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**SITUATIONAL CONTEXTS OF GUN USE BY YOUNG MALES
IN INNER CITIES**

Final Report

**Grant 96-IJ-CX-~~0024~~
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescent violence has been part of the urban landscape in this country since its origins. From the waves of immigration in the early nineteenth century, to the formation of ethnic street gangs in the 1890s (O'Kane 1992), to the rise in delinquency and violence rates in the 1950s, fighting has been an integral part of adolescence. Since the 1970s, as rates of non-lethal violence slowly rose, rates of lethal adolescent violence rose sharply (Cook and Laub, 1998). Most of the increase in youth violence involved gun violence (Zimring, 1999). After declining through the mid-1980's, adolescent violence rose once again, reaching new highs in the early 1990's. Most of this increase was in gun violence. The sharp rise in prevalence in the late 1980's, its rapid diffusion through a generation of teenagers, its sustained high rates for over five years, and its sharp decline nationwide in the past five years, strongly mirrors the natural history of a contagious disease (Cook and Laub, 1998).

Whether in the central cities or more recently in the nation's rural heartlands, guns have become a recurring narrative in the character of youth violence for nearly 30 years (Zimring, 1999). The current generation of American teenagers has grown up surrounded by gun violence. Guns have played a significant role in shaping the developmental trajectories and behaviors of many inner-city youths, and until very recently, gun violence was a part of the everyday lives of adolescents (Fagan and Wilkinson, 1998). Gun violence also has become fuel for political and social mobilization in the past decade, adding to recurring critiques of the juvenile justice system, and inspiring communities to undertake a wide range of punitive measures more generally toward crimes by adolescents (Feld, 1998; Zimring, 1999).

In this report of a four-year study of gun violence among inner-city youths, we review the lessons of this epidemic of youth gun violence in terms of its impact on adolescent development and the role of aggression in everyday life. We examine the role of guns in the lives of young people, and especially in the social and symbolic construction of violent events among adolescents, primarily focusing on males. We show how guns have become an important part of the discourse of social interactions in modern urban life, with both symbolic meaning (power and control), social meaning (status and identity), and strategic importance. Getting and using a gun against another person has become a rite of passage into manhood, or at least into a respectable

social identity within this context (Fagan and Wilkinson, 1998). Expressions of shortened life expectancies reflects processes of anticipatory socialization based on the perceived likelihood of victimization from lethal violence. Conversely and perversely, carrying firearms seems to enhance feelings of safety and personal efficacy among teenagers. The result is a developmental “ecology of violence,” where beliefs about guns and the dangers of everyday life may be internalized in early childhood and shape the cognitive frameworks for interpreting events and actions during adolescence. In turn, this context of danger, built in part around a dominating cognitive schema of violence and firearms, creates, shapes and highly values scripts skewed toward violence, and underscores the central role of guns in achieving the instrumental goals of aggressive actions or defensive violence in specific social contexts.

A. The Epidemic of Adolescent Gun Violence

The epidemic of youth gun violence should be viewed in both historical and contemporary eras. Gun violence has been a recurrent theme in youth violence since colonial times. For example, Sante (1991) describes the sometimes deadly and oftentimes comical struggles between the early 19th century street gangs of New York City to control territory and assert their authority. Although not involved in theft, robbery or the “unsavory professions of gambling or tavernkeeping,” these gangs warred regularly over territory with weapons including stones, hobnail boots (good for kicking), and early versions of the blackjack. Guns were rarely mentioned in the context of youth violence until the era following the Draft Riots of 1863, when gangs fought with every weapon then available including pistols, muskets, and (rarely) cannons (Sante, 1991: 201).

Guns (both automatic weapons and handguns) played a prominent role in the growth of organized crime groups beginning in the 1920s. Organized crime groups employed teenagers and street gangs in a variety of support roles, from running numbers to serving as lookouts for illegal gambling operations or liquor distribution points (Haller, 1989). Bootlegging and gambling provided a career ladder for teenagers. Of 72 “important” bootleggers identified by law enforcement authorities in the 1920s, most were young men in the later teenage years or early twenties (Haller, 1989:148). Guns were a prominent part of the security system used to protect liquor shipments, and Haller quotes documents from bootleggers and smugglers that claimed

there was more danger from "rum pirates" than from other bootleggers or the police. However, despite the involvement of adolescents in street gangs and emerging organized crime groups, there is little evidence that this led to the use of guns by teenagers.

Even in this era, when youth gangs were increasingly a part of the urban landscape, there was little mention of gun use by adolescents in homicides or robberies. In studies of the Chicago gangs of the early 20th century (Thrasher, 1927) and continuing for nearly 40 years, violence among youth gangs primarily involved fighting. Fighting was integral to the group identification of gangs and a central part of group interaction. Behavioral norms developed around fighting, and fighting had several meanings in gang life (Cohen, 1955; Miller, 1958; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Yablonsky, 1962).

While both common and makeshift weapons were used strategically in gang fights, guns were not mentioned as part of the everyday life of gang members or other delinquent youths. Guns were used more often for impression management -- that is, to convey to others that someone with a gun "means business" and is a person to be taken seriously. In Bernstein's account, guns were carried by only a very few members of the Cherubs, and almost never used. People carrying guns or even threatening to use them could be easily dissuaded from shooting if face-saving alternatives were presented (1958: 37).

Portrayals of gang members in the 1940s through the 1970s included descriptions of both common and outrageous guns: Navy flare guns, zip guns, sawed-off shotguns, revolvers and a few automatic weapons (see, for example, Keiser, 1969). Keiser's (1966) portrait of the Vice Lords also showed that weapons were not central to gang life, but used selectively and strategically in conflicts with other gangs and in gang "business." Among both gangs and "near groups," guns were valued as defensive weapons but sometimes also for offensive purposes. Guns often were carried for show, with little intention to use them (see, for example, Bernstein 1958). Then, guns played a strategic role in settling conflicts and asserting dominance in matters of honor, territory and business (Strodtbeck and Short, 1968). Guns had a symbolic meaning in addition to their instrumental value, and generally represented a threshold of commitment to "street life." Guns rarely used by adolescents outside these contexts.

Ethnographic studies in the 1970s confirm the abrupt increase in adolescent violence and gun homicides shown epidemiologically by Cook and Laub (1998). The ethnographic literature

is dominated by studies on gangs, and little is known about gun violence outside this particular context (see, for example, Sullivan's 1989 study). Even with this caveat, there seemed to be a rather startling change in the frequency of gun violence among teenagers, especially gang members, reported in the literature beginning in the 1970s. During this time, gun violence became an important theme in street life among teenagers. For example, Moore (1978) describes how behavior patterns were accelerated by each successive generation of *klikas* (*Chicano gangs or sets*):

"White Fence violated a gang code when they first used guns; by the mid-1970s, guns were normal, and a fair fight (one person on one person without weapons) was fairly unusual, although it was the norm of an earlier period. In the mid-1970s, violations of gang codes included firing into a household where there was a mother present..." (40).

In another ethnography of barrio life, Vigil (1988) quotes a young Cholo who describes how the tradition of fighting had changed over the past 25 years, and how guns had become commonplace features in barrio life:

"We were riding around and this dude ...just came up to us and asked where we were from and we said Cucamonga. He just pulled out a gun and started firing. He shot up...my car with a .38" (133).

Many of these gun assaults involved inter-gang conflicts. Gun violence was both strategic and pre-emptive, but also retaliatory. Reacting to the shooting described above, another young male described this shooting to Vigil:

"We got together to talk about how we were going to plan it...We had a .22 automatic rifle with 18 shots and one 4-10 shotgun with only two shots... As soon as we made a left...a white '64 Chevy started chasing us. I still don't know who exactly fired the gun from the truck, I just kept going faster and I think about eleven or twelve shots were fired at the '64 Chevy" (1988:135).

In addition to violence toward other gangs, Vigil describes incidents where gun violence was used to redress grievances against businesses, and resolve personal disputes over women or drugs. The wide range of motivations and contexts in which guns were used suggests the incorporation of guns into the foreground of decision making regarding violence within gangs.

Figure 1, from Cook and Laub (1998), shows that nearly all the volatility in adolescent gun homicide rates for the past 30 years are the result of rising and falling gun homicide rates.

There were three distinct epochs of gun violence, with peaks in 1972-4, 1980, and 1992. The most recent peak was far higher than the previous peak, but its decline through 1994 was also more pronounced than either of the two earlier epidemics. More recent analyses (BJS, 1999) show that the decline in youth gun homicides had continued through 1997.

The widening gap between gun and non-gun homicides was more pronounced for older adolescents. In Figure 2, the growth rates for gun homicides by adolescents were similar, but were steeper for adolescents ages 18-24, compared with younger teens ages 13-17. Throughout this time, non-gun homicides remained nearly constant for both age groups. Moreover, the rise in the percentage of adolescent homicides by guns was pronounced for most types of non-family victim-offender relationships: gang-related homicides, robberies and other felonies, brawls and disputes, and other known and unknown circumstances (Cook and Laub, 1998, Table 6).

By the 1990's, the relative risks of adolescents for gun homicide among adolescents had reached epidemic proportions. In 1990, firearm injuries accounted for one out of eight deaths of children 10-14, one of every four deaths among adolescents 15-19 and young adults 20-24 years of age, and one of every six deaths among adults 25-34 years of age (Fingerhut, 1993). Since 1984, gun homicides among adolescents ages 12-17 nearly tripled, from fewer than 600 victims in 1984 to a peak of more than 1,700 in 1993 (Snyder and Sickmund, 1999).

For most of the 1990's, there has been a consistent and steep decline in youth violence. The declines in youth violence during this time were most vivid in youth gun homicide: from 1993 to 1998, the juvenile arrest rate for murder declined by nearly 50 percent (BJS, 1999). But the declines were not limited to gun violence: arrests in 1998 for murder, robbery, rape and aggravated assaults were 394 per 100,000 youths ages 10-17, the lowest rate in over a decade (Snyder and Sickmund, 1999). Despite these steep declines in gun homicides nationally, there were twice as many victims of gun homicides in 1997 compared to 1984. Throughout this period, non-gun homicides by adolescents showed inconsistent patterns of small increases and declines, and remain virtually unchanged for more than 20 years (Snyder and Sickmund, 1999).

The social concentration of homicide increased concurrently with its age concentration. Virtually all increases in homicide rates from 1985 to 1990 among people ten to thirty-four years of age were attributable to deaths among African American males; most of the increase was in firearm homicides, and these were overwhelmingly concentrated demographically and spatially

among African American males in urban areas (Fingerhut, Ingram, and Feldman, 1992a; 1992b).¹ Among both African American males and females 10-14 years of age, the firearm death rates more than doubled from 1985 to 1990; the rate more than tripled for African American males 15-19 years of age (Fingerhut 1993). Among African American teenage males 15-19 years old, 60 percent of deaths resulted from a firearm injury, compared to 23 percent for white teenage males (Fingerhut 1993).

This epidemic led to adaptations in the everyday lives of inner city adolescents. Tables 1 and 2, from Wilkinson and Fagan (in press), shows estimates of gun carrying among American teenagers in the 1990's that range from five to 35 percent. Among adolescents involved in the criminal justice system, estimates of gun carrying in the past year range from 40 to 90 percent (see, for example, Decker, Pennell, and Caldwell, 1995; Huff, 1998). These studies also show that both adolescent criminal offenders and non-offending high school students alike report "self-defense" as the most important reason for carrying firearms (LH, 1993; Kennedy, 1993; Sheley and Wright, 1995). As Wright and Rossi (1986) note "self-defense" has a number of different meanings including defense against other youth in an increasingly hostile and unsafe environment as well as self-defense from law enforcement officials during the course of illegal activity. Fear is a recurring theme in juvenile gun acquisition, and the escalating adolescent "weapons" race can be traced in the literature to the 1970s. While gun homicides among adolescents increased rapidly following the onset of the crack crisis in the mid-1980s, it is unclear whether these homicides can be traced to business violence in the drug trade, or to other situational and ecological forces during that time.

