control for participants. This information may serve as the basis for prevention and intervention programs within the community. Detailed explanations of data analysis and site triangulation can be found in the Data Analysis section of this chapter.
The researcher recognized that ecological fallacy, correlations drawn from group data which produce results contrary to those that would be derived from correlations for individuals (Duncan, 1988), was a pitfall for this type of study. By obtaining information from individuals in several small groups of the same population at different locations, data was corroborated to decrease the likelihood that inaccurate conclusions were drawn about the population.

The researcher spent a minimum of one week and a maximum of four weeks at each study site. This time frame allowed adequate time to conduct the focus group interviews and also allowed the researcher to complete the study within a reasonable length of time. It took approximately two hours to conduct each focus group - including time for a get-acquainted segment, the actual interview and closure of the session. In order to gather adequate data, at some sites more than one focus group session was scheduled using to the protocol outlined in the following section.

A detailed chart of the research methods used in this study can be found in Appendix A.

Participants

Participants in this study were female adolescents aged 10 to 18 years, inclusive. The age range of 10-18 years was chosen because although, by virtue of location, the subjects were involved in delinquent behaviors it was possible they were not yet involved in serious interpersonal violence. Further, girls of this age are likely to experience a wider range of social control and self-control over their behaviors than those in a narrower age range.
Although the number of participants in each focus group varied, the researcher recruited participants and conducted focus groups until at least 40 girls were interviewed. The focus groups had an average of five participants with the smallest having two participants and the largest having eleven participants. The researcher made every effort to interview a cross-section of females with respect to age, race and ethnicity but in no way implies that the sample was representative of adolescent females beyond the participant group.

Selection of participants for the focus groups was based primarily on interest in being interviewed. At each location, the researcher requested from the staff a list of all female participants. From this list, the researcher identified potential participants by matching names with those attending activities. The researcher then met with them in small groups. At this meeting the project was explained to the participants, informed consent forms were distributed and the researcher asked each female to participate in the focus group. This process continued until eight to twelve adolescent females agreed to participate in the tape-recorded focus group or groups conducted at each site. By inviting this number of potential participants, there were a minimum of five to eight participants in each focus group. Some attrition of subjects occurred due to the age of the participants, refusal of parent or guardian to allow participation, or other factors beyond the control of the researcher. Due to the length of each focus group interview (sixty minutes), the length of time required for transcribing each interview (approximately 4-6 hours for each hour of taped material) and the length of time required to adequately analyze the data (40-50 hours), the researcher believed that to
incorporate more than eight individuals in each focus group would not allow adequate
time to properly complete the study. The researcher also recognized that the
likelihood of obtaining adequate data from this type of interview could not be
accomplished by interviewing only one or two participants at any given location.

Due to the potentially sensitive nature of the topics discussed in the focus
group interview, the participants were assured confidentiality of all statements. Prior to
initiating the focus group, the researcher reviewed and discussed guidelines for
appropriate behavior with the participants. In the case that a participant divulged
information which may have implications outside the interview setting (such as
knowledge of a crime) the researcher acknowledged a conflict of interest but honored
the confidentiality of the interview. The researcher filed documentation with the
Federal Government which enabled the maintenance of such confidentiality. The
approved Certificate of Confidentiality was retained at the University of North Texas
Office of Sponsored Projects.

Study Procedures

Five sites, Pleasant Grove, South Oak Cliff, North Oak Cliff, South Dallas and
Nexus, in Dallas, Texas were selected by the researcher. The researcher based
selection of sites on the referral of a committee member. A phone call to the director,
assistant director and site managers explaining the purpose of the study and requesting
permission to conduct the study in that facility was followed by a personal visit to
optimize the possibility of cooperation by the facility.
Contact was made at all locations simultaneously in an effort to have the schedule of the study in place as efficiently as possible. This procedure minimized delays in the research process while the researcher awaited permission to enter a site or schedule research activities. Each confirmed site was given a simple code based on its location. These codes were used to identify all data and participants from that location. The site code and corresponding location was documented in records kept by the researcher in a site file. The site file was a central location for all information about each site and consists of an envelope folder containing all documents for each location.

Documents included signed informed consent forms, notes taken during the observation period preceding the focus group interview, notes and tapes made during the focus group, original transcripts from the focus group tapes, notes made during the analysis of the transcripts, all coding and analysis documentation, progress notes, and documentation of any changes made in the data collection procedures at the site. Additional records and documents not noted above were included as well. See Appendix B for a listing of site folder contents.

Upon receiving permission to conduct the study at the site, the researcher worked with the site manager to determine what days and times were best for meeting with adolescent female participants. Names of all girls aged 10-18 years were obtained from the facility staff. During the observation period preceding the focus group interviews at each site, the researcher met with all eligible females to inform them of the study and invited them to take part in the focus group interview. The selection of participants was ultimately based on their willingness to take part in the focus group.
The researcher recognized that this type of participant selection placed limitations on the study as stated in Chapter I.

The focus group interviews were conducted following the researcher's orientation and observation period and took place at the facility. Arrangements were made with the staff to have access to a private space for the focus group. Each focus group interview was allotted a total time of two (2) hours and was scheduled at times most likely to facilitate attendance by the participants such as after large group meetings or in place of another scheduled activity. Each participant was given a verbal reminder of the focus group by the researcher the day before the focus group. At sites with multiple focus groups, participants were allowed to attend any of the scheduled meetings but could not attend more than one focus group.

Focus group participants were given two informed consent forms at the time they agreed to be in the focus group. These were returned to the researcher prior to the start of the focus group. These informed consent forms outlined the purpose of the project and the role of the focus group interview in the project. There was a separate informed consent form for the parent or guardian and for the participant. Each parent/guardian and participant was allowed the opportunity to address any concerns raised by the informed consent form before the focus group preceded. See Appendix C for examples of participant and parent/guardian consent forms.

All focus group interviews were preceded by a 30 minute "get acquainted" period during which the participants were provided refreshments such as pizza and sodas. This short period of time was intended to increase the comfort level of the
participants with the researcher and each other and "break the ice" prior to engaging in more serious discussion during the focus group interview. Many participants already knew one another to some degree and the refreshments served as an additional incentive to participate in the focus group.

The participants were informed that the focus group would be tape recorded and the reason for tape recording (namely, to ensure that the information gathered was accurate) was explained. If a participant did not wish to have her remarks tape recorded, the researcher allowed her to leave the focus group. Only one participant was removed (at the request of staff members) from any of the focus groups. All participants were instructed about the importance of and the need for confidentiality during and after the focus group. In addition, guidelines for the focus group were explained to the participants by the researcher (see Appendix D).

The researcher supplemented the tape recording with additional notes taken during the focus group. Participants were instructed to use their first name only when introducing themselves at the beginning of the focus group. Each interview participant was identified on tape by her first name only to increase anonymity. During the data analysis and reporting phase of the study, all transcripts omitted any reference to names. Prior to beginning the structured portion of the focus group, the researcher noted on tape and in the notebook the day, date, site code and beginning time of the focus group.

The focus group interview had an interview guide consisting of a set of questions developed by the researcher prior to the interview (see Appendix E). These
questions served as "jumping-off places" for the focus group conversation. The researcher deviated from these questions to pursue topics that provided additional information suggested by the participants and that the researcher had not considered prior to the interview. Any deviations from the interview guide were noted in the interview notes along with an explanation of why the researcher believed it important to deviate from the original line of questioning.

The focus group participants were informed that as part of the data analysis process the researcher might contact them in the future to clarify or confirm the accuracy of interpretation of any statements made during the interview. If a participant declined such contact the researcher noted this response in the interview notes.

The researcher recognized that, due to the nature of the topics discussed in the focus group interview, the participants might share sensitive information (i.e., knowledge of a crime). If such sensitive information became part of the interview, the researcher recognized a conflict of interest in not reporting such information to outside authorities and honored the confidentiality of the remark. The researcher filed a form with the Federal government via the University of North Texas Office of Sponsored Projects to protect the confidentiality of sensitive information (Federal Certificate of Confidentiality). If it appeared that a participant was discussing issues of a personal nature which warranted follow-up, the researcher inquired about such needs at the conclusion of the interview in a private and confidential manner. If the participant desired follow-up, the researcher worked with the site staff to obtain a referral which was passed on to the participant by the researcher. If the participant did not desire
follow-up, no action was taken. No participants requested such a referral nor did any indicate they would like such assistance.

As soon as possible following each focus group, the researcher made an auditory review of the tape(s) and compared that information to the notes taken during the interview. The researcher found the quality of the tapes and notes very acceptable. Transcription of the tapes did not take place until all the interviews were completed to avoid influencing subsequent interviews. The researcher transcribed each of the tapes in the order they were made. Each transcript was labeled with the corresponding site code for easier reference during the data analysis. All interview tapes, notes and copies of the transcripts were kept confidential. Following completion of data collection at each site, the site manager and staff were thanked. In addition, the researcher offered to send a summary of the completed study to the site manager.

The researcher spent from one to four weeks at each site in order to complete the focus group interview. All data collection was completed at each site before moving on to the next location. The researcher recognized from a scheduling standpoint the difficulty in returning to a site after initiating activities at another location. The researcher further considered it important to complete work at one site before moving on so the data at any one location was not influenced by information and interactions at the other sites. However, the researcher acknowledges that there was a cumulative effect which may have influenced the data collection process.

During the data collection phase of the study several steps were taken to document the gathering, tracking, early analysis, and synthesis of the data. The audit
trail consisted of a folder for each site which held all documents related to that site such as informed consent for the focus group interviews, all notes taken during the observation phase, and all notes and tapes made during the focus groups. Additional information in the site folders includes transcripts of all focus group interviews and detailed analysis of all data pertaining to that site. Documentation of recruitment of focus group participants and any deviations from the scripted study protocol are also in the site file. Appendix A provides a detailed example of the contents of the site folder.

Data analysis was ongoing, as is the nature of qualitative research, and there were some minor adjustments in the proposed protocol. These adjustments included such things as altering the schedule of focus group interviews to accommodate a participant, changing the location of the focus group to one which is more convenient to the participants, or following an interesting thread during the focus group which was not included in the interview guide provided in Appendix E. Such actions were considered carefully and weighed as to the merit they had in improving the quality of data gathered in the study before they were implemented.

Data Collection

As stated in Chapter 11, the social control and self-control characteristics studied were expressed in diverse behaviors having the common characteristic of providing the individual with immediate gratification of desires. Characteristics of social control include attachment to conventional others, commitment to conventional goals and activities, involvement in conventional activities, and belief in conventional norms (Patterson, in Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1980). Self-control characteristics include lack of
diligence, tenacity or persistence in a course of action; being adventuresome, active and physical; unstable interpersonal relationships; little need of or value for cognitive or academic skills; being self-centered, indifferent or insensitive to the suffering or needs of others; tendency to pursue immediate pleasures such as smoking, drinking or drug use; minimal tolerance for frustration and little ability to respond to conflict with verbal means; tolerance of or indifference to physical pain (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). In adolescence and the early adult years, these behaviors range from truancy, drop out, drug use, and pregnancy to theft, assault and accidents (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

The primary data collection tool for the focus group interview component was the researcher. Data from focus group interviews was recorded on audiotape and supplemented by written notes made by the researcher during the focus group. An interview guide (Appendix E) was used to initiate the conversation and introduce specific topics for discussion. The researcher deviated from the interview guide to pursue topics introduced by the participants that appeared relevant to the study and which are not included in the interview guide. Any deviations or modifications were carefully considered as to the merits and the rationale documented in the site folder.