B. Guns and Violent Events

Until recently, violence theory and research has focused on explaining why certain *actors* are more disposed to violence than others. However, recent theory and research has reflected growing interest in explaining the *occurrence* of violence: that is, identifying the specific conditions that channel individual motivation and predispositions into violent actions (see, for example, Tedeschi and Felson, 1994; Meier and Kennedy, 2000). This perspective reflects a shift in criminological theory from traditional concerns with the propensities or risks of *individuals*, to a closer examination of criminal *events*. The latter approach addresses both the

motivations that bring individuals to specific events, and the transactions or decisions that comprise the event. Recent studies on property crimes (Tunnell, 1993; Shover, 1995; Decker and Wright, 1996), assaults (Oliver, 1994; Wilkinson and Fagan, 1996), robbery (Wright and Decker, 1997), and homicides (Luckenbill, 1977; Polk, 1994), illustrate the confluence of motivation, perceptions of risk and opportunity, and the social control attributes of the setting, that shapes the decision to participate in a violent event and its outcome.

Violent events deserve special study because they differ in important ways from other criminal events. Unlike property crimes, violent events involve interactions between two parties that often are dynamic, contingent exchanges of words and actions. For this reason, violence research has increasingly adopted a situational or interactionist approach to explain violent transactions. This perspective makes possible explanations that sort out the proximal effects of situational elements from the distal influences of social psychological and personality factors. Situational approaches are dynamic "theories of action" (Cornish, 1994) that take into account both motivations and decision making within events.² Because violent events occur in specific social contexts, attributes of that context may also shape the course of violent events.

The event framework suggests that criminal offenders are active decision makers in criminal events.³ However, conceptual views on decision making in criminal events vary. Although each views the offender as a rational actor, their constructions of rationality are quite different. Econometric perspectives assume that would-be offenders employ a utility curve to assess the costs and returns of a criminal event, even going so far as to include components for taste and preference and moral dimensions of the decision (e.g, Miller and Anderson, 1986; Kramer, 1990; Tedeschi and Felson, 1994; Fagan and Freeman, in press). Neo-econometric views recognize the limitations of rational choice, and instead talk about *bounded rationality* (Cornish and Clarke, 1986). Ethologists contribute foraging models (Stephens and Krebs, 1986), where offenders make decisions that are satisficing rather than optimizing.

Interactionist perspectives offer a different view of decision making involving "theories of action" (Cornish, 1994). In this view, criminal events are dynamic processes where participants make decisions that reflect the interaction of motivation and social context, and are contingent on the actions of others. That is, criminal events are contingent on either interactions with other individuals, as in the case of interpersonal violence, or the attributes of the setting

where a putative event might occur. Sometimes, social witnesses provide an audience that shapes decisions, regardless of whether there is an opponent. Decisions may also be rule bound, or even normative, reflecting expected behaviors that are contingent on features of the immediate surroundings. These expectations are set socially, and refined through repeated social interactions or observations of the behaviors of others.

Until recently, these perspectives have not addressed the special situation of gun violence. The literature on guns and adolescents is characterized by broad surveys that gauge how often students bring weapons to school, and how their outlooks have been affected by the presence of firearms (see, for example, LH, 1993; but see Sheley, Wright and Smith, 1993, for an exception). Studies of adolescent violence offer little information about firearms. They often confound firearms with other weapons, and confound weapons use generally with other forms of violence (see, for example, Elliott, Huizinga and Menard, 1989). The low base rates of violence in these studies limits efforts to explain the use of firearms or other weapons. Violence in these studies is more often concentrated in inner cities, leading to a potential confounding of individual characteristics with social area effects (Sampson and Wilson, 1992).

For example, the LH (1993) survey suggests that the number of events where guns are used are a small fraction of the number of events where guns are present. Yet few studies have addressed the dynamics or antecedents of firearm use in inner cities among adolescents or young males, especially the mechanisms that escalate gun possession to gun use. No research has analyzed firearm use by young males as interpersonal transactions, or analyzed person-weapon interactions in specific social or neighborhood contexts. And few studies have specifically analyzed the use of firearms as part of the situational dynamics of violent events involving young males in inner cities. This approach seems necessary to explain the increase in firearm fatalities among young African Americans, and to locate the problem in the specific contexts where these events occur.

C. Firearms in Context

The literatures on specific contexts of violence (e.g. gangs, drug markets) potentially provide additional insights into gun use. These literatures suggest that gun use is infrequent and contingent, part of a context of a *situated transaction* noted by Luckenbill (1977) and Felson

(1993). In fact, many of these studies are somewhat casual in reporting the presence of guns, noting that they are common features of these scenes. One consequence is that their influence has not been carefully examined, and gun events have not been accorded careful analysis.

For example, gangs have always been a venue where weapons were prevalent, but the presence and types of weapons have changed the stakes and calculus of gang violence. Sanders (1994) reported that 38% of incidents of gang violence in San Diego in 1988 were drive-by shootings, up from 16% in 1981. Although drive-bys were favored by gangs over 20 years ago (Miller, 1975), the increase in the use of manufactured (compared to homemade) guns has de-emphasized the importance of fighting in resolving gang conflicts. If gangs are an important context of gun use, the growing number of gangs and gang youths may have increased market demand for guns. As gangs emerge in cities and new gangs form, and consequently more adolescents join gangs, the simple probability of a conflict between gangs and gang members grows (Fagan, 1992). During periods of instability, both within and across gangs, the likelihood of disputes is especially high (Spergel, 1990). If guns proscribe the rules and nature of settling gang conflicts, the likelihood of disputes settled by guns increases together with the frequency of conflict.

Although drug markets are another context where gun possession is common, the precise relationship between drugs and guns is uncertain. Guns have been characterized as necessary tools of the drug trade to protect the money, protect dealers from assaults and robberies, to settle disputes over money or drugs, for instrumental displays of violence, to secure territory, and preempt incursions in previous qualitative studies (Goldstein et al. 1989; Fagan and Chin, 1990; Sommers and Baskin, 1993). Young males may in fact be more vulnerable to gun use and victimization in drug markets than their older counterparts. They may lack experience or other affective skills to show the toughness necessary to survive. But homicides by and of young males continue to rise or remain stable even as drug markets contract (Reiss and Roth, 1993). Many homicides seem to be unrelated or tangential to drugs, involving material goods or personal slights. While the increase in homicides may have at one time reflected the expansion of drug market, homicides now (nearly a decade after the emergence of crack markets) may reflect the residual effects of those markets. That is, guns that entered street networks during the

expansion of drug markets remained part of the street ecology even as the drug economy subsided (Hamid, 1994).

Once again, these studies illustrate the highly contextualized patterns of gun use by young males, and the importance of guns as part of the contingencies of violence in disputes. They suggest that guns are part of the ecology in inner cities, and have become a variable in event decision making during disputes.

Violence research has increasingly adopted of situational or transactional approach to explain violent transactions, including the use of firearms (Cornish 1993, 1994.; Felson and Steadman, 1983; Luckenbill 1977; Katz 1988; Luckenbill and Doyle, 1989; Felson 1993; Oliver, 1994; Sommers and Baskin 1993). Situational approaches view violent events as interactions involving the confluence of motivations, perceptions, technology (in this case, weapons), the social control attributes of the immediate setting, and the ascribed meaning and status attached to the violent act. One advantage of this view is that it addresses both the motivations that bring individuals to situations where firearms are used, and also the actual transactions and decisions that comprise the event. Individuals may employ "scripts" as part of a strategy of "impression management" to gain status and dominance in potentially violent transactions (Cornish, 1994). These perspectives make possible explanations that sort out the proximal effects of the presence of firearms and other situational elements from the distal influences of social psychological factors. Situational approaches are dynamic "theories of action" (Cornish 1993; 1994.) that take into account both motivations and decision making within events.

D. The Columbia Youth Violence Study

In this research, we applied this framework of "situated transactions" to explain the occurrence and outcomes of violent events involving guns. The influence of guns, both as part of the dynamics of these contexts and as an independent influence was the primary focus of the research. We used targeted sampling methods (Watters and Bierkacki, 1989; Waldorf and Biernacki, 1986) to identify young males involved in gun violence. This approach was appropriate and necessary for studying a population whose parameters are unknown, whose base rates may be low, and whose behaviors carry strong social disapproval and who therefore may be reluctant to self-identify for research. We used targeted sampling strategies to locate potential

respondents in specific contexts and social areas, and to sample within known groups who met the study criteria. Accordingly, we recruited subjects from jails and hospital emergency rooms to identify known offenders and victims of gun violence. In addition, we used matching techniques to identify and recruit young males from the same neighborhoods and social networks who were active in gun violence, but who have avoided either arrest or hospital treatment. To avoid confounding situational and neighborhood effects, we interviewed adolescent and young adult males in two New York City neighborhoods with high rates of gun violence.

Through a lengthy and intensive process, we asked them to reconstruct up to four violent events, including some where guns were present and others not involving guns. We also asked them to reconstruct events where they were victims, and others where they were perpetrators, and events where violence was considered but did not occur. We collected information on the antecedents, contexts and dynamics of these events, and also on the exchanges and transactions that lead to the use of guns.

We also gathered data on the social networks where these events are likely to occur, looking for links to specific motivations and social values that may limit the range of behavioral choices once conflicts arise. To the extent that gun use also involves complex calculations involving strategic contingencies, we collected information on the perceptions of young males on the normative patterns of gun use and possession, as well as the circumstances where guns are likely to be carried or use. Finally, the increase in gun homicides among young males suggests not only behavioral changes but technological changes in the nature of guns and their availability. Accordingly, we collected some information on gun markets.

The preliminary phase of this research was supported by the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation. It involved a pilot study of 125 young males from two New York City neighborhoods: East New York and the South Bronx. The neighborhoods were selected for their high rates of gun violence and for their differences in the social and ethnic composition of the neighborhoods. In the pilot study, we developed and refined the methods of recruitment, interviewing and data analysis.

In the full study, interviews were completed with 377 active gun offenders ages 16-24 from the same two New York City neighborhoods. The full study was supported by grants from three federal agencies. The National Institute of Justice (Grant 96-IJ-CX-0021) provided support

for research on the criminal justice sample. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Grant R49/CCR211614) provided support for research on the hospital samples. The National Science Foundation (Grant SBR-9515327) supported research on the neighborhood samples. Support from each of these grants were used for data analysis and reporting.

Data collection for the pilot study began in June 1994, and for the full project in September 1995. Data collection was completed in August 1998.

E. This Report

This technical report presents the results of the research. In Chapter 2, we present a framework for explanation and analysis of violent events. We discuss adolescent violence in the context of adolescent development, and also identify the social contexts where violent events are likely to occur. Then, we identify the stages and components of violent events, including motivational, contextual, and interactive dimensions. Theories of situated transactions, symbolic interactionism, and script theory are integrated into a general framework of processual analysis to provide a heuristic for the construction and decomposition of violent events, and for the interpretation of their meaning. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of an event framework for theory and research. Chapter 3 discusses the methods and methodological decisions that informed the conduct of the research. We review the rationale for and process of sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Because of the low base rates of violence, its social concentration in neighborhoods and social networks that require sensitivity in data collection, and the dynamic exchanges that comprise violent events, the methods in this study draw from the rich traditions of life history studies and qualitative analysis of complex, situated transactions.

The next three chapters present analyses of violent events and their meanings, with specific attention to the importance of guns in shaping the outcomes of violent and “near-violent” transactions. Chapter 4 shows the range of motivations and “sparks” that trigger violent events, and the basic structures of the events themselves. In this chapter and the next, we identify systemic patterns that violent events follow. We examined heterogeneity in violent events, focusing specifically on context, motivations, relationship to the opponent(s), the role of co-offenders in violent situations, the role of third parties, the linkages of violent events to

subsequent events, and arousal states. In Chapter 5, the processes and dynamic exchanges in violent events are discussed. This chapter explores situational factors in violent events, including their contexts, the relationship between combatants, the role of third parties, alcohol or drug use, the role of the police, injuries, outcomes, and the aftermath of events. The interactional process (actor by action sequences) by which an interaction escalates toward a violent outcome is important. Rationale and meaning of different types of events are assessed. The motivational effects of guns on social identity and behavioral choice are considered in Chapter 6. Here, we illustrate how the presence of guns among adolescents creates unique contingencies that impact on the course of violent events, decisions within them, and their outcomes. We illustrate the social processes of gun violence among adolescent males in three specific areas: the development of norms and expectations for the use of lethal or gun violence, the role of guns in the development of “violent identities” and how this identity contributes to gun violence, and the impact of violent identities and guns on events involving drugs and alcohol. Conclusions and implications for theory, research and policy are presented in the final chapter.

Notes

1. Deaths of adolescents due to firearm injuries are disproportionately concentrated among nonwhites, and especially among African American teenagers and young adults. Among females 15-19 years of age, 22 percent of African American female deaths resulted from firearm injury, compared to 10 percent of deaths among white females. Since 1988, the firearm death rate among African American male teenagers 15-19 years exceeded the death rate due to natural causes or any other cause. Young African American males were 4.7 times more likely to die from firearm injuries than from natural causes (Fingerhut, 1993). There were 30 percent more deaths among 10-14 year old African American males from firearms than from motor vehicle injuries, the second leading cause. Moreover, these rates rose dramatically in recent years. Similar increases were reported for other age-sex-race groups, with the highest increases in each age group among African American males.
2. There are alternate perspectives on violence that do involve a decision making framework. For example, the violence literatures include theories that locate violence as a process of natural selection; as one dimension of a generalized deviance construct; as an act of psychopathology, sociopathology, or mental illness; as an adaptive response to societal reaction; as a response to attenuated means of achieving social status and success; as a learned behavior; or as an expression of subcultural values and norms. See, for a review, Reiss and Roth (1993).
3. There has been similar interest in the past, stemming primarily from economists whose theoretical models of the utility curves of would-be offenders portrayed them as rational actors

(see, for example, Becker, 1968). More recent interest in game theory (Bueno de Mesquita and Cohen, 1995) suggests that decisions to do crime reflect a "game" where the actions of the parties are interdependent, and decisions are a natural extension of the utility-maximizing view of criminal behavior. This heuristic assigns payoff functions and strategy sets to actors in situations in which the interests of participants are in conflict and are unpredictable.

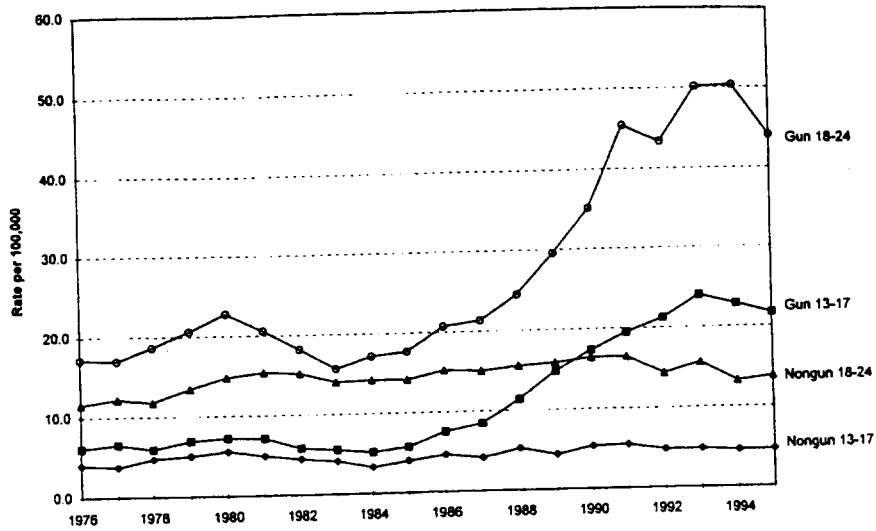


Figure 1-1a. Male homicide-commission rate, gun and non-gun, ages 13-17 and 18-24. Source: FBI, Supplemental Homicide Reports (1976-95). [From Cook and Laub (1998), Figure 12]

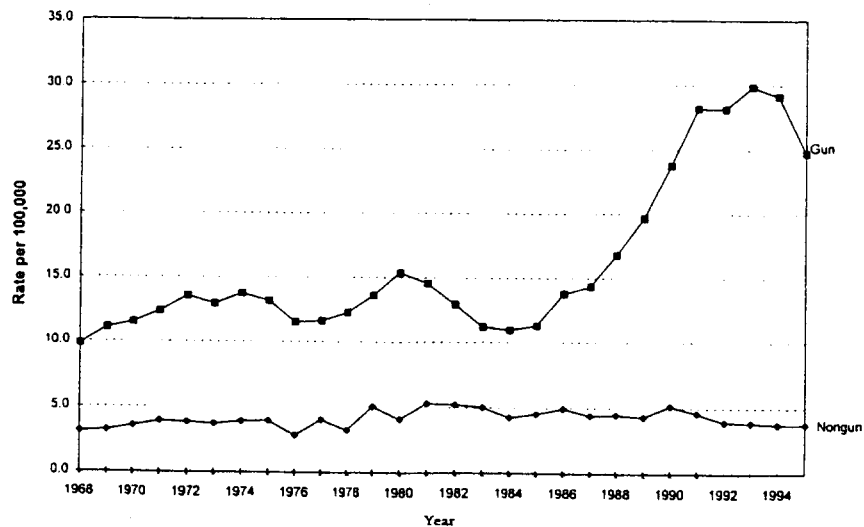


Figure 1-1b. Male homicide-victimization rates, gun and non-gun, ages 13-24. Source: FBI, Supplemental Homicide Reports (1976-95). [From Cook and Laub (1998), Figure 13]

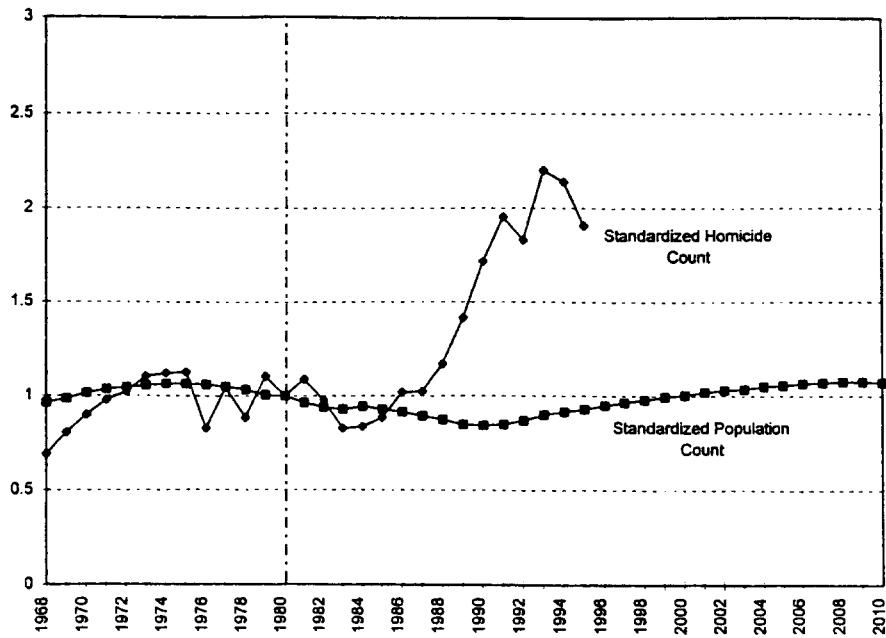


Figure 1-2. Standardized homicide-victimization count, ages 13-17.
 Sources: National Center for Health Statistics (1976-95); U.S. Bureau of the Census (1997); U.S. Department of Commerce (1966-96). [From Cook and Laub (1998), Figure 14]

Table 1-1. Summary of School Based Survey Studies of Gun Experiences among Adolescents

Data Source/Studies	Sample Characteristics	Findings
LH Research (1993)	A survey of 2,508 adolescents in 96 randomly selected elementary, middle, and senior high schools. The sample was predominantly white (70%), with 16% African-American, 15% Latino, and 4% Asian or Native American students.	60% could get a handgun; 22% carried a weapon to school; 4% carried a handgun to school; 15% carried in the previous 30 days; 1/3 of respondents felt they would die young due to violence.
National Crime Victimization Survey Student Supplement (1989-1995)	A national representative sample of 23,933 12 to 19 years olds enrolled in school	Almost no students reported carrying a gun to school in 1995 (0.1%); 12.7% know a student who brought a gun to school; 5.3% saw a student with a gun at school; students who felt that gangs were present in the schools more frequently 24.8% reported knowing a student who brought gun to school and 11.9% of those students saw a student with a gun at school; students who reported being a victim of any violent crime reported greater knowledge other students bringing a gun to school (25.9%) and seeing a student with a gun at school (15.5%).
1990 Youth Risk Behavior Survey CDC MMWR 1991; 40:681-684	11,631 9-12 graders in U.S. Schools	Nearly 20% carried some type of weapon in the prior 30 days; 31% of males & 8% of females. African American males who carried weapons carried guns 50% of the time. (did not specify guns)
1993 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Kann, Warren, Collins (1995)	16,129 9-12 graders from 155 U.S. Schools	22.1 % of students carried some type of weapon in the prior 30 days; 7.9% of all students carried a gun during the prior 30 days, (13.7% of males, 1.8% of females); 12.0% of white males, 20.9% of African American males, 17.0% of Hispanic males carried a gun during the prior 30 days.
Sheley and Wright (1998)	A mail survey of 731 male 10 th and 11 th grade students from 53 high schools nationwide.	29% possessed a gun in previous year; 4% carried now and then while 2% carried a gun most of all of the time; 50% reported that they would have "little" or "no" trouble obtaining a gun; 14% reported weapon carrying by friends, 8% experienced threats with firearms; 13% attended social events where shots were fired; 23% had friends who have a gun-related victimization.

Table 1-1. Summary of Survey Based Studies of Gun Experiences among Adolescents (continued)

Data Source/Studies	Sample Characteristics	Findings
Sheley, McGee, and Wright (1992)	Anonymous survey of 1591 male and female Inner-city high school students from 10 schools.	20% had been threatened with a gun; 12% had been shot at; 23% of students thought it would be easy to get a gun; 80% reported that other students carried weapons to school; 39% had a male relative that carried guns; 35% had friends that carried guns outside the home.
Sheley and Wright (1993) Sheley and Wright (1995)	Anonymous survey of 758 male inner-city male high students from 10 schools.	22% of students possessed a gun; 12% of males carried a gun all or most of the time; 35% of males thought it would be a lot of trouble to get a gun; 45% had been threatened with a gun or shot at en route to/from school; 10% had stabbed; 33% had been beaten up en route to/from school.
Lizotte et al. (1996) and	Longitudinal interview data on 615 Rochester males from waves 4 through 10.	22% carried guns between the ages of 15 and 20; Gun carrying is associated with having delinquent values, ownership of "protection" guns by peers, gang membership, and drug selling.
Lizotte et al. (1994) Bjerregard and Lizotte (1995)	Sample of 987 Rochester students	About 8 percent of the boys reported carrying a gun "regularly," and 4 percent reported using a gun in the past year. 33% of respondents said that one of their peers "owned" a gun for protection.
Callahan and Rivera (1992)	970 11 th graders in Seattle (half of the schools)	34% had easy access to handguns; 50% of males and 22% of females; 11% of males owned handguns, 1.5% females did; 6% carried a gun to school at some point.
Webster, Gainer, and Champion (1993)	Convenience sample of inner city junior high students at two schools	25% of males reported carrying a gun for protection; 16% carried routinely. Gun carrying is related to being threatened, arrest history, greater exposure to violence, initiating fights, and attitudes supportive of shooting someone.
Schubiner (1993) Schubiner, Scott, and Tzelepis (1993)	246 African American youth Inner city sample	30% could get a gun in an hour; another 30% could get a gun in a week; 18% carried in past 3 months; 42% had seen someone shot or knifed; 22% had seen someone killed.