Qualitative data collection has potential for more researcher bias than quantitative data collection. To reduce the researcher bias in this study, every attempt was made to become acquainted with the setting and participants before the focus group interviews took place, to clarify with the participants their role and the value of their input, to work with the site staff to gain access to the participants, to include a variety of adolescent girls in the focus groups, to clarify any possible misconceptions.
about what the participants said, and to work from the research questions and interview guide as closely as possible to avoid losing focus.

Data Analysis

For this study design, data analysis took place at several points during and after data collection. It is the nature of qualitative research to make preliminary examination of data to ensure that the researcher attends to pertinent information and does not focus on peripheral, but unusable, events, persons and activities. Ongoing data analysis allowed the researcher to identify gaps in the data and attempt to obtain missing information before leaving the site.

Analysis of the focus group interviews started with a comparison of the audiotape and written notes from the interview. This allowed the researcher to record impressions of the session alongside the written session notes, to clarify any sections which may have been unclear, and to note any statements of particular interest. Following auditory review of each session, when all focus groups were completed, the researcher transcribed the tapes verbatim. To aid in the analysis process, the transcription was done directly into a qualitative data base program designed for such purposes. The program chosen for this study was Folio VIEWS. Folio VIEWS was designed to manage textbase, search and retrieve data, code data, and allow memos and notes to be inserted in the transcribed text. After the session tape was transcribed, the data was color-coded for key words and phrases as suggested by Gottfredson and Hirschi’s characteristics of social control and self-control. After coding was completed, the data were reviewed three times by the researcher using manual techniques and the
Folio VIEWS program. The first review was for themes suggested by the participants. The second review was to refine themes and look for possible connections between themes. In the second review, statements made by the participants within each focus group were examined for consistencies and discrepancies but none were identified. The third review looked for sub-themes and ensured that no major points were overlooked in previous reviews of the material.

Miles and Huberman (1984) detail several methods for systematically summarizing the data from the individual focus group interviews and then incorporating that information into cross-site analysis. Once transcription and review of the focus group interviews were completed, the researcher began to categorize responses to each question posed to the focus group in what Miles and Huberman (1984) call a check-list matrix for each of the focus groups. This activity created a visual representation of the primary themes and suggested possible connections between them. The connections may be environmental or situational such as the neighborhood or family, personal characteristics of the participants, or combinations of factors identified in the Bio-social Conditions Flow Chart (Figure I).

Following the analysis of the individual focus group interview data, the researcher employed site triangulation to compare the information from the focus groups at each study site. The purpose of such a comparison was to corroborate results and identify discrepancies in the data. The appearance of discrepancies may have reflected on the reliability of the data or indicated areas that further investigation. All
such consistencies and discrepancies were noted in chart form for use in comparing data from different sources.

Following the completion of the qualitative data analysis for all sites, the researcher examined previously developed categories and themes for similarities and discrepancies from the other sources. One purpose was identification of similarities that pointed to common experiences among the participants and which were indicative of universal experiences for adolescent females. A second purpose was to more clearly identify themes that were indicative of local environmental or social control influences. A third purpose was identification of discrepancies between the sites although the researcher recognized that these differences may have been spurious.

As a check on the accuracy of the data analysis, the researcher periodically sought input from the committee chair. For this type of data analysis, a second opinion was useful in informing the opinion of the principal investigator although it was recognized that such an opinion did not have the advantage of experiencing the situation in question first-hand.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Overview of Study Design

This cross-sectional study used qualitative research methods. The researcher chose the qualitative method of focus group interviews to obtain in-depth information about the beliefs held by the population regarding the influence of social control and self-control on individual behaviors, interpersonal violence and motivations for participating in acts of interpersonal violence.

Site triangulation was the guiding research model for this study. This allowed comparison of information from different sources and thereby increased the reliability and validity of the information gathered in the study. The use of multiple measures helped insure that any variance reflected in the data was that of the trait being assessed and not associated with the measures used (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Miles and Huberman (1984) assert that the basic purpose of triangulation is to support a finding by showing that independent measures of it agree with or, at least, don't contradict it. Comparison of data from multiple locations and groups provided replication of the study by collecting information on the same topics from new subjects in different settings.
Site Descriptions by Location

For this study subjects were drawn from five locations operated by the aforementioned agencies (see Chapter 3 for descriptions of each agency). The locations for Positive Directions were Pleasant Grove, South Oak Cliff, North Oak Cliff, and South Dallas. The sites were visited by the researcher in order of convenience of scheduling only. The Nexus Outpatient facility was the final location included in the study.

The Pleasant Grove facility was located in a lower class neighborhood with numerous small businesses as well as national franchises and chain stores. For the majority of persons in this neighborhood there were employment opportunities in service industries for adults and youth. Staff indicated there was a high level of parent/guardian involvement in the Positive Directions programs and parents/guardians regularly drove the adolescents to and from the site. The staff at Pleasant Grove were mixed race and ethnicity, predominantly Hispanic and African American, and the site manager was Anglo. The staff were not highly involved in recruiting participants for the focus groups and left the recruitment process solely to the researcher. Incentives such as extra field trips were offered by the site manager to all females who participated in the focus groups.

Pleasant Grove had 26 adolescent females enrolled in its program at the time of the study. Of these, fifteen attended activities at least weekly. A total of ten females participated in a focus group. The age range of participants was 9 to 16 years old with a mean age of 13 years and 3 months. Participants were African American, Hispanic and
Anglo. For a description of participant characteristics at all sites, see Table I at the end of this section.

Of the females enrolled at Pleasant Grove but who did not participate in the focus groups, the researcher noted the following circumstances. Most often, irregular attendance at activities (i.e., coming less than once a week) which was true for 10 of the girls enrolled. Many of the potential participants failed to return signed parental consent forms even though the researcher provided multiple forms on multiple occasions. School activities such as sports practice or academic programs on the evening of the focus group also decreased participation. Two regular participants declined to attend a focus group for personal reasons and one regular participant was unavailable after giving birth. Two potential participants were pulled from the focus group by Pleasant Grove staff to attend other site activities such as career counseling.

The South Oak Cliff facility was located in a lower class neighborhood with relatively few employment opportunities for adults or youth, as described by the site manager. Staff stated there was a low level of parental involvement in the program. The staff was primarily female (4 female and 1 male) and primarily African American. The site manager at South Oak Cliff was relatively new to the program and there were two staff vacancies at the time the researcher was on site. Staff were lacking control over participants and had no time to encourage participation in the focus groups. Recruitment of subjects was primarily the responsibility of the researcher. Incentives in the form of "bonus points" (an internal reward system employed by Positive Directions) were offered to all females who participated in the focus groups.
South Oak Cliff had 25 adolescent females enrolled in its program at the time of the study. Of these, twelve attended at least weekly. A total of 6 females participated in a focus group. The age range of participants was 9 to 14 years old with a mean age of 12.2 years. Participants were all African American.

Of the females enrolled at South Oak Cliff but who did not participate in the focus groups, the researcher noted the following circumstances. Most often, irregular attendance prevented involvement in a focus group. Failure to return a signed parental consent form also limited participation even though the researcher distributed multiple forms on multiple occasions. Lastly, participation in school or personal activities prevented some females from attending on the nights of the focus groups.

The North Oak Cliff facility was located in a low income to lower middle class neighborhood with numerous shops and stores in the area. For the majority of persons in the neighborhood there were employment opportunities for adults and youth. Staff stated there was a high level of parent/guardian involvement in the Positive Directions program. The staff were a mix of Hispanic, African American, male, and female. The staff took an active role in encouraging participation in the focus groups and the site manager offered "bonus points" for participation.

North Oak Cliff had 18 adolescent females enrolled in its program at the time of the study. Of these, fifteen attended activities on a regular basis. A total of fifteen females participated in the focus groups. The age range of participants was 10 to 17 years old with a mean age of 11.2 years. Participants were all Hispanic.
Of the females enrolled at North Oak Cliff but who did not participate in the focus groups, the researcher noted the following circumstances. One was unable to attend the program due to court ordered restrictions on her activities. Two others declined to participate for personal reasons.

During the focus group sessions, one female staff member was in the room. It did not appear, in the estimation of the researcher, that her presence made any difference in the responses of the participants.

The South Dallas facility was located in a lower class neighborhood with few visible employment opportunities for either adults or youth. Staff stated there was a low level of parent/guardian involvement in the Positive Directions program. The staff was primarily African American with one Anglo female and were male and female. One female staff member was assigned to assist the researcher with recruitment of participants for the focus groups. The site manager offered an incentive of "bonus points" to all females who participated in a focus group.

South Dallas had 30 adolescent females enrolled in its program at the time of the study. Of these, fifteen attended activities on a regular basis. The age range of the participants was 10 to 16 years old with a mean age of 13 years and 3 months. Participants were all African American.

Of the females enrolled at South Dallas but who did not participate in the focus group, the researcher noted the following circumstances. Many females were not in attendance on the day the focus group was held (the site manager had determined that
the site schedule allowed for only one focus group session) or arrived well after the focus group had started. One declined to participate for personal reasons.

During the focus group, two staff members remained in the room. In the estimation of the researcher their presence did not affect the responses of the adolescents.

The Nexus facility was an out-patient counseling center serving adolescent females from throughout Dallas. The facility was located in a middle class neighborhood in central Dallas. The staff was male and female and of varied race and ethnicity. Due to the nature of the program, staff indicated there was a high level of parent/guardian involvement in program activities. One staff member was assigned to ensure that all parent and participant consent forms were completed. Attendance at the focus group was mandatory for all adolescent females enrolled in the short-term, intensive counseling program.

Nexus had 6 adolescent females enrolled in its short-term, intensive counseling program at the time of the study. Of these, five were in attendance on the night of the focus group. The age range of the participants was 14 to 16 years old with a mean age of 15 years. Participants were Hispanic and Anglo.

The researcher was unable to access the greater number of adolescent females enrolled in the long-term counseling program as they were already committed to a research project and interviews from another source. The Nexus program manager determined that the additional involvement in this study would not serve the best interests of this group. They were, therefore, omitted from the focus group process.
Table I.

Summary of Characteristics of Focus Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pleasant Grove</th>
<th>South Oak Cliff</th>
<th>North Oak Cliff</th>
<th>South Dallas</th>
<th>Nexus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number Enrolled</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Regular Attendees</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Focus Groups</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Participants per Focus Group</td>
<td>6, 2, 2</td>
<td>3, 3</td>
<td>7, 8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>AA, H, W</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>W, H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Range-Years</td>
<td>9 to 16</td>
<td>9 to 14</td>
<td>10 to 17</td>
<td>10 to 16</td>
<td>14 to 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age-Years</td>
<td>13.25</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>13.25</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: AA=African American, H=Hispanic, W=White

Review of Data

The transcripts of the focus groups were analyzed by the researcher with guidance from the committee chair in accordance to the methods outlined in Chapter Three of this document. Focus group questions were categorized as seeking either self-control or social control data. As the participants' statements were analyzed, each was labeled as indicating either self-control or social control. Each statement was then further categorized as indicating a negative or positive example of that trait. The following is a question by question review of the transcripted data with examples of
statements made by participants used to illustrate the researcher's conclusions. For the purpose of this discussion, parents and guardians will be referred to as parents.

Question: Describe the neighborhood where you live. (social control) Responses from all groups indicated a lack of social controls in either the family or neighborhood. The types of social influences most often present were gangs, various types of violent or illegal behavior including disturbing the peace, gang activity such as drive-by shootings and fights, killing animals, drug trafficking and use, theft, unsupervised activity for youth—"running in the streets," and destruction of property. Few of the participants made statements regarding regular police presence and when police were mentioned it was in connection with a specific incident such as a relative or neighbor calling for assistance.

Representative statements from participants included:

"They drive up and down the street fast and kill each other in the alley and, um, shoot dogs and poison 'em and kids be fightin'."

"My neighborhood, uh, it got drug houses around there. Some of them live next door to us but it's they (sic) grandma's house."

"It's sort of like a gang-related neighborhood. There's a lot of drug dealers around there. And it's a dangerous place to live in."

"They crowd up the street, at night they shoot and over, over there they gang bangers, the Cryps. They, uh, make they dogs fight each other. They talk about killin' peoples. They go knockin' out the glass in people's windows. They stealin' peoples' tires off the car."
Question: What kinds of activities or things do you and your friends do when you're together? (Self-control and social control) Responses from participants were typical of most adolescent females and included going to the movies, talking on the phone, going to the mall, going to the park, going skating, school activities, and going to parties and clubs. Other responses from participants were indicative of a lack of self-control and reflected the loose social controls in the participants' lives. These statements included references to fighting, doing things that they knew their parents would not approve of, drinking and smoking, breaking the law, missing curfew, and "hanging out or chillin'" with both male and female friends. Most participants were likely to engage in undirected activity when with their friends and were unlikely to plan an activity in advance.

Representative statements from participants included:

"We go to the movies and talk on the phone. We fight, jump people."

"We go to the mall. We go to the movies. When I go with my friend Ruby, she has a car, so we go anywhere."

"We be kickin' the...or whatever. We just find something to do."

"We never plan things cause if we do it always comes out wrong. So we just, we all meet at somebody's house and we see what we're gonna do from there. When our parents are around we can't drink and smoke and all that. We gotta leave so we can do what we want to do out there in the street."

"When I be with my homeboys and everything we go to the West End, trip out. We do all the wrong things. Break a couple of laws here and there but, you know, it's
all good cause don't nobody find out. We be jaywalkin'. We stay out after our curfew down there at the West End. We get into a couple of little confrontations. Um, most of the time with them we be smokin' things and just chillin' and havin' fun."

When asked if the aforementioned activities were different than what might take place if there were a parent, teacher or other authority figure around, most participants stated that they did behave differently or engage in different activities when on their own or with their peers. For many of the participants, these activities further illustrated a lack of self-control in the absence of social controls. The behaviors included seeing boyfriends although that might be forbidden by the parent, cursing, using alcohol or other drugs, looking for and spending time with boys, being less restrained in overall behavior, and looking for activities deemed to be exciting.

Representative statements by participants included:

"It's different cause, you know, when you're at home you don't get to do nothin'. Your mamma be all over you and you don't have no privacy but when you're around your friends you feel like you have more privacy. You don't have a grownup tellin' you 'you can't do this and you can't do that, be still and be quiet' and all that."

"If you stay around like, your grandma and stuff, too long it start gettin' borin'. When you're around your friends, it's a different story cause they like to have fun, they don't like to sit around and be bored and stuff."

"When we're being supervised we act all good and like little angels or somethin'. When we're not being supervised we just go out. It's like, we just lose control. When we're not supervised we just lose control of ourselves. We just do whatever we want."
"I believe we act different because, um, like we go crazy because like, when we're not being supervised we act ourselves but then, when we're supervised we have to be all nice and stuff like that and when we get the chance to be alone we get to be our own wild crazy self."

"We do things we're not supposed to do. We talk about things we're not supposed to talk about but we still do--about boys. People play spin the bottle. You just act real different cause you get a chance to be whoever you are and the older parents don't allow you to."

"I act more mature and calm around my parents."

**Question: Who or what has the most influence on what you do and why? (self-control and social control)** Responses suggested that peer pressure, a form of social control, was strongly felt by all participants. Both male and female friends as well as same-age relatives regularly encouraged participants to engage in activities which provided an opportunity for illegal or violent behavior. Several participants stated that they would not be influenced to engage in an illegal or violent behavior simply because their friends were urging them to do so. Although this indicates a measure of self-control, the same participants also stated that if the circumstances dictated they might engage in such behaviors. For all participants, family influence, both positive and negative, was strong. All participants cited examples of family members who served as role models. Other social influences were teachers or clergy. Many participants stated that they had "play mommas," "play brothers," or "play sisters" indicating that the need for some type of family ties was strong enough to warrant
creating a surrogate relative to meet this need. An interesting phenomenon, to this researcher, was the use of a negative behavior, such as lying to friends, by participants in order to avoid engaging in an illegal, violent or trouble-causing behavior.

Representative statements from participants included:

Peer references:

"About everyday of your life somebody goin' to put peer pressure on you somehow, some way. So you know, you got to be ready to say 'oh, no'. You might have to say it harder."

"A person has an influence on me and that is my sister's boyfriend. And her friends. They come in our house and they smoke and you can't do nothin' about it but let our momma know."

"Our parents, they be thinkin' that our friends have influence on us but it's us, you know, cause if we want to do it then we'll do it. They ain't makin' us do nothin' we don't want to do."

"The people that influence me is my friends because like, I just like the way they acted cause when I was little I guess I didn't have as much friends as they had and I wanted to have a lot of friends so I just, I guess, started acting like them, hanging around with them but, uh, I regret some of the things I did. Like gangs or something."

"My peers influence me because you see what they do even though you know it's wrong you still want to do it because you just want to be like them and you don't want to be left out."
"I care about what my mom thinks but my actions don't always reflect that. My friends are also a big, maybe the biggest influence. I go with what they say."

Family references:

"When my sister, when I turned 15 I thought I was grown then but my sister said, 'Ain't it time for you to lose your virginity?' I said no girl. She was like yeah girl and I was like no girl. I started to but I was like 'no, I can't mess up my life like this cause I know I'm supposed to be waitin'."

"My grandmother and my momma, they try to teach me right. But as you can see, I go to an alternative school so as you can see, I didn't pay no attention to them. They tell me to do the right thing when I'm doin' wrong but you know it's the way that they gotta tell me for me to do it. If they got an attitude with me or somethin' then I ain't gonna do it but if they say 'girl, you doin' somethin' wrong' I do it."

"What really influenced me is my brother and his friend because they can fight. Cause I want to be like 'em. Cause it's just fun and I can run fast."

"My dad. The men on my dad's side of the family. I feel sad when I'm bad. I want to live up to their ideals."

Negative behaviors references:

"I might be like, 'Yeah, I'm gonna go with you man but not right now.' I wait til after school and then go home. Just make up some lie. Tell a fib."

Play relative references:
"My biggest influence on me would be my play brother cause any time I need him he's there for me. Even though he did sell drugs back in the day, he don't do that no more."

**Question:** What do you think is the most important quality or characteristic a person can have and how do they get this quality or characteristic? (self-control and social control) Responses were indicative of the participants' belief in strong self-control although individual participants made statements contradicting their ability engage in such self-control. Characteristics deemed important included personality and a positive outlook, respect for others and their opinions and beliefs, attending school and getting an education, high self-esteem, the ability to take care of oneself, having high self-respect, being true to friends, honesty, obedience—especially to a parent, and openness and compassion. For many participants, these characteristics were ultimately self-serving in that they provided protection for the individual.

Representative statements from participants included:

"Doin' what you have to do, ignore what they do and everything. Just keep your mind on what you have to do. If you know you're not supposed to do it, you're not supposed to. I have to go to school, get a good education, keep my grades up high and try my best to graduate even though my grades fall or whatever I just have to try my best to keep them up high."

"Say you get in a fight, right? And everybody says, 'oh you lost, you lost', well, you fought back. You didn't back down, you fought. That's all that really matters. You
get your ass whooped, well, everybody's gonna get an ass kickin'. But that doesn't mean you go looking for trouble. I mean, if it comes to you then you handle it."

"I guess the quality that anyone should have is friendship and being true to your friends. Like, you should never turn your back on your friends or something like that cause that can get you into more trouble or something."

"Honesty, cause most of these people anywhere today, you can't trust them for nothin'."

"The most important quality a person can have is the same thing everybody else been sayin' is honesty because, you know if your best friend see somethin' that you have and they don't have it they'll try to, you know, take it from you cause your best friend can be your worst enemy. People can lie very good now these days and you think they're tellin' the truth and you go find out they say 'no' and you say 'yeah' and there's gonna be a whole big ole fight over nothin'."

"Attitude. Cause like if you have a bad attitude won't nothin' good come to you in life."

When asked the follow-up question of how the above characteristics are learned, participant statements were indicative of strong influence by social controls. Means of learning desired characteristics included learning from parents, grandparents or other family members who provided examples of the behavior, the environment, by being attentive to others and what they say, peer influence, through the media--especially television, and through role modes such as talk show hosts and
singers. For most participants, modeling of desired behaviors was a stronger influence than verbal teaching of the behavior.

Representative statements from participants included:

"They have family members that go through it and they follow in they (sic) footsteps by graduatin' and doin' the right things and everything. Ain't nobody in my family graduate high school or nothin' like that."

"It's the environment you come from. Like most of the time if you come from an environment that people always sad and downin' you and downin' other people, you don't, ain't gonna know any other thing but to down other people. But if you come from an environment where you have 'put ups' all the time and they have high goals and high self-esteem tellin' you you can do anything you try and then, you know, you be happy most of the time. Depends on what the situation is."

"You give them the respect to do it because you would like for someone to give you as much respect as you would give them."

"How you can get honesty is bein' trustworthy to everybody instead of just one person. Bein' faith (sic), bein' trustworthy to your mother, your father, everybody you know instead of lyin' and stealin', thievin'."

"You can learn it through how you want to be treated."