Table 1-2. Summary of Studies of Gun Experiences among Juvenile Offenders and Criminal Justice Based Samples

Data Source/Investigators	Sample Characteristics	Findings
Sheley and Wright (1995)	Interviews with 835 male inmates in three juveniles correctional institutions in four states.	84% of inmates had been threatened with a gun. 83% possessed a gun; 50% carried all or most of the time; 13% of inmates thought it would be a lot of trouble to get a gun.
Inciardi, Horowitz and Pottieger (1993)	611 youths in inner city neighborhoods in Miami as part of a study on crack cocaine and "street crime."	295 (48%) carried guns in the previous year.
Decker, Pennell, and Caldwell (1995)	An interview study of 856 juvenile arrestees from 11 U.S. cities during the first 3 months of 1995.	40% of juveniles had ever possessed a firearm; 22% carried a gun all or most of the time; rates were higher for drug dealers and gang members; 32% admitted to using a gun in crime; 55% experienced gun victimization; 50% had been shot at; 38% supported the belief that "it is okay to shoot someone who has disrespected you."
Huff (1998)	Target samples of 187 gang and 194 non-gang (at risk) youth from Denver, Aurora, Broward and Cleveland	Gang members are significantly more likely to own guns; Nearly 75% of gang members owned guns; County, 90% preferred powerful, lethal weapons; 25-50% of non-gang youth reported that their peers owned guns; 50% of non-gang youth preferred powerful, lethal weapons.
Wilkinson and Fagan (1999)	In-depth interviews with a purposive sample of 377 violent active gun offenders aged 16-24 from two New York City neighborhoods. The samples were drawn from four pools: recently released, jail, hospitals, and the neighborhoods.	91.8% had ever possessed a gun; 93.8% had ever fired a gun; 73.5% had used a gun in a crime; 41.8% had been arrested for a gun or gun-related offense; 28.7% carry on a daily basis; another 51.7% carry on an occasional basis; 73.2% reported access to guns is easy; the mean age of gun acquisition was 14.37; the mean age of first time firing a gun was 14.16; respondents owned an average of 3.84 guns; guns were acquired for protection by 50.4% of the sample.

CHAPTER 2.

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVES ON VIOLENT EVENTS

Violence researchers have come to understand dispute-related violent events as a process of social interactions with identifiable rules and contingencies.¹ Numerous studies have applied this framework with respect to violence focusing on the interactional dynamics of situated transactions (Luckenbill, 1977; Felson, 1982; Campbell, 1986; Luckenbill and Doyle, 1989; Felson and Steadman, 1993; Oliver, 1994). The processual nature of violent interpersonal transactions is both rule oriented and normative (Cornish, 1993). It is through these processes and contingencies that individual characteristics such as "disputatiousness" are channeled into violent events. In this research, we argue that the presence of firearms presents a unique contingency that shapes decision making patterns of individuals within disputes, and also as they approach social interactions with the potential for becoming disputes.

Luckenbill and Doyle (1989), based on earlier analysis of homicide events by Luckenbill (1977), offered one such conceptual framework of interpersonal disputes. They argue that such disputes were the product of three successive events: "naming," "claiming," and "aggressing." At the naming stage, the first actor identifies a negative outcome as an injury for which the second actor has caused (assigning blame). At the claiming stage, the injured party expresses his grievance and demands reparation from the adversary. The final stage determines whether or not the interaction is transformed into a dispute. The third event is the rejection of a claim (in whole or in part) by the harmdoer. According to Luckenbill and Doyle, "disputatiousness" is defined as the likelihood of naming and claiming, and aggressiveness is defined as the willingness to preserve and use force to settle the dispute. They claim that violence is triggered by norms of the code of personal honor and that differential disputatiousness and aggressiveness would depend on the situation.

This conceptualization closely resembles Goffman's "Character Contest" used by Luckenbill (1977) to examine violent transactions resulting in homicide. According to Luckenbill and Doyle, a character contest goes something like this:

...one begins by attacking another's identity, challenging his or her claim to a valued position in the situation. The other defines the attack as offensive and retaliates, attempting to restore identity either by threatening to injure the

challenger if he or she does not back down or by using force to make the challenger withdraw. Rather than back down and show weakness, the challenger maintains or intensifies the attack. Fearing a show of weakness and a loss of face, and recognizing that peaceful or mildly aggressive means have failed to settle the dispute, one or both mobilize available weapons and use massive force, leaving one dead or dying (1989: 423).

Felson and Steadman, (1983) used a similar event centered approach to examine the interactive process leading to criminal violence. Using official data from 159 incidents of homicide and assault (where suspects were incarcerated), the authors developed a detailed action-unit coding scheme for the data. They found that the incidents tended to follow systematic patterns, began with identity attacks, followed by attempts and failures to influence the opponent, followed verbal threats, and finally, ending in physical attack. Retaliation, escalation, and aggressiveness of the victim were found to be important factors. This study, albeit limited methodologically, illustrates the usefulness of a processual analysis of violent events. Detailed narratives on incidents, volunteered without any prejudicial motive, both discovered by law enforcement and those that go unnoticed, may provide insights that previous research using official data could not.

Oliver, (1994) used detailed narratives of violent confrontations between black males in bars and bar settings. In his study of 41 adult black males, he observed a five stage sequence of events which is similar Felson and Steadman's previous classification. The first stage was characterized by "an antagonist having committed an act that was defined as representing a potential threat to his manhood, physical safety and/or reputation. " (p. 329) The second stage involved an attempt to clarify the antagonist's intentions and to develop a plan of action. This step also included an attempt to confirm one's definition of the situation. Stage three was the actual physical confrontation which almost always occurred "when the antagonists failed to provide an acceptable account of their behavior, insulted or threatened the identity of respondents or physically assaulted the respondents. " (p. 332) The fourth stage was the termination or end of the confrontation this included three types of closure according to Oliver: symbolic, overt, and internal. The final stage of the sequence of events was described as post-incident aftermath including psychological and behavioral adjustments. This analysis once again illustrates the

importance of situational factors.

Although he did not specifically focus on gun use events, many of the events described involved the use of weapons. In his interviews with older respondents (men in their 30-40), Oliver's respondents explained that weapons had changed the dynamics of interpersonal violence. Fighting on the street was characterized as being unfair because of the power of guns. He also found that carrying a weapon resulted from a lack of closure in an on-going interpersonal conflict. Oliver concluded that respondents packed a weapon because they anticipated violence or retaliation in the future and/or they knew from previous transactions that the antagonist had a weapon. According to the narrative, respondents often stashed weapons in handy locations nearby so that they could quickly arm themselves if the need arose. This tactic was recounted, at least in part, as a strategy to reduce the severity of the criminal justice sanctions. Unfortunately, the incidents described were limited in scope and number therefore Oliver's study provides only a tiny glimpse into gun use events. A more detailed analysis of the many important micro-decisions that make up gun use events will be examined in the proposed study.

The social interactionist perspective emphasizes the role of social interaction over other "personality" explanations in aggressive behavior.² It interprets all aggressive behavior as goal-oriented or instrumental, that is, as an attempt to achieve what is valued. Both Katz (1988) and Felson (1993) identified three main goals of aggressive actions: (1) to compel and deter others, (2) to achieve a favorable social identity, and (3) to obtain justice. An interactionist perspective is concerned with the actor's point of view. The interactionist approach focuses on describing the factors that produce conflict and those that inhibit it. This approach focuses on three central issues for understanding violence: the escalation of disputes, the role of social identities and the role of third parties. Felson describes the dynamics of violent incidents, similarly to Luckenbill and Doyle, calling the sequence of events a social control process. Violence is a function of events that occur during the incident and therefore is not predetermined by the initial goals of the actors (Felson and Steadman, 1983).

In this chapter, we develop this model to predict and explain different outcomes of situated violent transactions where guns are present. Using a framework of "violent transactions"(see Campbell and Gibbs, 1986), gun-related violence among adolescents is

analyzed as an interactive and transactional process involving people situated in contexts that themselves are predisposed to violence. The influence of guns, both as part of the dynamics of these contexts and as an independent influence will be examined. Equally important in the study of situated transactions are the techniques of avoidance and dispute diffusion. Previous studies have looked exclusively at completed actions which resulted in some sort of criminal justice involvement. The events described by Luckenbill (1977; 1980) and by Felson and Steadman (1983) were completed violent transactions. Previous examinations have been one-sided and may have distorted our understanding of situated transactions more generally. Little is known about events that do not end in physical fights or firing a weapon. This study will attempt to obtain a better understanding of the realm of possible scripts existing in the world's of our young male participants.

A. Symbolic Interactionism and Adolescent Violence

Criminology rarely turns to symbolic interactionism to explain violent behavior. This framework places violent events in context, focusing on social identities that emerge from human interaction. The works of interactionists like Mead, Blumer, and Goffman are especially relevant to the examination of violence as social interaction. According to Blumer (1969), "human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, by interpretation, or by ascertaining the meaning of one another's actions" (p. 79). For Blumer, human action is processual and begins with observation/sensation which results in an "indication to the self" which is noted and interpreted in order to construct a proper response. It is through this process of self-indication that an individual digests information and begins to formulate a decision for his or her future action.

Blumer argues that "social action is lodged in acting individuals who fit their respective lines of action to one another through a process of interpretation." (1969: 84). There is a social learning process that occurs where individuals develop common understanding of how to act in certain social situations based on previous experience and repetitive behavior over time. Blumer claims that social situations are 'structured' but individuals are constantly interpreting the actions of others and often confront conflicting definitions or interpretations of the situation and thereby construct new actions for a particular set of circumstances. One of the central ideas of symbolic

interactionism is the “taking each other into account.” Blumer states:

taking another person into account means being aware of him, identifying him in some way, making some judgement or appraisal of him, identifying the meaning of his action, trying to find out what he has on his mind or trying to figure out what he intends to do. Such awareness of another person in this sense of taking him and his acts into consideration becomes the occasion for orienting oneself and for the direction of one’s own conduct. One takes the other person and his action into account not merely at the point of initial contact, but actually throughout the period of interaction. One has to keep abreast of the action of the other, noting what he says at this point and that point or interpreting his movements as they appear, one after another. Perceiving, defining and judging the other person and his action and organizing oneself in terms of such definitions and judgements constitute a continuing or running process. (1969: 108-109)

For Blumer, interactions take on “careers” of their own through repeated interpretation, decision, action, reinterpretation, decision, and counteraction by the parties involved. He claims that the interpretation is made based on the actor’s “purpose, aims, or directions.” These interpretations can also be based on prior experience in similar situations or misread definitions of a situation (scripts). Blumer notes that social interaction is mostly stable and predictable but variations of action are to be expected also. Blumer also suggests an explanation for defused interactions or the deescalation of events that might otherwise have resulted in some (probably negative) action. He explains that certain social cues in the situation may inhibit behavior and cause an individual to hold back his expression of ‘inclinations, impulses, wishes, and feelings’ until more “profitable” situation arises. Blumer hints to the role of third parties and other onlookers as potentially altering the individual’s interpretation of the situation and his development of a plan of action (1969:111). Blumer’s variety of symbolic interactionism offers many important tools for understanding violence as social interaction.

This line of thinking continues with Goffman's notion of a "Character Contest" used by Luckenbill (1977) to examine violent transactions resulting in homicide. Goffman defines interaction as “...the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another’s actions when in one another’s immediate physical presence.” He claims that self-identity is essentially social, that is, dependent on the responses of others for construction and retention. One of the many concepts he introduced was dramaturgical analysis of social interaction (or performance). He describes two kinds of communication which individuals participate: “expressions *given*” and “expressions

given off.” According to Goffman, impressions *given off* were most important in conveying meaning about the actor within a social situation. Thus, the actor could manipulate the impression received by projecting a certain definition of the situation he enters.

According to Goffman (1971), people are to some extent involved in giving staged performances to different social audiences. Individual behavior is “scripted” to the extent that scripts are used to convey the kind of impression (or situational identity) an actor wanted others to perceive. He argues that different audiences may have different preconceptions of the actor and the actor may have varying degrees of experience projecting alternate impressions in new situations. The importance of status and reputation (*impression given off*) in this social context influences the scripts an individual may choose when confronted with a dispute on the streets. One could argue that based on whatever limited knowledge available at the start of the event, an individual will choose a script which casts him or her in the best light.

Goffman began to focus on linking the micro-dynamics of social interaction with the macro level forces working to structure such interactions. Goffman (1983) argues that there is an “interaction order” (a set of ground rules and moral obligations) which provide constraints on interaction. Goffman suggests that language and shared cultural knowledge (“general resources”) are used by actors to make decisions in social interactions. People create meaning in face-to-face interactions by drawing on local agreements, definitions and understandings that are upheld during an event. The lesson of an event may continue into the future as the parties have future contact.³

B. Violence “Scripts”

Studying crimes as *scripts* provides another useful framework for understanding the decision-making process involved in gun use events (see Cornish, 1993; 1994). Cornish states,

The unfolding of a crime involves a variety of sequential dependencies within and between elements of the action: crimes are pushed along or impeded by situational contingencies -- situated motives; opportunities in terms of settings; victims and targets; the presence of co-offenders; facilitators, such as guns and cars (1994: 8).