**Question: Describe what you or your friends might do or have done to get something you wanted? (self-control)** With a few exceptions, responses indicated a lack of positive self-control. Most participants stated that it was common to sell drugs to raise money to buy things, steal the item(s) if there was no money
available, lie to others, argue or otherwise cause trouble for others until they gave in, and misuse or take advantage of others. Other means of obtaining what was wanted included cheating, bullying or threatening others, use of blackmail or bribery, and threatening or using violence. A few participants stated that it was important to graduate from high school, get a good job and work hard to get the money to buy what was wanted. These participants also acknowledged the importance of waiting your turn to have what was wanted even if it meant that it might be out of fashion. For these participants, delayed gratification was understood and accepted where for most others the concept was foreign.

Representative statements from participants included:

"All you have to do is get it. First you have to graduate and then you have to get a good job. That's what my family does. Cause they work to get what they want. They don't sell drugs or nothing like that because it would not get you nowhere in life. You have to work hard for your money."

"She was tellin' us not to sell drugs or nothin' just to get money. Grow up, get a good education, a good job, find you somethin' to do. People are fallin' down, you know, they (sic) jobs aren't payin' good money, you know, but they are tryin' their best to help they (sic) children know what they want. Parents say 'to get what you want you have to wait your turn'. You have to just cool down and wait a minute. It'll come to you. You don't know how long it take but you'll get it someday, you know. Even though it'll be old but you'll still get it."
"Like bullies or something they be 'you better get this or they goin'." A lot of people they are very violent. I'm a very violent person to a certain extent. My attitude is sometimes violent and I'm violent physically. I do do violent things to get what I want but, you know, you can't really learn by always bein' violent. You got to go about things a different way. I know some girls and boys at school they just be beatin' people up, takin' they (sic) stuff, gettin' what they want and it works. I ain't sayin' it's right. They ain't always gonna be that way. It's gonna come back to them. Somebody gonna do them the same way."

"My friend wanted to get this person's radio and stuff that they had in the car and also thought they could jack the car and they tried but the police caught 'em. They took off. they went to jail but then they got out and they said whoever told on them was gonna get cut which by my understanding no one has gotten it yet. They know that that was wrong that they shouldn't have done it but they still went on to do it."

"People can steal it. Never let nobody in your house when you have somethin' that they don't have. They'll get real, real jealous. If they (sic) parents don't have enough money to buy it for them they'll try to get what they want and try to go into your house and try to steal it."

"Just bribe somebody into getting you something. Really, really beg and stuff like that. My friend came to my house and she asked me can she keep this. She run out of my house with all my stuff on. They come in your house and steal it. You can't tell your momma cause your momma tell you to keep all your friends out of the house."

"Some kids trade sex for drugs."
**Question**: Can you describe any situations where girls your age would use force (hitting, intimidating, hurting) to get what they wanted? 

**Self-control and social control** Statements from participants indicated a general lack of positive self-control and the influence of social controls in engaging in violent behaviors. Participants acknowledged a low tolerance of frustration and a strong need to appear in control of the situation. The degree of violence used was often dependent on the type of threat or the individual's desired outcome with greater threats eliciting more violent behaviors. Situations most often included a desire to control others, jealousy over boys, a rivalry with or dislike of another person, the need to create "respect" on the streets, the need to maintain respect, to be cool, at the encouragement of others--especially friends, and when no other method of obtaining a desired outcome was apparent.

Representative statements from participants included:

"I had a fight. And it was with a home girl. She stepped up to me in school. She just started calling me you bastard and you B and all this stuff. I just wanted to start bringing weapons but we got to go through a metal detector and they go off. She said she let her homegirls tell her 'you got to get her, you got to get her.' She talked like you were scared. Yeah, like, she like, 'L, you pushed me into her.' Me and her just went to swingin'. I got suspended for like 6 or 3 days. I told momma I'm not gonna let that girl hit me like this. My momma told me if I ever come home cryin' or my dress torn she gonna whoop me herself."
"The only way they push me too far is if they get in my face. Only way they push me is if they swing. Or use they (sic) hands."

"The girls at my school they are really racy and so they'll fight because of like two girls don't like each other. The other girl came up in one girl's face and tell her that she doesn't like her and stuff like that trying' to start a fight."

"My sister will fight. We was all goin' to fight. There was some other girls talkin' about they was gonna jump my sister. So my sister had got the other girl and she got beat up real bad. The had to take her to the hospital."

"If I'm close to a brick or anything, or a churl, I'll pick it up and hit a person with it if I'm real mad. But if they look like they cain't (sic) do nothin' and they hit me real soft-like then I'll just use my fists and hit them. But if they real big boned and real tall and I know they can whoop me then I'll pick up somethin' to hit 'em."

"Say they don't like you over a guy. They'll talk a lot of shit. We don't go tell somebody about it. (comments from other participants about not telling someone else your problems with the expectation that they will intervene and solve it for you)

Violence. Fighting. It's not like someone's going to come up to you and say 'why are you talking about me? please don't talk about me.' They would be girly girls. They would be seen as scared. They ain't gonna back out of it."

"When somebody writin' a letter about me and if I find out what it say, then I just, you know, go haywire on them. Try to put 'em in the hospital."

"A close friend is manipulative and verbally abuses others. Sometimes she steps over the line."
Question: Why do you think girls your age do things that are considered "bad" or that may be "wrong" or illegal? (self-control) Responses were indicative of a strong lack of self-control. Participants made numerous references to self-centered activities, pursuit of immediate pleasure or instant gratification, minimal tolerance for frustration, and impulsive, risk-taking or short-sighted behaviors.

Responses also indicated that, in the participants' experience, social controls such as family environment, including family problems, and peer pressure were influential in their decision to engage in illegal or violent behavior. A strong need for approval from others was also a motivating factor for many participants. Specific instances noted were jealousy, "player hate"—a cultural phenomenon of baiting another person to instigate a confrontation, family problems and environment, acting out, copying older youth or parents, peer pressure, to win attention, for fun with no thought of the consequences, to earn "respect" in the streets by being "bad" or cool, to be part of something—acceptance, as an indirect way to rebel against authority, and as a way of getting revenge.

Representative statements from participants included:

"It starts off with your parents when they were younger. And it grows onto their child which will mostly bring influence to them and then they just learn from them and their friends who learn from their parents."

"They think if they (friends) doin' it, I can do it and I ain't gonna get caught or get in trouble."
"It depends. I been around that kind of people or they (sic) family environment and they been around violence so long all they know is violence. So some people feel like they have to get in, they have to have friends all the time but it's not all about havin' friends."

"Sometimes it's all about peer pressure. Peer pressure has somethin' to do with it too. Cause you know how your friends just pressure you into just 'oh fool, let's go do this, let's go do that' and you all get hyped up from that and then you all just go and do it."

"It's fun when you doin' somethin' bad, it's fun until you get caught or whatever. When you havin' fun, you ain't thinkin' about what's gonna come your way when you finish doin' this. You don't think about that you gonna get into trouble. You think you gonna slip (avoid getting caught). That's why people be robbin' them banks to get what they want and, you know, tryin' to be, people just like to fit. You try to do somethin', you just want to be seen or somethin', you know, until you get caught, and that stops everything."

"When we do bad things we don't look at it as getting caught, you know. We don't think about the consequences. We just want to have fun, you know? Like when we go to the mall, we steal clothes but we don't think about it. We don't think about getting caught. We just think about the good stuff we're gonna have. We're gonna be wearin' some bad ass clothes, you know?"

"They probably do it because they think they're bad that they can get someone on check. And what I mean by on check is that they can make them do anything or say
anything. They probably have just like lots of problems at home or something and they just take it out on them or something."

"I think they do it because, to see them get in trouble, or like, to see them get hurt or for them to get something that they know that they're going to get into trouble but they still get it or to like get into something or be a part of something."

"It's peer pressure, cause the people they hang around do a lot of violent things. You don't want to be bad and they bein' bad and you want to be rad like they bein' rad but they don't be in the jail, they be on probation. You could just not be in jail and be on probation too."

"Most girls do it, they try to be bad. They be tryin' to show people. You know how you have a fight and I ain't gonna say, most girls in this world be tryin' to cut up a person. They just be tryin' to cut up folks to make people be scared of them and stuff."

"It's not just to impress the boys but it's just to be like your friends. I was always, to tell the truth, the nerd out of all of them cause I wasn't doin' nothin' bad. But then when I got in fourth grade I just started makin' fun of people like them. I was goin' to the office every week, every day. I got into some real bad trouble."

"For attention. When I was in juvy (juvenile detention) I thought it was cool."

"I saw my mom do the same stuff. I did it to get back at her and show her how bad I could be. It's more like getting revenge or getting even."

**Question: What do you think would keep girls your age from doing something "wrong", "bad", or illegal? (Self-control and social control)**

Responses indicated a strong reliance on social controls over self-control by the
participants. The positive social controls included religious teachings and going to church, family expectations of good behavior, peers, recognizing the consequences of one's actions, knowing right from wrong and acting appropriately and having positive alternatives for activities. Negative social controls included family sanctions such as beatings, legal consequences such as loss of probation, arrest and jail, peers—especially males who were seen as a "bad influence," and opportunity to engage in illegal or violent behaviors. The sole self-control characteristic mentioned by participants was a strong sense of self-esteem which was seen as enabling the individual to resist peer pressure and act as she knew was appropriate.

Representative statements from participants included:

"Friends. My friends will be like 'no, don't even try to skip, I'll tell the teacher'. They be influencing me not to skip school so I won't get into trouble."

"Some people go to church and they be like 'I want to do this and I want to do that and I'm a Christian' but they be like 'no, I want to get caught'. But some people be girls on probation and be like 'no, if I get caught then I'm gonna have to go back to juvenile (detention), I'll have to go back there' so they end up... Sometimes they (sic) parents are real abusive and they know if they get into trouble or get caught they (sic) parents will beat them or whatever and they don't want to go home and face that every day."

"I went to juvenile and learned a lesson from goin' to juvenile cause I didn't like it. Cause it's rough. What would stop me from doin' it too is that I used, just like she
said, I don't want to face a beatin' every day and everything but I stopped gettin' it when I turned 13."

"I know that young kids like us get adult charges and stuff, that's why I ain't tryin' to be in trouble with the law. Gettin' adult charges and stuff like that--I don't want all that. I want to see another day. It ain't promised so I gotta be good sometimes."

"If their parents are rich or they get anything they want or they're spoiled or they get everything they want. Like us, you know, you gotta be begging or your family ain't got enough money, you know, for you. You want the stuff your friends have. (parents say) I'll give you the money but it has to be next week."

"I gotta work for what I get. I have to do something to get something. I just don't get it like handed to me. They got it lucky for what they got but some people are less fortunate and they don't have what everybody else gots. You gotta realize that too when you're taking things from somebody. You don't want that to happen to you. When you do something to somebody you hope it don't come back on you but if it does, it does. You can't think about that. It's just like, you know, you shouldn't wish bad on nobody cause one of your loved ones could get hurt by you doing that."

"They know what's right from wrong. They don't want to be copying people. They just want to be themselves."