The script framework is as an event schema to organize information about how to understand and enact commonplace behavioral processes or routines. Accordingly, script theory offers a way of generalizing, organizing, and systematizing knowledge about the processual

aspects and requirements of crime commission. An application of this approach for criminology is provided in Cornish's study of auto theft (1993). He identified five sequential stages to "ringing" namely, theft, concealment, disguise, marketing, and disposal. In the paper, he breathes life into the theory by developing a model which utilizes a string of cubes connecting along an axle. The cubes represent the different stages in the crime-commission process. The model is multi-dimensional with each face of the cubes representing a different method or contingency of each stage or "sub-crimes." The axle represents the temporal sequence of events and it is flexible in that the cubes can be rotated and re-aligned for alternative routes to the same outcome.

Cornish uses the example of the "restaurant script" to further explicate the theory. He argues that we all know how to "...enter; wait to be seated; get the menu; order; eat; get the check; pay; and exit" (p. 8). He maintains that there are different levels of abstraction, for example, within the general script are related "tracks" --which organize knowledge about the various kinds of restaurants which require different procedures in specific contexts. The situation largely determines the props, casts, scenes, paths, actions, roles, and locations. The script framework provides a useful way of understanding the decision-making process including (calculation of risks, strategic decisions, etc.).

These scripts develop in a specific socio-cultural context, and we will expect that they will reflect the physical and social isolation that young people experience in inner cities. This context may shape how young males develop a range of behavioral styles, and evaluate the contingencies of behavioral choices. Popular culture has served as a transmitter, amplifier, and interpreter of gun-related violence (New York Times, 1993; LH, 1993). The symbols and trappings of guns are widespread in music and film, and often irony or mockery of violence by these artists is confused with endorsement by the listeners and viewers. The celebration of gun possession (as symbol of safety and power) is commingled with the dress and speech codes that characterize the behaviors and contexts where violence carries a positive value. This includes conceptions of manhood that place a high value on the willingness to "take a bullet" or otherwise engage in acts of extreme violence (New York Times, 1994).

The costs of violence, including death by gunfire, are rated very low in this context (Kotlowitz, 1991; Anderson, 1991). Futures, especially for males, are seen as tenuous. Thus,

what may appear as a problem of impulsive violence may in fact reflect a calculation of the benefits of restraint compared to the short term payoffs from high risk acts of violence.⁴ Advanced segregation (Massey and Denton, 1993) and social isolation (Sampson and Wilson, 1992) of inner city communities create social boundaries that effectively seal off adolescent networks from potentially moderating influences of other social contexts. In these circumstances, cultural diffusion transmits such views and behavioral norms quite efficiently (See, for example, Tienda, 1991).

C. Violence and Adolescent Development

Adolescence is a time of stressful development, marked by changes in both physical appearance and social status. It is a developmental period characterized by physical stress, impoverished coping skills, and high vulnerability (Hamburg, 1974). It is a prolonged period, beginning with hormonal changes and ending with the transition to adult social roles, typically work. Adolescence is marked by a series of social transitions, including entry into junior high school and differentiated school tasks, increasing use of the peer group as a critical reference group for exploration of social roles, exploration of opposite-sex relationships, and changing relations with parents and other adults. Adult expectations of teenagers are changing just at the same time that the adolescent's perceptions of himself or herself also are undergoing basic changes. It also is a time of pursuit of some universal goals of adolescence: social affiliation, mastery, social identity, and autonomy.

The daily routines of child and adolescent development occur primarily within the specific contexts of neighborhood, family, school, and peer group. Apart from family, social interactions occur among groups of similarly situated children within schools or neighborhood peer groups. These contexts circumscribe social networks, and daily interactions within these networks gives rise to potential disputes and violence in three ways.

First, there are recurring interactions among individual youth. Adolescents see each other daily in school, on the journey to and from school, in their neighborhoods, and in a range of social activities such as parties or athletic events. Individuals rank each other in these contexts through a variety of social comparisons. These processes naturally give rise to competition and disputes.

Second, bystanders are present in contexts of adolescents' lives and they witness and participate in disputes and in confirmation or the withholding of status. Bystanders are a critical component of the escalation of disputes into violence (Tedeschi and Felson, 1994; Oliver, 1994; Decker and van Winkel, 1996). Witnesses to disputes are the arbiters of their outcomes, and often the main arbiters of status. Accordingly, they play a crucial role in the initiation and settlement of disputes, at times encouraging violence for their own vicarious pleasure or raising the stakes of a conflict so high that violence becomes necessity to the participants in the dispute. From children in playgrounds to adolescents in streetcorner groups, witnesses are a part of the landscape of social interactions and influence decisions on how to conduct social relations or settle disputes.

Third, the social position of the inner city affords limited avenues for children and adolescents to obtain the types of social status and roles available to children in other ecological contexts. Inner-city residents tend to withdraw from organized communal life (Anderson, 1990). Social roles are dominated by street-oriented peer groups, with limited opportunity for broader participation in community life such as after-school groups, volunteer organizations or unsupervised athletics (Short, 1997). Accordingly, adolescents often are unable to demonstrate the types of refined skills that bring status in later years: vocational or technical skills, analytic intelligence, or artistic talent. Alternatives to conventional status attainment, then, may be limited in the inner-city to manifestations of physical power or domination, athletic performance, verbal agility, or displays of material wealth.

The process of placing, ranking, or defining oneself and others among adolescents has been studied primarily within the context of elementary and secondary schools (Brown, 1990; Kinney, 1990; 1993; Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1985; Eder, 1995) and primarily with white samples (but see Fordham, 1995; Billson, 1981; 1996; Majors and Billson, 1992). Symbolic interactionist studies of social identity emphasize the group or public nature of interaction which enables individuals to form and maintain personal and social identities (Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1985; Eder, 1995; Kinney, 1993). Studies of adolescent identity in school settings consistently show that a status hierarchy exists within the setting and those individuals who are the most popular and visible get the most status (Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1985; Eder, 1995; Kinney, 1990; 1993). Peer groups are very significant in the

formation of personal and social identities in childhood and adolescence.

Social status inordinately depends on one's position within social hierarchies, and for males those hierarchies often are established through manifestations of physical power or fighting (Guerra and Slaby, 1990; Guerra, Nucci and Huesmann, 1994). The continual demand for personal "respect," coupled with limited avenues by which to attain it, sets up conflicts that often are resolved through fighting, an available pathway to high status. For example, social networks within neighborhoods where violent events are likely to occur are adaptive organizational responses to specific social and cultural contexts. The social exchanges within these networks provide specific motivations and social values that may limit the range of behavioral choices once conflicts arise (see Wilkinson and Fagan, 1996; Fagan and Wilkinson, 1997; Wilkinson, 1998).

The process of self-preservation through displays of toughness, nerve, or violent behavior is considered a necessary part of day to day life for inner-city adolescents especially young males (Wilkinson and Fagan, 1996; Anderson, 1997; Canada, 1995). Acquiring fighting skills (and perhaps more importantly shooting experience) is considered important as a means of survival in the inner city (also see Sullivan, 1989:113). The status and reputations earned through violent means provide inner city adolescent males with positive feelings of self worth and "large" identities especially when other opportunities for identity development are not readily available (Messerschmidt, 1993; Hagedorn, 1997). Those individuals who have prestigious identities are granted respect while the stigmatized face attacks on self. The concept of respect or honor refers to granting deferential treatment to what Goffman called one's "personal space." One who grants another respect would acknowledge and esteem the other's individuality and personal space (or least not attack it). The adolescent male is looking to others to reflect back ("looking glass self" phenomenon) aspects of his own self-image which is constantly shaped and reshaped within the context of social interaction with others.

In a recent study of 125 inner city adolescent males and their 306 violent events, Wilkinson (1998) found that identity concerns were a major issue in 66.5% of those violent events. The events could be classified as "character contests," strategies of "impression management" and/or "face saving" situations. Three distinctive types of challenges to identity were described: personal, material, and social. Personal attacks challenge who a person has a

right to be (projected self-image), material affronts contest what possessions a person has a right to have, and finally, relational assaults who a person has a right to be in relationship with. The initial interaction sparking many of these events involved some type of insult, degradation, violent threat, bump, slight, ice grill (hard stares), domination, cunning, or unprovoked physical attack. The parameters of a character contest are determined by social interactions among actors of differing status ("mixed interactions") in specific contexts. As suggested by Athens (1985), this dynamic may be most salient during the adolescent years.

Wilkinson (1998) found that young inner-city residents must learn to negotiate the street world by building a social identity, projecting a reputation, and developing a protective peer group in the neighborhood. The process of finding a niche and forming a "safe" identity typically includes engaging in violent behavior. Violent events which occur in the public context of social interaction serve as "defining moments" for identity formation and maintenance. Impression management seems to be an important aspect of negotiating the street world. Guns play a significant role in forming and sustaining "positive" social identities within the neighborhoods. As noted above, taking on one or more of these social identities varies by interactional context, stage of development, and social network.

Wilkinson also attempts to describe several processes through which individuals develop social identities on the street, who gets "prestige" or "stigma" and how "mixed interactions" play out within this context (Wilkinson, 1998). Two themes emerged with regard to social status: (1) individuals start status deprived and (2) establishing status requires the public performance of violence. Social standing can be won via several routes which are connected by the threat or use of violent force. The socialization process into this dynamic is quite clear according to her respondents. At an early age, males frequently experience violent attacks and must learn "how it is in the street." The process was described as a kind of "who's who" of the street by her sample, in essence a way of identifying potential threats and resources within neighborhood associations. Participation in violent social interactions, provides young men with information about the abilities and potential of others with whom they share social space and time. This public performance allows others to classify and categorize males in terms of threat, power, "heart," and status.

As with other social contexts, peer groups play a significant role in defining social

identities. Belonging to a clique or street corner group may fulfill a variety of needs for the young men including: protection, income generation, adventure, companionship, love, identity affirmation, partying, and drug/alcohol consumption in a social atmosphere. The social network, among other contexts, enables masculine views to take shape. Groups also take on social identity and group affiliation brings with it privileges and obligations. According to our sample, criminals and males who exhibit tough qualities and behavior are the "populars" and get the most attention from others. As one respondent describes the attention that "bad guys" got in his neighborhood is very appealing to him as a young adolescent.

D. Social Contexts of Violence

Social contexts often contribute to the onset of violent events and also help shape their outcomes (Fagan, 1993a; Fagan and Wilkinson, 1998a). Recent studies have examined both the social worlds of young inner city males and the violent encounters they face in-depth. These studies describe several dimensions of social context, and illustrate how context influences violent events among inner city teens. Two socialization processes converge to influence violence: (1) the emergence of a "street code" that shapes perceptions of grievances and norms on their resolution (see, for example, Anderson, 1997; Wilkinson, 1998) and (2) an "ecology of danger" where social interactions are perceived as threatening or lethal, and where individuals are normatively seen as harboring hostile intent and the willingness to inflict harm (Fagan and Wilkinson, 1998b).

The meanings of violent behavior develop in these social worlds, and the meanings reflect the physical and social isolation that young people experience in inner cities. This context may shape how young males develop a range of behavioral styles, and evaluate the contingencies of behavioral choices. Advanced segregation (Massey and Denton, 1993) and social isolation (Sampson and Wilson, 1995) of inner city communities create social boundaries that effectively seal off adolescent networks from potentially moderating influences of other social contexts. In these circumstances, cultural diffusion transmits such views and behavioral norms quite efficiently (See, for example, Tienda, 1991). High levels of exposure to violence including witnessing or participating in the death of peers, friends, family members, or neighbors has become a way of life for too many inner city adolescents.

Thus, inner city adolescents learn few techniques for settling conflicts or managing threatening situations. Combined with the distal influence of formal social controls in their neighborhoods, violence is the only choice and perhaps the desired choice. Adolescents simply do what they know in these situations. The handling of one situation by using violence feeds into the next situation and so on. The costs of violence, including death by gunfire, are rated very low in this context (Kotlowitz, 1991; Anderson, 1994).

E. Situational Contexts of Violent Events

Consider the simple proposition that the same individual will behave quite differently in different settings. For example, people drink and fight in some places but not others. Neighborhoods that are similar in composition and appearance may have different crime rates. This raises two simple and related questions: (1) to what extent and precisely how does the setting create or channel arousal that will translate into criminal activity, and (2) to what extent and how do attributes of a setting mediate the arousal effects of individual factors or interpersonal exchanges?

The attributes of setting, or situational factors, are important factors that shape the onset and outcome of violent events (see, Fagan 1993a, for a review). The presence or absence of social controls in a setting, whether the participants are drunk or high, the presence of weapons, known attributes of the location ("fighting" bars, for example), are some examples of situational factors. However, several studies (Felson, 1982; Felson, Ribner, and Siegel, 1984; Decker, 1995; Black, 1993; Oliver, 1994) agree that none of these situational factors is more important than the presence and actions of bystanders.

Third parties play a variety of roles in violent events, including instigators, peacekeepers, cheerleaders, and bouncers (Tedeschi and Felson, 1994; Decker, 1995; Wilkinson, 1998). In a public dispute, third parties constitute the audience, and their reaction has a strong effect on youthful actors. In dispute situations, the identities and associations of observers of potential conflict can deeply influence the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of the actors. For example, Felson (1982) found that when a dispute occurred between parties of the same sex, the presence of third parties increased the likelihood that a verbal disagreement would turn into a physical fight.

Oliver (1994) described three primary roles for third parties: "mediators, instigators, and instigating audiences." According to Oliver "mediators" were third parties who actively attempted to intervene in an encounter between a respondent and an antagonist to deescalate conflict toward a nonviolent termination (1994: 98). Instigators were third parties who assumed a proactive stance in violent incidents by provoking one participant to argue or fight with another participant (1994: 100). An "instigating audience" consists of bystanders who encourage one or both participants in a dispute to resort to violence (1994: 103).

Black (1993) has also developed a useful system for analyzing third party involvement in violence. He identifies two roles - "supportive" and "settlement" - and two dimensions - degree of partisan intervention, and degree of authoritative intervention. The supportive include the *informer, adviser, advocate, ally, and surrogate*, and the settlement roles include the *friendly peacemaker, mediator, arbitrator, judge, and repressive peacemaker* (Black, 1993: 97-124). The role of the third parties often depends on personal allegiance (or lack of it) to the main actors. Audience members allied with either the protagonist or the antagonist may each contribute to the escalation or de-escalation of a dispute through verbal statements, body language, cheering, nonverbal social pressure, or physical acts of violence. In these circumstances, third parties or bystanders may become the co-producers of violent events.

F. Summary

By examining violence as social interaction and incorporating the symbolic interactionists perspective with a special focus on adolescent development we can begin to get a clearer picture of the meanings or functions violence may have for adolescent males. Violent events appear to be situated transactions that reflect the interactions of the parties and features of both the social and situational contexts. What remains unknown are the dynamics of choice and the circumscribing of choice by social contexts and the situations that evolve in those contexts. In the next section, the concept of context is imposed on a framework of processual dynamics in violent events. In this framework, violence is both rule oriented and normative (Fagan and Wilkinson, 1998b; Wilkinson, 1998). It is through these processes and contingencies that individual characteristics such as "disputatiousness" are channeled into violent events. Violent events can be viewed as opportunities to communicate social meanings, to express grievance or

assert social control, or to develop social identity and accrue the status that comes with it. Again, these issues are of primary importance to adolescent males.

Notes

1. Felson (1993) distinguishes "predatory" violence from dispute-related violence, suggesting that there are processual factors in dispute-related violence that are not evident in "predatory" assaults. Predatory violence is defined as physical aggression committed without provocation while dispute-related violence involves a reaction to some alleged wrong. However, Katz (1988) suggests that even the most seemingly irrational violent acts have a logic and predictable sequence. There may be disputes involved between the aggressor and the victim, but there appears to be no interaction between the two parties preceding the violent act. In these cases, the victim may be a proxy, surrogate or symbolic target for the other disputant. Pallone and Hennessy (1993) also suggest that impulsive or "tinderbox" violence may be explained by angry arousal from disputes or grievances that preceded the violent act. The source of arousal, such as a disputant, may have long gone from the immediate vicinity of the violent act.
2. See, for example, Fagan (1993), on the influence of set and setting on the outcomes of disputes where the actors have been drinking. Felson (1986) also explains different outcomes of barroom disputes (brawls versus crying in one's beer) as the interaction of personality "set" of the actors and the social control mechanisms present in the "setting."
3. Goffman uses the term "baggage" to describe the cumulative memory (history or biography) of handling previous encounters. He suggests that the "baggage" automatically affects how those currently engaged in a social situation will relate to each other. Goffman states that: "social structures don't 'determine' culturally standard displays, merely help select from an available repertoire of them." (1983: 11). The repertoire is similar to the "toolkit" of behaviors described by Swidler (1983) in her analysis of culture.
4. In this context driven by fear, young people believe that life is dangerous, that anything (fatal) can happen at any time, and that having a gun is a necessary, if not attractive, option (LH, 1993). The more that guns are present within their social networks, the more they seem normative and the more inured kids become to the realities of guns. In a world where they see themselves as having no power or control over the dangers and fears they evoke, guns provide a means to reduce fear and regain some defense against ever present threats and enemies. Some young males may decide that the option of defense through gun use is too attractive to pass up, especially when weighed against the social and mortality costs of not carrying it.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODS

Interviews were conducted with a targeted sample of 377 young males involved in gun violence from two New York City neighborhoods.¹ The primary field methods were in-depth interviews and a biographical approach focusing on the social and symbolic construction of violent events and significant life events. Data were collected on at least one violent event per person, with an average of 2.44 events per individual. Respondents were males 16 to 24 years of age who had been convicted of illegal possession of handguns or another violent offense (criminal justice sample), or who had been treated for gunshot injuries in the emergency rooms or hospitals located in the study neighborhoods, or who (upon screening) had been identified as actively involved in these behaviors in the past six months (neighborhood sample).²

The interviews elicited lengthy, detailed narratives. In addition to the violent events of primary interest, the topics also included neighborhood violence, family experiences, school, employment, friends, guns, drug use, the police, and future goals. Respondents were asked to reconstruct three violent events: one where guns were present and were used, one where guns were present and were not used, and one where guns were not present. Events included both “completed” and non-completed violent situations; later group included events where violence was avoided in a variety of situational and social contexts.

A. Research Design

The primary goal of this research was to capture thick descriptions of events including firearms use. The secondary goal was to identify the individual and neighborhood contexts in which these events unfolded. Depth interviewing is the most appropriate method to record information about specific events and to allow respondents to reflect on those events.³ The interviews took one to two hours to complete. The interviews were tape-recorded and fully transcribed.

To put respondents at ease and obtain the fullest possible cooperation from the respondents, male peer interviewers of the same race/ethnicity were assigned. The unit of analysis for the study included both individuals and events. Where respondents described more than one event, individuals served as their own controls, avoiding person-event confounding.

This chapter outlines the research design, data collection procedures, measurement of individual and event-level data, and validity and reliability issues for the research.

Peer interviewers were used to help establish trust and rapport with respondents. The interviews consisted of conversations about events and their contexts, were based on semi-structured but open-ended and highly flexible interview protocols for describing events. The benefit of this approach is obvious, in this type of exploratory work, respondents regularly introduce new topics or issues not previously considered by the researcher in the initial design phase.

As recommended by Cornish (1993:28), sections of the interviews focusing on the procedural developments of violent events use a "free elicitation" approach with active prompts in an effort to record the offenders' own script and to optimize individual variation. The use of prompts or probes is highly dependent upon the level of specificity with which the respondent described the situated transaction. The interviewers prompted respondents to clarify points and elaborate on initial descriptions of their actions and perceptions. The interviewers were trained throughout the data collection period to in techniques to elicit detailed information on respondents' life histories and violent events. Study procedures and techniques improved over time; therefore, many of the problems faced early on were overcome during the data collection period.⁴

B. Neighborhood Selection and Characteristics

We selected two neighborhoods for this study, primarily to control for the effects neighborhood differences may have on violent behavior. Two criteria informed neighborhood selection: base rates of violence, and exposure to a concentration of risk factors for violence. The two neighborhoods are among the worst of in terms of poverty and violent crime in the City of New York. The socio-demographic and violent crime profiles (1990) of the two neighborhoods selected for this study are summarized in Table 2-1. As shown, both East New York and the South Bronx have a significantly higher proportion of the population below 25 years old than New York City as a whole. The two neighborhoods also have a substantially higher minority population (both African American and Hispanic) than the city overall. Economically, the target neighborhoods are much less affluent than the citywide average. Both

neighborhoods have significantly higher rates of unemployment, fewer high school graduates, and higher percentages of families below poverty. The violent crime rates per 100,000 population in the target neighborhoods compared to the citywide rates are equally disparate. Examining homicide specifically, one finds that the rate from East New York was 2.24 times greater, and that from the South Bronx was 3.41 times greater than the overall rate for New York City. As shown in the following table, both East New York and the South Bronx also had significantly higher rates of robbery and assault.

C. Sample Selection and Characteristics

The samples included an array of respondents that, in qualitative terms, reflect what are thought to be the characteristics of both violent offenders and gun use events. As stated above, the sample consists of individuals who have completed a period of criminal incarceration for a violence-related offense and those recruited from the study neighborhoods. Specific characteristics of the sample(s) are presented in Table 2-2.

The sample for this analysis is exclusively males and minority: 44.8% African American, 41.6% Puerto Rican American, and 13.6% Caribbean or mixed ethnicity. No race/ethnicity differences were apparent in the descriptions of violent events in the current data. The majority of respondents (58.4%) resided in East New York and 41.6% resided in the South Bronx. Nearly half (45%) had been recently released from Rikers Island or another correctional institution, while the rest were recruited from the study neighborhoods. The average age was 19.3 with 24.8% of respondents at the model age of 18 years old. Respondents provided detailed descriptions of a total of 306 violent events that occurred in the two-year period prior to the interview, an average of 2.44 events per interview, with a range of one event [16%] to 10 events [0.8%].

D. Sampling Procedures

A detailed screening protocol was used to ensure that respondents met the eligibility requirements of the study. The goal of the screening process was to determine the extent to which potential respondents were committed to violent behaviors. All locators and field researchers were trained explicitly on the eligibility requirements and overall purpose of the

study. The screening policy was designed to avoid an influx of walk-ins who volunteer for the study by keeping the interview office location discrete and relying on the personal knowledge of the interviewers in identifying and recruiting subjects. The staff did not interview a potential respondent until a full screening interview had been completed.

Criminal Justice Sample. The initial group of respondents for the study consisted of young men who had been released from Rikers Island Academy between April 1995 and December 1996 (interviews were conducted from June 1995 to March 1997) and who entered a membership program called *Friends of Island Academy*.⁵ Subjects were recent graduates from Island Academy (the secondary school for young males at the Rikers Island correctional institution) who sought the assistance of *Friends* (N=51). The peer interviewers recruited respondents and completed a formal screening process for interviews.

Approximately 1 to 4 weeks before their release, potential participants were introduced to the study while during weekly peer counseling sessions held by a youth counselor from *Friends*. The peer counselor described the basic goals of the study and encouraged young men from the two study neighborhoods to participate. It should be noted that the main purpose of the “prep class” was to talk to the young men about making changes in their lives upon being released from jail. Mention of the study inside the jail and the peer counselor’s involvement in the study were considered important steps in beginning to establish rapport with potential subjects. However, to comply with requirements mandated by the institutional review board, no formalized recruitment or screening was conducted inside the jail. Upon release from Rikers Island, potential subjects sought assistance from *Friends* and were fully screened for eligibility by the same youth leader they met while on Rikers Island.

Emergency Room Samples. The second sample was recruited from the emergency rooms of the two largest hospitals that served the study neighborhoods. Epidemiologists assigned by the Department of Health for this project recruited eligible patients as they came to the hospital. Patients treated in the emergency rooms for gunshot wounds that were classified as ICD-9 injuries (i.e., caused by interpersonal violence), were flagged for screening. After completing the informed consent protocols, a brief screening interview was administered to finalize eligibility for the study. If eligible, patients who were treated and released were interviewed following their treatment. Interviews were conducted in private offices either at the hospital or at a neutral

neighborhood location. For eligible patients who were admitted, the screening interview was completed as soon as their medical condition permitted, usually within 24 hours of their admission. Interviews were conducted immediately following, usually in the patient's room. Some admitted patients were interviewed following their discharge, again in private offices within the hospital.