"They know what's right from wrong and they know what's going on and what's not going on and they know if they do this what will happen. Their mothers taught them very good. The ones that aren't gonna do it (get in trouble) have enough self-esteem inside them and enough knowledge to tell them 'no'."
"Separate them from the boys cause most of the time the reason why they be doin' it is just to impress the boys. Most of the time they do stuff just to impress the boys—like fightin'. Just keep 'em away from the boys. Like a private school just for girls. Like in white folks."

"Well, somethin' to keep girls away from all this drama is like centers that's positive on somethin', find your big brother or sister, you can mostly hang out. I can't play or whatever unless it's on the weekend. Then that's when I get all my free time. You can act bad on the weekends but on weekdays you kind of got to cool out."

"Love. Having your parents around to love you as you are, in an unconditional way. Them having sympathy for you and letting you talk about it. Not being afraid to share what's going on with parents or others who are important to you. Not having taboos."

"How you are brought up. How you are raised. Like to have respect and how to handle conflicts."

**Question: Is there anything else you would like to say about what we have been discussing?** This question was seeking neither self-control or social control information but was designed to allow participants to share any additional random thoughts about the topic of adolescent females and violence. By this point in the focus group session there was a general pattern of most participants becoming restless and losing attention. Few responded at all. The following are random samples of final remarks made by participants:
"You shouldn't be something that you ain't. You should be yourself and if they don't like you, well, they have to deal with it."

"If you want to be somebody be your own self. Have your own personality. Don't try to act like someone else. You know what you can do and what you can't do."

"Parents being involved with their kids is very important."

"If there is divorce or abusive parents, the kids do more stuff. Like acting out or doing what they know they aren't supposed to do."

"My grandma accused my mom and my mom accused me. The cycle repeats itself like a disease and you act like you're expected to act."

"Belief in God is also important in how you behave."

Social Control Characteristics versus Self-control Characteristics

Responses to Question #2 indicated a lack of social control in the immediate environment of the participants. Neither family groups nor neighborhoods were able to provide social controls strong enough or with the consistency necessary to positively influence the behaviors of the participants. The types of social controls mentioned most often were predominantly negative.

Responses to Question #3 reflected participation in activities typical of most female adolescents. The level of violence acknowledged by participants was in proportion to the lack of self-control indicated by their remarks. This is likely reflective of looser social controls found in the unplanned and undirected activities in which participants engaged. Unsupervised or undirected activities were more likely to allow for expression of a lack of self-control when social controls such as adult supervision
were not in place. These same activities also were subject to the strong social control of peer influence.

Responses to Question #4 indicated that peer pressure is an extremely strong social control and comes from both friends and similar age relatives. The stated level of self-control exercised by participants varied with the circumstance and was lower for either positive or negative behaviors when greater social controls, i.e. peer pressure, was applied. The influence of the family, whether positive or negative, was a powerful social control for the participants. While recognizing the difference between "right and wrong" or appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, participants often used the tactic of engaging in a negative behavior to achieve positive results, i.e. lying to friends in order to avoid engaging in a behavior such as skipping school.

Responses to Question #5 indicated a belief in the necessity of strong self-control. However, participants contradicted themselves by repeatedly making statements which reflected their own lack of ability to engage in strong self-control. Often their behaviors, whether positive or negative, were self-serving in that they were calculated to protect the individual's reputation or something else she valued such as a friendship or possession. Participants strongly believed that self-control is learned through social controls such as the family, religious institutions, the environment in which they lived, cultural role models, peers and the media. For all participants, the presence of social controls and the modeling of self-control was a stronger influence than verbal instruction in self-control alone.
Responses to Question #6 indicated a general lack of self-control by the participants. Statements referred to high impulsivity, low tolerance for delayed gratification, low tolerance for frustration, and general disregard for others.

Responses to Question #7 were indicative of a lack of self-control. The perceived degree of social control by participants was a strong influence in the type of behavior in which they engaged. The degree of violence admitted to by participants appeared proportional to the desired outcome or the perceived social desirability of the behavior.

Responses to Question #8 indicated a strong lack of self-control by participants. Statements made by all participants indicated the importance to them of social controls in decision-making and the behaviors in which they engaged.

Responses to Question #9 also reflected a strong reliance on social controls over self-control. Both positive and negative social controls influenced participants' behaviors although for many participants a negative social control such as legal consequences were often a stronger deterrent to participating in illegal or violent behaviors.

The focus group questions and the predominant social control or self-control characteristics indicated by each are summarized in Table 2.

Table 3 lists words or phrases representing social control or self-control and the frequency with which they were mentioned by participants.
Table 2.

Summary of Focus Group Questions and Predominant Social or Self-control Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Social Control</th>
<th>Self-control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe the neighborhood in which you live.</td>
<td>Lack of family or community controls.</td>
<td>Self-control lacking. Primarily undirected activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kinds of activities do you and your friends do when you're together?</td>
<td>Minimal social controls. Little adult supervision.</td>
<td>Lying to friends to avoid engaging in negative behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who or what has the most influence on you and why?</td>
<td>Peer pressure strongly felt. Family influence, positive or negative, strong.</td>
<td>Belief in strong self-control. Respect, school and high self-esteem important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think is the most important quality a person can have? How do they get this quality?</td>
<td>Social control important in learning self-control.</td>
<td>Lack of self-control evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe what you or your friends might do to get what you want?</td>
<td>Social controls influence the amount and type of force acceptable.</td>
<td>General lack of self-control. Living for the immediate reward, low tolerance of frustration and strong need to appear in control of a situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you describe situations where girls your age would use force to get what they wanted?</td>
<td>Strong reliance on social controls to deter negative behaviors. Negative and positive controls held similar influence.</td>
<td>Strong sense of self-esteem seen as enabling individual to exercise self-control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you think girls your age do things that are considered &quot;bad&quot;, &quot;wrong&quot;, or illegal?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do you think would keep girls your age from doing something &quot;wrong&quot;, &quot;bad&quot;, or illegal?</td>
<td>Strong reliance on social controls to deter negative behaviors. Negative and positive controls held similar influence.</td>
<td>Strong sense of self-esteem seen as enabling individual to exercise self-control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything else you would like to say about what we have been discussing?</td>
<td>Negative social controls were not effective in deterring negative behaviors.</td>
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Table 3.

Frequency of Use of Social Control and Self-control Words or Phrases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word or Phrase</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>82</td>
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<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother/momma</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug/drugs</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang/gangs</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fight or fighting</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>Hang out</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer/peers/peer pressure</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fib/lie/lies</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steal</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent/violence</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father/dad/daddy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
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CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As defined by Miles and Huberman (1984), triangulation at its most basic
supports a finding by showing that independent measures of it agree or, at the very
least do not contradict one another. In this research, recurring statements with the
same content made by different persons in different settings serve to corroborate one
another and, thereby, increase the validity and reliability of these concepts.

Analysis of the focus group transcripts with attention to self-control and social
control characteristics indicated by participants' statements and noting whether these
served as positive or negative influences for the participants led to the development of
three principle themes. Underlying the principle themes were additional, and often,
interwoven concepts which served to elaborate each theme. For the purpose of this
chapter, each theme is discussed individually and underlying concepts detailed with
reference to representative statements by participants. The role of social control and
self-control in these themes and the implications for participation in violent behavior are
addressed. The three principle themes are family, respect and self-esteem/sense of self
and are presented in no specific order of significance.

Family

For all focus groups, family and family members played a significant role in the
social control of individuals. For the participants in these focus groups family was often
extended to include not only parents and immediate siblings but also cousins, aunts and uncles, grandparents and, in a few cases, distant relatives. Participants were clear in stating their belief that individual behavior is most often learned in a family environment and that individuals act to meet the expectations of the family unit regardless of whether those expectations are positive or negative.

Representative statements from participants included:

"If somethin' wrong in they (sic) family and they just got to take it out on someone else. Most of the girls today, that's what's wrong."

"To me, it's like they have family members who go through it and they follow they (sic) footsteps by graduatin' and doin' the right things."

"Sometime I been around that kind of people or they (sic) family environment and they been around violence so long all they know is violence."

"Well, if their parents are rich or they get anything they want or they're spoiled or they get everything they want. Like us, you know, your family ain't got enough money, you know, for you."

Parents were seen as a strong influence, perhaps stronger than any other family member, with both verbal and nonverbal messages impacting participants. Even participants who acknowledged not heeding parental guidance recognized its importance.

Representative statements from participants included:

"The most important quality someone could have is like obeying your mother and that's basically the most important quality to me cause most people I know or
associate with don't obey they (sic) mother. Bein' faith (sic), bein' trustworthy to your mother, your father, everybody you know 'stead of lyin' and stealin', thievin'."

"Well, my grandmother and my momma, they try to teach me right. but you know, as you can see, I go to alternative school so as you can see, I didn't pay no attention to them. And, I mean, they tell me to do the right thing when I'm doin' wrong but you know, it's they way that they gotta tell me for me to do it. You know, if they got a attitude with me or somethin' then I ain't gonna do it but if they say 'girl, you doin' somethin' wrong' I do it."

"My daddy has a big influence on me because he tells me that if I have a problem with anything I don't have to hide it from him. I can tell him anything. I look up to my daddy as a role model too."

"Sometime they (sic) parents are real abusive and they know if they get into trouble or get caught they (sic) parents will beat them or whatever and they don't want to go home and face that every day."

As a function of circumstance, mothers were mentioned by participants as a predominant influence in their behavior. When asked to describe their family, many participants made reference to a mother as the only available parent.

Siblings were also influential on the behaviors of the participants. Examples of both negative and positive influence were given by all focus groups. Surprising, to this researcher, was the influence of sisters on the decision to have sex at an early age. As one participant stated, "If you say no (to a boy who asks you to have sex) and you go back and tell your sister or your friend and they tell you 'well, you need to tell him no..."
or you need to back off and start.' And they be like, 'girl, get your freak on. You know you're a virgin and all that.' " From another participant "When I turned 15 I thought I was grown then but my sister said—no, for real—my sister say 'ain't it time for you to lose your virginity?' "

Participants were more likely to engage in violent behavior to protect or defend a sister or other female relative than a brother or male relative. Conversely, they stated they would follow the example of a male relative's use of violence as a means to get what they wanted or to solve a problem.

Representative statements from participants included:

"They had a fight at school and this was a real violent fight because this girl's sister, she was fightin' my cousin and they just got, it just came all the way to a big fight and I got into it because this girl was tryin' to calm me down from tryin' to get into it."

"One day we was (sic) at school and there was like twelve girls tryin' to fight me and my sister and some other girls. We went to the bathroom at the same time and we was all goin' to fight but it was just me and this one girl. We was gonna fight but there was some other girls talkin' about they was gonna jump my sister."

"What really influenced me is my brother and his friend because they can fight."

The need for strong family ties was manifest in the creation of "play" brothers, sisters or mommas. By context and with clarification from participants, a "play" brother, sister or momma was a close friend, either male or female, who provided not only friendship but who was reliable and could be counted on to provide support in
times of crisis. Generally, "play" family was seen by participants as a positive influence on their behaviors.

Representative statements from participants included:

"And my influence is my best friend Jamal. He's really cool and all. I would picture that as my role model cause he is so sweet. He like my big brother. I don't have a brother. He's like a brother."

"My biggest influence on me would be my play brother because he done turn himself around. He listens to my problems and he's there for me."

"If I have something, she'll want it. If she don't get it, she'll go tell my 'play momma' and then, I have to get her somethin' that I have which I don't really want to because when she have things she take to her friends before she take to her 'play sister.'"

Participants stated the belief that one function of the family was to provide some form of protection from outside influences—especially those which were negative. Although they also expressed considerable frustration with this type of guidance and supervision from parents, the desire to know that it was available was important as well.

Representative statements from participants included:

"It's different when I'm with my mother. When boys, okay, like, when you can walk by, you know how boys they be lookin' at you and 'ooh, she's so fine' and all that stuff. My mom she always like 'I'm gonna get them. They keep lookin' over.'"
"I can have boyfriends, you know, long as I don’t do nothin’ with them. My momma and my uncle, you know, they always say, ‘They better not be messin’ with my baby.’"

"I try not to worry about it. They say worries don’t hurt but... worries do hurt. My momma told me not to worry about that because they don’t know you. It’s hard. Especially when it’s just you and your momma or your grandmomma."

"When you’re at home you don’t get to do nothin’. Your momma be all over you and you don’t have no privacy but when you’re around your friends you feel like you have more privacy. You don’t have a grownup around tellin’ you ‘you can’t do this and you can’t do that, be still and be quiet’ and all that. It’s more fun when you’re around your friends cause you don’t have no parents breathin’ down your back and tellin’ you what to do all the time."

"You just act real different cause you get a chance to be whoever you are and the older parents don’t allow you to."

"Love. Having parents around to love you as you are, in an unconditional way. Them having sympathy for you and letting you talk about it. Not being afraid to share what’s going on with parents or others who are important to you. Not having taboos. Being able to discuss anything."

"It’s not as much fun when our parents are there. We do different things and act differently around our parents."
Respect

All focus groups talked directly and indirectly about the concept of respect which is central to many characteristics of self-control. Respect for self and others enables one to avoid engaging in behaviors that may lead to violence or which are inherently violent. Participants made numerous statements indicating that great time and effort was directed at creating and maintaining respect with friends and foes alike. Achieving respect was a means of acceptance and, to some extent, survival with exact methods varying according to the degree of respect desired. Having the respect of others ranked high for participants. Whether this respect was conferred by association with others or through personal “achievement,” recognition of one’s status by others was important. Very often respect was achieved by engaging in negative behaviors.

Representative statements from participants included:

“One thing girls want is respect... everybody want respect. People won’t respect you. Money, everybody like money. Threaten people and they want everybody to know they (sic) bad and rule everything.”

“I just liked the way they acted cause when I was little I guess I didn’t have as much friends as they had and I wanted to have a lot of friends so I just, I guess, started acting like them, hanging around them and, well, now it’s to the point I have a lot of friends but, uh, I regret some things I did. Like gangs or something.”

“I used to gang bang a lot. But I don’t gang bang no more and um, I used to want to be like Buckwheat (?) cause they used to do some cool stuff but I think that stuff ain’t cool no more. I wanted to gang bang and see what it was like.”
"My peers influence me because you see what they do even though you know it's wrong you still want to do it because you just want to be like them and you don't want to be left out. You don't want to be the only one just being around and just looking at them and seeing what they're doing cause it's like, it sticks you that you're not one of them and you're being left alone and you want to be with them to do what they do."

"It's not just to impress boys but it's just to be like your friends. Like me, you know, the reason why I'm down here is because I was bein' too bad at home and they brought me down here in handcuffs. That's another reason why it's just to be like your friends cause, you know, I was always, to tell the truth, the nerd out of all of them cause I wasn't doin' nothin' bad."

"Say you get in a fight, right? And everybody says, 'oh, you lost, you lost.' Well, you fought back. You didn't back down, you fought. That's all that really matters. You get your ass whooped, well, everybody's gonna get an ass-kickin'. But that doesn't mean you go looking for trouble. I mean, if it comes to you then you handle it."

"See, well, we don't, well, (we don't go tell somebody about it—aside from another participant). Yeah, we don't (comments from other participants about not telling someone else your problems with the expectation that they will intervene and solve it for you). That's the way we do it. Violence. Fighting. It's not like someone's going to come up to you and say 'why are you talking about me? please don't talk about me.' They would be girly girls. They would be seen as scared. They ain't gonna back out of it."
Participants in all focus groups expressed that creating and maintaining a strong image on the streets was important to the type of respect they valued. In spite of restrictions at home or having to deal with either legal or personal consequences of behaviors, the desire to belong and gain approval of others—especially peers—was powerful. For many participants, fighting was a primary way to create and maintain respect. For those who admitted to fighting, the degree of violence or force used was often tied to the perceived degree of threat.

Representative statements from participants included:

"It's peer pressure. Cause the people they hang around they do a lot of violent things. Like, you know, you don't want to be bad and they bein' bad and you want to be rad like they (sic) bein' rad. They don't be in jail, they be on probation. You could just not be in jail and be on probation too."

"Well, knowin' me, if I'm close to a brick or anything or a churl, I'll pick it up and hit a person with it if I'm real mad. But if they look like they can't do nothin' and they hit me real soft-like then I'll just use my fists and hit them. But if they (sic) real big boned and real tall and I know they can whoop me then I'll pick up somethin' to hit 'em with."

Gaining respect of friends through negative behaviors such as those mentioned previously was important to participants but the most commonly mentioned approval-getting behavior was stealing something to gain status. Whether the object was taken from a retail store or from a stranger or acquaintance seemed to be
irrelevant to most participants. The status conferred by having the object outweighed
the consequences of the behavior.

Representative statements from participants included:

"The way I see it, when we do bad things we don't, we don't look it as getting
caught, you know? Like when we go to the mall, we steal clothes but we don't think
about getting caught. We just think about the good stuff we're gonna have. We're
gonna be wearin' some bad ass clothes, you know?"

"Like, you want somethin' at the store at the mall. You ain't got no money. If
you know you ain't got no money, you shouldn't even have went to the mall. You be
like, 'oh, I want this dress so bad cause my friend's got it.' And if they want it, they steal
it. Just depends. Half the time, they'll just get the movie just to brag to they (sic)
friends that they got it. They don't have a VCR most of the time. So, it just depends on
what you want."

"You take it if you want it. If you want it and you don't got the money to pay
for it."

Yet another way to maintain respect with peers was what this researcher calls
situational lying. Situational lying occurred when participants were being pressured into
engaging in negative behaviors—usually by friends. In these instances, participants
reported telling what they called "fibs" to cover themselves, maintain respect and keep
from engaging in the behaviors.

Representative statements from participants included:
"Anyway, I was like walkin' back towards school and he be like 'Let's go skip school. We gonna go smoke these...we gonna go get high. We gonna get 10, 15 whatever.' I was like first--I know I'm wrong for that-- I said yeah, I'm gonna go. But the only reason I said I was gonna go is that they would worry me all day. Every time they see me. Like he go to class with me and he would be 'You gonna go, you gonna go?''

"But like what she just got through sayin' like I might be 'Yeah, I'm gonna go with you man but not right now.' I wait til after school and then go home."

"Yeah. Just make up some lie. Tell a fib. If they don't like me for me then that's it."

"Sometimes it's all about peer pressure. Peer pressure has somethin' to do with it too. Cause you know how your friends just pressure you into just 'oh fool, let's go do this, let's go do that' and you get all hyped up from that and then you just go and do it. So I wouldn't, I, but, still people still try to pressure me into doin' stuff like that I try to tell them, I be like 'my momma want me at home or...'."

**Self-esteem/Sense of Self**

For the adolescent females in the focus groups, the degree to which they felt a sense of self-esteem was related to how they dealt with pressure to engage in the use of force, fighting or violence in their everyday lives. Those who expressed strong positive feelings about themselves were also likely to state that they would not engage in negative behaviors. Conversely, those who did not express such feelings were more likely to engage in negative behaviors as a way to gain status or feel in control and were
more likely to be influenced to engage in negative behaviors by friends. Also, those who had achieved status or respect through their ability to fight or stand up for themselves felt less of a need to engage in such behaviors unless provoked by another.

Representative statements from participants included:

"Like there's this girl at my school that, I mean, I don't like her and she knows I don't like her. I don't have time, I mean, I'm trying to get my education right now but I'm trying to get grades. I ain't even gonna bother her cause she has her baby and enough to worry about. But I already told her if I had to fight her I'd beat her. And then she's always trying to say something on school property."

"I been into some stupid fights but my attitude isn't anything so if my word...I just fight physically. And I been in some really violent fights..."

"When somebody says somethin' to me I get smart and I let people influence me and I jump a fight and then I end up gettin' kicked off the basketball team and stuff, um, because you let people influence you."

"Well, a person that has an influence on me and that is my sister's boyfriend. And her friends. But they're not an influence on me cause I'm old enough to know, you know?"

"The one that influenced me is like one of my closest friends. They influence me by like, um, I guess, a little bit how to dress. Or like to stick up for myself. A lot to stick up for myself. Not to like, hide behind it for them to stick up--for me to stick up."
"Well, when I'm with my friends they don't tell me to do stuff that I don't want to do because, um, they know I'm not no drug dealer and I don't drink or nothin' like that."

"It would be my friends cause you know I have good friends I don't have, well, I have friends who are in gangs but they don't tell me to be in it or something. They know how I am so they don't ever ask me anything like that."

"I had this boyfriend I just broke up with. He had a lot of influence on me because before I met him I ain't have low self-esteem, but you know, I feel like I wasn't really nobody. I wasn't really nobody. I ain't had no friends, you know, I felt that people didn't want to be around me or whatever. Then I met him and he taught me 'don't you worry about what nobody else say, it's all about you.' You know, be proud of the things you are doin' so that I ... a lot of high self-esteem."

"Like our parents, they be thinkin' that our friends have influence on us but it's us, you know, cause if we want to do it then we'll do it. They ain't makin' us do nothin' we don't want to do."

"I have good friends and bad friends but I don't follow the bad friends. I follow the good friends. I don't follow the bad friends cause they treat you bad and force you like to smoke weed and stuff."

"What keeps them from doing it (getting into trouble)? Cause they know what's right from wrong. Cause they don't want to be someone they don't, they don't want to be copying people, know what I mean? They just want to be themselves, if they don't like them like that then they ain't friends."
"Some people are still gonna do it but some aren't. The ones that aren't they have enough self-esteem inside them and enough knowledge to tell them 'no, I want to do better things in my life than be a little doper.' They say, 'no, we're not buying it, we know what is right for us and that's not it.'"

"You shouldn't be something that you ain't. You should be yourself and if they don't like you well, they have to deal with it."