Neighborhood Samples. Criminal justice and emergency room samples provided only one end of the spectrum of violent offenders. After recruiting and interviewing the majority of the criminal justice subjects, the researchers began to identify and recruit individuals who had not been convicted for violent offenses, but who were active in the same behaviors and lived in the same neighborhoods as the participants in the criminal justice sample.

During the recruitment of the neighborhood samples, referral chains were monitored as they developed for each of the peer interviewers. Interviews were analyzed with an eye toward directing and guiding existing and future referral chains. As the data were gathered and analyzed, emerging patterns and subgroups were incorporated into future sampling. The chain referrals, agency referrals, and "cold" contacts were mapped for each interviewer. Interviewers were instructed to stop recruiting individuals from specific social networks to avoid clustering effects in the data.

E. Measures: Individual and Event Level

Semi-structured, but open-ended and highly flexible interview guides were used. The interviews were quite detailed, and in addition to the violent events of primary interest, cover a wide range of topics including neighborhood violence, family experiences, school, employment, friends, guns, drug use, and future goals. A biographical approach is used to describe respondents' life experiences, their involvement with violence and especially gun use in situated transactions. The research team attempted to apply a "bottom-up" strategy, beginning with a specific event and subsequently uncovering the details of the interactional process. The data were analyzed to examine linkages were made between individual and event-level toward understanding the social and symbolic construction of violent events in the context of respondent's lives. Peer interviewers were asked to modify the wording of the questions so they would come across in a street -savvy way.

Measuring Life History Data

Social control theorists and others contend that social bonds to the institutions of family, school, and work are protective factors that prevent delinquency. Inner-city neighborhoods are frequently characterized as disorganized places bereft of the social capital necessary to sustain viable institutions through which such positive outcomes would be expected (Sampson, 1992; 1997; Sampson and Wilson, 1995). Indeed, numerous studies have documented the dissolution of the American family (Sampson, 1997; Wilson, 1987; Sullivan, 1989; Messner and Sampson, 1991; Sampson and Grove, 1989), the inadequacy of urban schools to provide quality education (Brooks-Gunn et al. 1993; Coleman, 1990), and the disappearance of job opportunities from inner-city neighborhoods in the 1970s and 1980s (Wilson, 1996). Recent cultural arguments have focused on the role of the family in creating and reinforcing values of acceptance and in some cases even approval of criminal behavior (Anderson, 1997; 1994). The full interview protocol with specific questions for each of these domains is presented in Appendix C. The open ended format of the questions provided an opportunity to collect detailed data on family, school, and work experiences that would otherwise be lost with other methods.

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their friendships and associations with their peers. These relationships were examined to gain a fuller understanding of respondents' level of social embeddedness in street activity including drug selling, gun carrying, violence, and drug use. Peer involvement in respondents' lives is examined in several areas. Specifically, the interview explores issues related to the quality of friendships, gun carrying and using patterns among friends, drug dealing and using patterns among friends, and violence related attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.. The questions are developed to tap into dimensions of what Anderson (1994) calls the "code of the streets." Respondents were asked specifically about rules for handling disputes ("beefs") with the intent of characterizing the larger normative system that dominates the street world. In addition, the interview protocol focused on identifying the interpersonal dynamics of neighborhood violence, identity and status issues, representations of self-identity, attacks on identity, methods of self-preservation, and the role of contexts and circumstances in shaping violent outcomes. Respondents described the processes of social interaction with other young males on the street in terms of image, reputation, respect, and identity.

Measuring Events

Respondents were asked to reconstruct the stages and transactions occurring within gun and non-gun events among inner-city adolescent males. Lengthy narrative interviews with young men who had been involved in gun violence generated data on the dynamic exchanges surrounding gun events, including those in which violence ensued as well as those in which violence was avoided. Respondents were asked to reconstruct up to three violent events. Interviewers directed respondents to describe: events in which guns were used, events in which gun use was threatened or attempted but did not occur (i.e., aborted and failed acts), and events in which the decision was made to not use a weapon. To minimize recall problems and avoid potential confounding with evolving developmental states or social roles, events that occurred only during the previous two years were included. The events included situations in which either party attempted to use a gun, did use a gun, or was the victim of gun use.

The event measurement protocol (the set of questions used to elicit the event narrative from respondents) was finalized after the first 15 cases were collected and analyzed. Fourteen components or “multi-dimensional” blocks (to use Cornish’s 1993 analogy) were identified as important features of violent events based in part on previous research of situated transactions (Luckenbill, 1977; Felson and Steadman, 1983; Tedeschi and Felson, 1994; Oliver, 1994). Data analysis suggests that there is considerable variation within each dimension, and the interaction of these features with a given of weapon/situation is even more varied. The matrix presented in Table 2-3 shows how the features of violent events were sorted and organized by type of weapon as a basic data analysis step. The full event question sequence is presented in Appendix C. A detailed description of the coding definitions for each of the subcategories within these global categories can be found in Appendix B.

F. Validity and Reliability

There are many fundamental concerns in social science regarding the reliability and validity of qualitative research designs. It would be impossible to use the standard quantitative tests for reliability and validity with detailed narratives; however, this does not mean that more appropriate qualitative yardsticks should not be used. The threats to validity are essentially the same regardless of the method of data collection. Validation must focus not only on

measurement issues in data collection but also on the validity of interpretation of the data collected. Validity of qualitative research tends to rest on latter more than the former in that it “has to do with description and explanation, and whether or not a given explanation fits a given description” (Janesick, 1995).

The validity and reliability of retrospective reconstructions of violent events is essential to the study. Multiple validity threats risk bias in the data; however, the most serious is the possibility of motivated or biased recall of violent events. A number of steps were taken to minimize these effects such as careful screening and selection of events, interviewer engagement and relationship-building techniques, intensive data collection management efforts, and consistency checks built into the interview protocol. Each issue is discussed below.

Many aspects of the research design enhance the internal validity of the interview data. Interviewers with appropriate training and experience in gaining respondents’ trust ensure the quality of data gathered. The choice to employ peer interviewers enhanced data quality by strengthening the connection between the interviewee and the interviewer. Obviously, training was central to the success of this approach. Field interviewers were trained to screen out events in which respondents could not recall details in an accurate fashion, to challenge inconsistencies during the interviews, to seek clarification when event histories or chronologies were not clear, and to interpret body language that might suggest lies, distortions, or exaggerations. During the interview conversations, interviewers maintained control over which events were described while allowing the respondent to use “free elicitation” within the selected events.

In addition, the interview protocol and supporting materials were designed to expose inconsistencies. To minimize problems of recall, telescoping and distortion, the interviewers employed techniques such as probes, reference points, sequencing, memory aids, and cross checks. Two important tools, the two-year timeline and a “life calendar” were used to anchor respondents’ stories with other life events. Throughout the interviews, the interviewer followed up on topics raised by asking specific questions, encouraging respondents to describe experiences in detail, and constantly pressing for clarification of the respondent's words. Inconsistencies in reports of individual- or event-level data were noted and revisited to assess the respondent’s veracity and to reconcile and clarify the data. Time reference points and sequencing of actions were used to organize events into temporal intervals meaningful to the respondent. The

procedure required that the interviewer work closely with the respondent to structure the period of interest, using corroborative information and memory aids (e.g., life events and associated dates). Data on significant life events (such as the death of a parent, sibling, or friend) were collected to capture important contextual factors that may influence changes in violence.

G. Data Collection Process and Procedures

The intent of this project was to generate hypotheses and elaborate a theoretical framework for understanding violent events among adolescents. The interview protocol was developed through a joint effort by the researchers and volunteers from *Friends*. The initial guide was used during staff training and though some of the early interviews. Many additional topics were introduced as the interview data began to accumulate, and thus the guide went through numerous revisions. This evolution of the measurement instrument was part of the original qualitative research design.

Using Peer Interviewers. Ex-offenders were involved in a variety of different roles on the research project, including advising, facilitating, locating, and interviewing respondents. Bringing ex-offenders into the process as contributing members of the research team greatly enhanced the quality of data collected. This “lay expert” turned researcher approach has been used most successfully in field studies of drug addicts (see Walker and Lidz, 1977; Dunlap et al., 1990; Williams and Kornblum, 1994), and gang members (Hagedorn, 1988), and in education research (see McLaughlin, Irby, and Langman, 1994). The approach is considered appropriate for a study of gun users because it enhances researchers’ ability to access a typically hidden population, to gain understand into what happens in violent situations, and to overcome the methodological limitations inherent in survey-based methods. Dunlap et al. (1990) outlined the “artistic aspects” of conducting field research in urban settings from their experiences on several studies of crack users and criminal activity in New York City.

A team research approach that included local experts was considered the best way to get close to the phenomenon of interest for this study. Differences in age, gender, street knowledge and language, identity, and race prevented the author from gaining direct entry into the social worlds of young violent inner city males . However, *Friends* provided an ideal setting for developing this type of research partnership. Prior to initiation of the actual study, the author

devoted one evening per week to developing a trusting relationship with our “lay experts” over a one-year period. The process of developing a reciprocal relationship with two-way communication and respect between professional researchers and “lay experts” was essential for the study to succeed. The author alternately served as advisor, teacher, student, employer, friend, coach, and mentor to twenty potential peer interviewers, all of whom would have met the criteria to participate in the study. Lay members of the research team had previous experience in various violent activities, including firearms offenses. Most of these young men had gained powerful reputations on the streets (for past violent behavior and/or current anti-violence outreach work) and were granted respect and trust in their neighborhoods. Six of the young men were residents in one of the two study neighborhoods. These status and role identities were extremely valuable to researchers’ efforts in protocol development, interviewing, and data interpretation. Based on their impact on this study, the overlapping and unique contributions of skilled field researchers and street-level experts is a promising approach for violence research.

Peer field researchers served as advisors on this project during the early stages of protocol development and in the chain referral sampling strategy. They also advised the researchers about apparent holes in the data regarding to the types of violent events that occur in their neighborhoods, thus directing future sampling decisions. As noted above, the young men also served as facilitators and locators of potential subjects and social settings for the study.

The use of peer interviews attempted to bridge developmental, generational, and cultural gaps by having a supportive peer with whom life experiences could be discussed. Communicating with young men who are at a very difficult transitional stage of human development at their level and in their language would be difficult even for the most streetwise researcher. But the young men serving as peer interviewers for this study were experienced or had recently gone through the same difficult issues while making the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The familiarity peer interviewers had with those issues enhanced the validity of the data collected. They could easily establish a rapport with subjects, understand the issues that were discussed, and could clearly communicate with the respondents. In addition, our ex-offender interviewers had experienced the difficulties of making the transition from crime to legitimate employed, school, or volunteerism. This status differentiates them from the subjects, but the interviewers were trained to not show any value judgments or react impressionably to

respondents' stories. In most studies where "indigenous observers" were used the individuals employed as researchers already had been established in "paraprofessional" or "grown-up" lifestyles and career patterns (See Dunlap, et.al. 1990; Walker and Lidz, 1977), but that was not the case in this study.

Training Peer Interviewers. In this research project, the interviewers had an important influence on the quality and richness of the data. Interviewer training was an ongoing and elaborate process that focused on teaching peer interviewers about the purposes and sponsorship of the research, the procedures for protecting respondents' confidentiality, ways of being sensitive to difficulties during an interview, a variety techniques of interviewing, the importance of developing a rapport with subjects, and communicating effectively with potential respondents. Training also included role playing; mock interviewing; peer and researcher critiques of each interviewer's style; explanations of how to use probes, reference points, sequencing, memory aids, and cross checks to assist in the recall of information; identifying and screening potential subjects; a full review of the informed consent procedures; and transcription of taped interviews.