"I think that if you want to be somebody be your own self. Have your own personality. Don't try to act like someone, like, you know what you can do and what you can't do, and you have a conscience in your mind so..."

For African American females maintaining self-esteem was also linked to a concept called "player hatin'," "play hate," or "player hate." The driving force behind this concept was jealousy of or contempt for another person, in this case, another female. It was seen as less aggressive than direct confrontation and just as effective in provoking or disrespecting another person. It could be used to "save face" in a situation which was threatening and which did not call for physical force. This concept was not noted by participants from other racial or ethnic groups.

Representative statements from participants included:

"If they got something that somebody else don't, you know, they be like 'She thinks she cute.' That's called player hatin' though if you want to know the slang word."

"Sometimes you know they say it because it's true. And sometimes they just say it because they hate you."
"I'm usually always gettin' into trouble for hangin' around with the boys. But they seem, you know, they do crazy stuff but still, you know, they don't be tryin' player hate on you and stuff."

"So, if you want to say what you want to say to your homeboy, you need to say it in peace but not when nobody, you know, sittin' there gettin' all up in they (sic) face. Gettin' all you in they (sic) face and interfering with they (sic) business, play hate and all this stuff."

For the adolescent females in this research project, the types of negative or violent behaviors in which they engaged were no different than what has been documented for males of the same age (Uniform Crime Reports for the United States-1993, 1994). Participants in all focus groups admitted to stealing, smoking cigarettes or other substances, drinking, use of coercion, truancy, lying, and the use of physical force including fighting. For these females, the reasons stated for engaging in such behaviors appeared to differ from those which have been documented for males by other researchers. Females were often seeking the attention of other adolescents, trying to win the attention of males, responding to verbal threats or rumors from other females, defending a female friend or relative, following the example of a male relative, acting out of jealousy for another's relationships or possessions, or attempting to get even with someone else for a real or imagined slight.

The females interviewed had contact with gangs and, in fact, often had family members or friends who were gang members. Although there may have been gang members in these focus groups, few participants made statements which indicated such
activity. Of the forty-seven girls in the focus groups, only three made direct reference to any type of direct gang involvement.

The females interviewed made few references to personal use of weapons such as guns or knives. Most physical altercations were done with hands or with the use of something such as a rock or brick. Several participants acknowledged that females did use weapons such as razors in extreme cases but that it was not the norm.

The female adolescents in these focus groups exhibited a lack of self-control in much of their behavior. They tended to engage in largely unstructured activities, had little or no direction in how they spent their time, often acted on the spur of the moment or under an impulse, were likely to act in pursuit of immediate gratification, and tended to respond to adversity physically or actively rather than verbally or through reasoning. They saw social control such as family rules and legal sanctions as a means of learning self-control but did not acknowledge that they also had a responsibility to learn how to regulate their behaviors. For these females, external controls were more powerful than internal controls in all aspects of their behaviors including school performance, relationships, and participation in negative or violent behaviors. Even for those who recognized the need to develop self-control over their behaviors, the reasons given for not doing so were often related to social controls such as the way discipline was presented.

Hypotheses Generated

The primary function of qualitative research is to generate hypotheses for future qualitative and quantitative research. While this investigation was guided by its own
research questions, the information generated resulted in additional hypotheses which would bear further investigation. These hypotheses are as follows:

1) The social controls applied from within the family may have a strong influence on the development and use of self-control in female adolescents.

2) Adolescent females with a strong positive self-image may be more likely to use self-control than those who do not have a strong positive self-image.

3) Self-control may be applied situationally based on perceived power and respect to be gained from a specific interaction.

Implications for Prevention, Intervention and Education

Prevention programs must be instituted at an early age. To be most effective, preschool age, a time when many lifelong skills and concepts are first learned, is the best time to begin teaching the concepts of respect for oneself and others. Children as young as three or four years of age are able to grasp the concepts of caring about the feelings of others, learn to wait one's turn, and asking before taking another's property. Such simple behaviors are relatively easy to teach and can be reinforced through adult modeling of the same behaviors—a way in which children learn most often. These behaviors, or the lack of them, are also central to the use of self-control as the child matures. As such programs are created there should be consideration of parental involvement at all levels of the process.

Parents are the primary source of social control for young children and, as such, need to know how to effectively set and enforce limits for acceptable behaviors within and outside of the home. To be most effective as a source of social control, parents
must be willing and able to use non-punitive methods of discipline and be able to help a child recognize situations in which self-control is possible. Further, the parent must be able to guide the child in choosing effective methods of self-control and applying them. Therefore, to be most useful to children, prevention programs should have a strong parent education component to ensure that the primary adults in the child’s life are prepared to model desired behaviors. This type of parent education will also go far in ending the negative cycle of behavior described by some of the focus group participants.

As children master skills and behaviors which lead to the ability to exhibit self-control in a variety of situations, they will increase the likelihood that they will be able to gain the respect deemed necessary by focus group participants in a positive manner. Having the positive self-esteem gained by feeling competent to resist peer pressure, being able to make decisions and stand by them, having verbal skills to avoid or de-escalate a confrontation, and learning to effectively deal with frustration will likely allow adolescent females to participate less frequently in, or avoid altogether, negative or violent behaviors. These skills can only be mastered through repetition in a variety of situations and such a skill-building program should be incorporated into community-based prevention programs, religious settings, within the schools and in programs mandated by the judicial system.

While not as effective as primary prevention in reducing the incidence of any behavior, intervention programs have a significant role in modifying negative or violent behaviors (Page et al., 1992). Adolescent females who are motivated, usually by social controls of parents, schools or the legal system, need to learn and practice the skills
mentioned above. Regression into previous methods of problem solving and conflict resolution is to be expected until those patterns of behavior are replaced by new skills. As with prevention, those skills need to be taught and practiced in a variety of situations. To be most successful in changing behaviors such skill building, programs need to be intensive at the outset and, over the course of several months to several years, taper off as adolescent females internalize the behaviors.

As research in other areas has shown, the most effective prevention and intervention programs are those which are developed on the community level with input from all parties affected by the program. Any program created for adolescent females must include representatives from schools, community groups, religious institutions, law enforcement, parents and, most importantly, the adolescents themselves in the planning process. Creating relevant and, optimistically, effective skill building programs can only occur if the content is of interest to the target audience.

Future Research

Much remains to be done in the area of adolescent females and their increasing participation in negative and violent behaviors. Follow-up studies based on the hypotheses created by this research are a beginning. Studies which corroborate data from parents, siblings and others with data from the participants would be useful in supporting the data generated by this study. Additional studies will be needed to be able to generalize the information gained in this study to the larger adolescent female population. Studies to compare adolescent females who are already in some degree of trouble, such as the girls in this study, to those who are not in trouble will help to
further define the prevalent social control and self-control characteristics which need to be targeted in prevention programs. Studies to determine a maximum age at which intervention programs cease to be effective will be useful in targeting limited resources. Finally, investigation into the link between social controls and the development of self-control in pre-adolescent females can provide a basis for developing new prevention programs and improving existing programs.
APPENDIX A

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES
Research Methods Flow Chart

1) Contact the Executive Director or Assistant Executive Director of the organization to obtain permission to conduct the study.

2) Telephone individual sites (locations) to arrange a meeting with site manager prior to beginning research at that site.

3) Meet with each site manager to explain the study, arrange for days to be at the site, answer questions and meet other staff. Set day(s) and time(s) for the focus groups.

4) Begin "volunteer" work at the site (helping with routine tasks and attending regular activities) as a way to get acquainted with staff and potential participants. Spend one to two weeks at the site doing volunteer work.

5) Informally meet with potential participants (in groups of 2-4 as they are involved in other activities) to explain the purpose of the project and how they fit into the research.

6) Meet with all potential participants in a more formal meeting (with staff present if the site deems appropriate) to explain the project in detail, answer questions, and distribute consent forms for participants and their parents or guardians. Inform participants of the date and time of the focus group(s).

7) Remind participants of the need to return consent forms prior to the focus group(s). Redistribute consent forms as needed.

8) Conduct focus group(s) at the site. Provide participants with pizza and sodas as a way to further get acquainted and to "reward" them for their participation.

9) Audiotape each focus group by having participants pass the microphone from one to another as they answer questions. Take notes during the group to supplement the audiotape and to provide prompts about specific comments made or issues raised. Label all notes and tapes with the information specific to each focus group (site, date, time).

10) Upon completion of research at the site, thank the staff with a small gift such as candy and a card.

11) File all materials from each focus group in a locked file cabinet until completion of all focus groups at all sites.

12) Transcribe each tape in chronological order into the FOLIO Views data base. When all tapes are transcribed, print copy of the transcripts and file in site file.

13) Manually review the transcripts looking for statements which are indicative of social control or self-control (based on the key words or phrases from Travis and Hirschi). Mark these statements as such and further mark them as positive or negative by using colored highlight pens so each type of statement is apparent at a glance.

14) Provide committee chair with a copy of transcripts for the same type of review.
15) Using FOLIO Views, search for key words and phrases indicative of social control and self-control, group these statements for later review of content and note the frequency of use of each word or phrase.

16) Review the grouped statements for content, noting the number of positive or negative remarks and for predominance of social or self-control. Note the site where the remark was made and the age of the speaker where possible.

17) Review grouped statements for consistency across sites and also to note discrepancies (where one site predominated in making remarks). Note if remarks were particular to a specific age group or race/ethnicity.

18) Develop chart to identify predominance of social control or self-control remarks for each question. Note statements which may be used to illustrate the conclusions.

19) Create narrative explanation of conclusions.
APPENDIX B

SITE FOLDER CONTENTS
1) Signed Informed Consent Forms--Parent/Guardian and Participant
2) Focus group notes
3) Focus group tape(s)
4) Focus group transcripts
5) Progress notes for site
6) Documentation of any changes in data collection procedures
7) Grouping of common statements and possible themes
8) Detailed analysis of each focus group for trends in data
9) Notes on preliminary results
10) Notes on focus group analyses
11) Observation notes
12) Recruitment notes
13) Miscellaneous notes on site and any protocol changes for that site
APPENDIX C

PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Beverly Mavis, a Master's degree candidate at the University of North Texas, is conducting a research project titled "Factors Associated with Interpersonal Violence in Adolescent Females." The project will be conducted at Nexus. The purpose of the project is to learn more about how social control and self-control influence the decision of female adolescents (girls aged 10-18 years) to get involved in delinquent or violent behaviors (hurtful behaviors).

The research project consists of a series of focus groups. Your child's participation is important in learning about why young girls do things that may hurt others in some way (hurtful behaviors). Only girls who volunteer for this study will be asked to be in the focus group. Each focus group will consist of 5-8 girls. All girls in the focus group will be told about the importance of respecting what is said and not taking the conversation outside the focus group meeting. The focus group questions will ask the girls to describe what they believe are the reasons girls their age become involved in hurtful behaviors, what they think are the most important reasons that girls their age get involved in hurtful behaviors, what they believe are the most common hurtful behaviors, and what they think keeps girls their age from becoming involved in such behaviors. The focus groups will be tape recorded to aid the researcher in analyzing the information.

The information each girl provides will be combined with answers from other participants. There will be no way to identify which person made any given statement. The information gained from this research project will be used to improve violence intervention and prevention programs in the community.

All information given by the girls in the focus group will be kept confidential. Any information that could identify any participant will also be kept confidential. The researcher has applied for a federal certificate of confidentiality which protects the study in most cases from having to disclose the identity of any participant, even under court order. Your child may stop participating in the research project at any time without affecting her activities in Nexus programs. The risks to your child are minimal since she will be in a discussion group and the information will be confidential. No one will be required to answer any questions that she does not want to answer.

There are some exceptions to the researcher's ability to maintain confidentiality. If there is a report of child abuse or any statement that indicates the participant intends to cause serious harm to herself or to someone else, the researcher is obligated to report such statements to the appropriate agency (Nexus staff).

In order for your child to be part of the focus group, you must sign at the bottom of this form. By signing this form, you are giving permission for your child to be part of the focus group discussion. Before your child is allowed to be in the focus group, she will need to return the signed form to the researcher. If you have any questions, please feel free to call the researcher at the telephone number listed below or call the UNT number listed. If you would like a copy of this form, please mark the line below your signature.

Parent/Guardian

Researcher

Date

Date

Researcher: Beverly Mavis, Master's Candidate, (817) 428-7937
University of North Texas: Dr. Tim Bungum, Physical Education Building, University of North Texas, Denton TX Phone: (940) 565-2651

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (940) 565-3940.
Participant Informed Consent Form-Nexus

Beverly Mavis, a Master's degree candidate at the University of North Texas, is conducting a research project titled "Factors Associated with Interpersonal Violence in Adolescent Females". The project will be conducted at Nexus and other locations. The purpose of this project is to learn more about how social control and self-control influence the decision of female adolescents (girls aged 10-18 years) to get involved in delinquent or violent behaviors (hurtful behaviors).

The research project is made up of several focus groups at Nexus and other locations. Your participation is important in learning about why girls your age do things that may hurt others in some way (hurtful behaviors). Only girls who volunteer to be in the study will be asked to be in a focus group. Each focus group will have 5-8 girls who are from 10-18 years old. The questions you will be asked to talk about include the possible reasons for girls to become involved in hurtful behaviors, what you think are the most important reasons for girls to do things that are hurtful to others, what kinds of behaviors happen a lot, and what reasons girls might have for not becoming involved in hurtful behaviors. The focus groups will be tape recorded to aid the researcher in analyzing the information.

The information you provide will be combined with answers from other participants. There will be no way to connect you with anything you say. The information gained from this project will be used to improve violence intervention and prevention programs in your community.

All information given by you in the focus group will be kept confidential. Anything that could identify you will also be kept confidential. The researcher has applied for a federal certificate of confidentiality which protects the study in most cases from having to give the identity of anyone in the study, even under court order. You may stop participating in the project at any time without affecting your activities in Nexus programs. The risks to you are minimal since you will be in a discussion group and the information you share will be confidential. You will not be required to answer any question you do not want to answer.

There are some exceptions to the researcher's ability to maintain confidentiality. If someone discusses child abuse or talks about seriously hurting herself or someone else, the researcher must report such statements to the appropriate agency (Nexus staff).

By signing this form you are giving your permission to be included in the study. You may be asked to be in a focus group. If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to call the researcher at the telephone number listed below or call the University of North Texas.

_________________________________   ______________________   
Participant                        Date

_________________________________   ______________________
Researcher                        Date

Researcher: Beverly Mavis, Master's Candidate, (817) 428-7937  
University of North Texas: Dr. Tim Bungum, Physical Education Building, Denton, TX  
Phone: (940) 565-2651

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (940) 565-3940.
Parent/Guardian Informed Consent Form-Dallas Challenge Positive Directions

Beverly Mavis, a Master's degree candidate at the University of North Texas, is conducting a research project titled "Factors Associated with Interpersonal Violence in Adolescent Females." The project will be conducted at locations in the Dallas Challenge Positive Directions Program. The purpose of the project is to learn more about how social control and self-control influence the decision of female adolescents (girls aged 10 to 18 years) to get involved in delinquent of violent behaviors (hurtful behaviors).

The research project consists of a series of focus groups. Your child's participation is important in learning about why young girls do things that may hurt others in some way (hurtful behaviors). Only girls who volunteer for this study will be asked to be in the focus group. Each focus group will consist of 5-8 girls. All girls in the focus group will be told about the importance of respecting what is said and not taking the conversation outside the focus group meeting. The focus group questions will ask the girls to describe what they believe are the reasons girls their age become involved in hurtful behaviors, what they believe are the most common hurtful behaviors and what they think keeps girls their age from becoming involved in such behaviors.

The information each girl provides will be combined with answers from other participants. There will be no way to identify which person made any given statement. The information gained from this research project will be used to improve violence intervention and prevention programs in the community.

All information given by the girls in the focus group will be kept confidential. Any information that could identify any participant will also be kept confidential. The researcher has applied for a federal certificate of confidentiality which protects the study in most cases from having to disclose the identity of any participant, even under court order. Your child may stop participating in the research project at any time without affecting her activities in the Positive Directions program. The risks to your child are minimal since she will be in a discussion group and the information will be confidential. No one will be required to answer any questions that she does not want to answer.

There are some exceptions to the researcher's ability to maintain confidentiality. If there is a report of child abuse or any statement that indicates the participant intends to cause serious harm to herself or someone else, the researcher is obligated to report such statements to the appropriate agency (the Dallas Challenge Positive Directions staff).

In order for your child to be part of the focus group, you must sign at the bottom of this form. By signing this form, you are giving permission for your child to be part of the focus group discussion. Before your child is allowed to be in the focus group, she will need to return the signed form to the researcher. If you have any questions, please feel free to call the researcher at the telephone number below or call the UNT number listed. If you would like a copy of this form, please mark the like below your signature.

Parent/Guardian

Researcher

Date

Date

Researcher: Beverly Mavis, Master's Candidate, (817) 428-7937
University of North Texas: Dr. Tim Bungum, Physical Education Building, University of North Texas, Denton, TX Phone: (940) 565-2651

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (940) 565-3940.
Participant Informed Consent Form-Dallas Challenge Positive Directions

Beverly Mavis, a Master's degree candidate at the University of North Texas, is conducting a research project titled "Factors Associated with Interpersonal Violence in Adolescent Females". The project will be conducted at locations in the Dallas Challenge Positive Directions program. The purpose of this project is to learn more about how social control and self-control influence the decision of female adolescents (girls aged 10-18 years) to get involved in delinquent or violent behaviors (hurtful behaviors).

The research project is made up of several focus groups at locations served by the Dallas Challenge. Your participation is important in learning about why girls your age do things that may hurt others in some way (hurtful behaviors). Only girls who volunteer to be in the study will be asked to be in a focus group. Each focus group will have 5-8 girls who are from 10-18 years old. The questions you will be asked to talk about include the possible reasons for girls to become involved in hurtful behaviors, what you think are the most important reasons for girls to do things that are hurtful to others, what kinds of behaviors happen a lot, and what reasons girls might have for not becoming involved in hurtful behaviors.

The information you provide will be combined with answers from other participants. There will be no way to connect you with anything you say. The information gained from this project will be used to improve violence intervention and prevention programs in your community.

All information given by you in the focus group will be kept confidential. Anything that could identify you will also be kept confidential. The researcher has applied for a federal certificate of confidentiality which protects the study in most cases from having to give the identity of anyone in the study, even under court order. You may stop participating in the study at any time without affecting your activities in the Positive Directions program. The risks to you are minimal since you will be in a discussion group and the information you share will be confidential. You will not be required to answer any question you do not want to answer.

The are some exceptions to the researcher's ability to maintain confidentiality. If someone discusses child abuse or talks about seriously hurting herself or someone else, the researcher must report such statements to the appropriate agency (Dallas Challenge Positive Directions staff).

By signing this form you are giving your permission to be included in the study. You may be asked to be in a focus group. If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to call the researcher at the telephone number listed below or call the University of North Texas.

_____________________________  _____________________________
Participant  Date

_____________________________  _____________________________
Researcher  Date

Researcher: Beverly Mavis, Master's Candidate, (817) 428-7937
University of North Texas: Dr. Tim Bungum, Physical Education Building, Denton, TX
Phone: (940) 565-2651

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (940) 565-3940.
APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP GUIDELINES
The following rules/guidelines should be observed by each of the focus group participants. If a participant is not willing to work within these guidelines she may excuse herself from the focus group. If, during the course of the focus group, it becomes necessary, the researcher will restate the guidelines for all participants. If a focus group participant will not abide by these guidelines and becomes disruptive to the group process, she will be asked by the researcher to leave the focus group.

1) Anything said in the focus group stays in the focus group. Participants are not to repeat what they hear outside of this room.

2) Respect the right of each person to talk. Do not interrupt when someone else is talking or "talk over" another person. Everybody will have a chance to state her opinion.

3) Do not laugh at, make fun of, or in any other way discount what someone has said. If you disagree, you will have the chance to state your opinion when the speaker is finished. Each person in the group has a right to her own opinion. There are no right or wrong opinions.

4) If you would like to speak next, please raise your hand and wait until the person speaking is finished.

5) If you do not want to answer a question, you may "pass" on that question. The researcher may call upon those participants who have not spoken about a question to see if they would like to contribute.

6) To help keep everyone's remarks confidential, please do not refer to anyone in the group by her last name.
APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION GUIDE
These are the core questions/issues to be addressed in each of the focus groups. The researcher may deviate from these core questions to pursue a topic introduced by the participants which is of interest and related to the research questions. The questions may be asked in a different form than written to make them clearer to the participants. The focus group questions were suggested by the review of literature.

1) Tell a little about yourself (first name, age, grade in school, family, something you like to do).

2) Describe the neighborhood where you live. Follow-up prompts: neighbors, friends, police, what people do, how do they spend free time, any criminal activity

3) What kinds of activities or things do you and your friends do (participate in) when you're together? Are most of the things you do planned or "spur of the moment?" Give an example. Are these activities different that what you would do if your parents, a teacher, or someone else "in charge" was around? How?

4) Who or what has the most influence on what you do? Why? How does that person or thing influence you?

5) What do you think is the most important quality or characteristic a person can have? Why? How does somebody get this quality or characteristic?

6) Describe what you or your friends might do or have done to get something you wanted (possessions, money, power, respect, etc.).

7) Can you describe any situations where girls your age would use force (hitting, intimidating, hurting, etc.) to get what she wanted? Specifics such as who was involved such as friends or strangers (no names), type of force used, outcome

8) Why do you think girls your age do things that are considered "bad" or that may be "wrong" or illegal?

9) What do you think would keep girls your age from doing something "wrong", "bad", or illegal?

10) Is there anything else you would like to say about what we have been discussing?
REFERENCE LIST


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