First, we interviewed each crew member and became familiar with his personal story and general philosophy about the causes of violence. In turn, the author shared my own personal story and motivation for conducting violence research. This open personal dialogue helped to bridge the social distance between the researcher and the peer interviewers. Next, the interview crew began interviewing each other and other young men who are members of G.I.I.F.T. Pack as part of the training process. The researcher debriefed the interviewers after each interview for the first four months of data collection, and weekly thereafter. Individual coaching seemed to be the most effective tool in teaching the peer interviewers to collect useful and detailed information.

During the data collection process, weekly debriefing meetings provided additional training support and feedback to the research staff. The field crew members recorded their personal reflections on the interviewing process in a weekly audio journal. The investigator listened to the tapes and/or read transcripts and then reviewed them with the interviewers to identify specific recommendations to improve the interviewers' data collection skills.

Group feedback also was important for reminding the interview crew of the overall study goals and sample selection requirements on a frequent basis. After some obvious

misunderstandings, the training approach was redirected toward explaining methodological issues around sample selection, bias, and research design. One common mistake interviewers made early on in the study was to interview any candidate who was available regardless of whether or not he met the study criteria or to settle for shallow answers that did not provide enough information to make inferences. A series of readings, handouts, and formal exercises were developed as training tools using examples from the recorded interviews. A significant amount of time also was spent training the peer interviewers on screening and sampling procedures. This individualized learning process was ongoing throughout the study.

Implementing the Interview Protocol. The research team experimented with a variety of different styles regarding language and wording, and level of formality of the interview guide. At first, the list approach described above was attempted; it was determined that a more detailed but highly flexible guide yielded more systematic data collection. Throughout the process, the interview guides were continuously modified as the research team gained familiarity with the specific subject matter.

The peer interviewers were allowed to develop their own style and modify the interview guide as needed into a more “street smart” language. It was up to the researchers to coach the young men to elicit the necessary detail and to monitor the overall quality of the interviews. They were taught to allow the research subjects to introduce topics or issues that the researchers had not considered beforehand. As recommended by Cornish (1993:28), sections of the interviews on focusing the procedural developments of violent events used a “free elicitation” approach with active prompts in an effort to record the offender's own script, and to optimize individual variation. Many of the interviews were extremely conversational in tone; some of the best interviews resembled conversations between two old friends or classmates one might overhear. The use of prompts or probes was dependent upon the level of specificity with which a respondent described a given transaction. The interviewers prompted respondents to clarify points and further elaborate their actions and perception. As described earlier, the interviewers employed techniques such as probes, reference points, sequencing, memory aids, and cross checks to assist in the recall of information. Use of these research tools varied over time as the peer interviewers learned various strategies and received feedback from the field director.

Throughout the interviews, the researchers followed up on topics that had been raised by asking

specific questions, encouraging respondents to describe experiences in detail, and constantly pressing for clarification of the respondents' words.

The data collection process for the study proceeded at a relatively slow and steady pace over a period of 16 months. To avoid problems with lengthy delays between completion of interviews and transcription of the audiotapes, semi-formal debriefings were conducted with the staff after each completed interview. The debriefing process also served to monitor the quality of data collection and to allow interviewers to share feelings and discuss any problems that may have surfaced. For example, in one particular situation an interviewer was confronted with a safety issue during an interview. One of the respondents became angry during the question sequence related to his father and the respondent happened to be armed with a gun at the time of the interview. The interviewer was able to calm the respondent and end the interview peacefully but he was clearly affected and concerned about his personal safety during the interviewing process.

Each interview was audio taped to relieve the interviewers of the burden of taking notes and to eliminate the artificiality imposed by that process. Recording the interviews enabled the interviewer to create a more conversational interview environment, devote complete attention to the respondent, and concentrate on the discussion. The tape recording also gave the researcher a genuine accounting of what transpired during an interview. The open-ended interviewing technique (non-structured answer format) also created a context in which informants could speak candidly and in their own words.

Interviews were conducted either at the *Friends* office, at the *Center for Violence Research and Prevention* office, or in neutral neighborhood locations such as libraries, apartments, coffee shops, or private offices in social agencies. Interviewing locations were carefully chosen to ensure privacy of conversations. Most interviews are conducted in an isolated private room to avoid any interruptions or possible eavesdropping by others. Respondents were paid \$25 for their interview and were given subway tokens for travel to and from the interview site. Payment was made at the end of the interview although it was not contingent upon the completion of the interview. For safety reasons, interviewers never carried more than \$50, or two stipends, at any time.

Each of the focal respondents was informed in detail about the nature of the study, its sponsors, sources of funding, objectives and goals, probable duration, and the likely extent of his

time and participation. Before beginning the interview, a respondent was to have definitively affirmed that he was giving his informed and voluntary consent to saying as a respondent in this study.

Following the completion of an interview, respondents were asked about their comfort with the conversation and were offered the opportunity to speak with a counselor to address any anxiety or emotional distress from recounting unpleasant experiences. Appropriate referrals were made, and some referrals were made based on the judgment of the interviewer, regardless of what the respondent said.

H. Data Transcription and Cleaning

The audio taped interviews were transcribed into case-specific files that, upon cleaning were integrated into a highly complex relational database. The transcription processes were taken very seriously by the research team. These interviews were very difficult to translate from speech to text, thus several iterations of data entry were required. Having street “savvy” ex-offenders involved in the transcription process improved the accuracy of the lengthy verbatim transcripts of the interviews. Without this lay expert assistance, valuable expressive speech patterns would have been lost. One product that developed from this process was an agreed-upon glossary of current street terminology and spelling (see APPENDIX B). Another factor contributing to the difficulty of interview transcription was the fact that the interview protocol was continuously being revised as respondents introduced new and interesting topics. Also, each interviewer had his own unique style for conducting interviews which made transcription (and coding) more complex. As with most aspects of this study, a great deal was learned during the process that would have been useful at the outset. A case-by-case verification process was employed to ensure a high accuracy rate. This process consisted of one or two lay experts playing the audiotape aloud and reading along with the transcript while flagging any inconsistencies or mistakes and making corrections accordingly. Revisions were numerous for the majority of cases; however, his process ultimately enhanced the accuracy of the transcripts and accuracy continued to improve over time.

I. Data Analysis

The method of analysis in this study incorporated both induction and deduction. Data analysis for this study comprised a number of stages, including open coding (Strauss, 1987), sifting and sorting (Wolcott, 1994), categorizing, coding in teams and checking for consistency, and examining interactions between and across categories and cases. After the typescript files were created, copies were printed and the coding process began both online and on paper. While reading the interview content, a topic name (code) were inserted beside each excerpt categorizing the theme(s) of what was being discussed. The lay expert researchers worked closely with the researcher by helping to identify patterns, suggesting interpretations, and validating the investigator's interpretations. These efforts facilitated the coding and analysis of the data and permitted checks for consistency in classification among members of the research team.

The interview content was deconstructed into themes and emergent patterns. The coding process evolved throughout the data collection process. Each code was explicitly defined; where necessary, multiple codes were used. These codes then were assigned addresses in the database system. Additional notes and memos were written at the case, node (category), and intersecting location. Both individual- and event-level variables were sorted according to categories that were identified through careful reading and analysis of the data. Using NUD*IST, each text string or series of text strings was given an address code for easy retrieval and analysis. These analyses were intended to describe and interpret the social world of young inner-city violent offenders and the structural and processual components of violent events. The matrix presented in the measurement section above provided the organizational framework for analyzing features of violent events. The detailed narratives were used to reveal the many contingencies and factors within and across events. The matrix simply served as a heuristic device for making assessments of the reported components of violent events. To the extent possible, typologies of violent situations were developed from those reported by our respondents.

Computer software was used to assist in qualitative data analysis by streamlining analytic procedures and allowing the analyst to write syntax to facilitate repeated commands on different samples and subgroups. While computer programs made certain aspects of the analysis easier, they were merely tools to assist the analyst in searching and retrieving the data. Particular data processing issues required using all available tools, including word processing, spreadsheet, SPSS, and relational database programs. QSR NUD*IST software was used to organize the data

into easily accessible "chunks" or records which could be retrieved and memoed in an online format. All the excerpts of a particular code could be pulled from the files and sorted into a single node or address. Thus, all examples of each code could appear together at one address to facilitate further analyses, including elaborate cross referencing. The program offered advanced features for organization of the data in hierarchical structures and creation of multiple links between different levels of information in the data set. Multi-dimensional blocks of the reported components of violent events can be constructed to describe typologies of violent events across different weapon types. Thus, NUD*IST was used to analyze the procedural components of violent events.

Finally, the clustering or intersections of these dimensions of violent events were examined to identify consistent and recurring patterns of interaction and context that describe the contingencies that launched them. Patterns of motivation, decisions, third-party involvement, action, tactics (including weapons), and contexts or settings were analyzed within violent transactions. Different explanations for the same incident were compared, negative cases were examined, and multiple interpretations were developed where appropriate (Kvale, 1996).

Notes

1. Developmental and pilot research was supported by the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation. Forty of the 125 cases come from those pilot data. The remaining 85 cases were supported by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
2. "Time bounding" techniques were used to limit the recall period to the two years preceding the date of the interview. Inherent in this sampling plan is a lack of comparability regarding "street time" between the criminal justice sample and the other two samples.
3. There are generally three sources of data for event level research: (1) official case reports from police investigations and court proceedings, (2) survey-based measures of event activity, and (3) ethnographic or qualitative interviews.
4. The unevenness of data content and quality presented only minor problems for the study. For example, many of the early interviews did not include certain questions that we realized were relevant only after numerous interviews had been conducted. Those topics are simply missing for respondents interviewed using the earlier version of the protocol. While missing data are always problematic, it is less troublesome in qualitative studies such as this. (These issues are discussed further in Appendix A.)

5. *Friends of Island Academy* (Friends) is a non-profit organization founded in 1992. Friends provides educational, vocational, and mentoring services to young men and women who have left the educational Academy (alternative high school) at Rikers Island. Guys Insight on Imprisonment for Teenagers (G.I.I.F.T.) Pack is a program for youth run by the youth membership of Friends. The main approach is peer counseling and outreach in which ex-offenders encourage and assist soon-to-be released offenders to make positive changes by learning from their mistakes. G.I.I.F.T. Pack members regularly engage in public speaking at Riker's Island Academy, New York City schools and community-based organizations and in local media outlets.

TABLE 3-1. Neighborhood Socio-Demographic and Crime Profiles, 1990

	East New York	South Bronx	New York City
Total Population	161,359	77,234	7,322,564
% Males under 9	20.32	22.56	14.34
% Males 10 to 14	9.93	10.34	6.62
% Males 15 to 19	9.85	10.17	6.89
% Males 20 to 24	9.01	9.97	8.15
% Males 25 to 59	42.15	38.41	49.43
% Males over 60	8.71	8.51	14.54
Ethnicity			
% Non-Hispanic White	9.45	1.70	43.19
% Non-Hispanic Black	47.94	30.51	25.22
% Hispanic	38.38	66.88	24.35
% Non-Hispanic Other	4.16	1.26	6.68
Employment			
Unemployment Rate -Males	15.00	19.90	9.30
Unemployment Rate -Females	13.40	18.40	8.70
Education			
% Persons 25+ with < HS Education	46.70	62.60	31.70
% Dropouts Aged 16-19	16.50	22.90	13.50
Poverty			
% Families Below Poverty	29.00	49.40	16.30
% Female Headed Families Below Pov.	45.60	63.70	35.30
% Female Headed w/ kids Below Pov.	54.50	71.60	48.10
Violent Crime			
Murder Rate Per 100,000*	64.25(2.24)	97.97(3.41)	28.70
Robbery Rate Per 100,000*	2142.63(1.61)	2676.28(2.01)	1329.99
Assault Rate Per 100,000*	1749.10(1.86)	2112.20(2.25)	940.80

*A three-year average of 1989, 1990, and 1991 FBI Uniform Crime Report statistics was used to compute these rates.

Sources: New York City Department of Planning, 1993. *Socioeconomic Profiles 1970-90*. New York: Dept. of City Planning. New York City Police Department, FBI Index Crime Reports (Uniform Crime Report). Comparative January-December summaries.

TABLE 3-2: Sample Characteristics (N=125)

<i>Neighborhood</i>	
East New York	58.4%
South Bronx	41.6%
<i>Age (years)</i>	
Mean	19.29
Median	19
Mode	18
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	
African American	44.8%
Puerto Rican American	41.6%
Other Islands or mixed	13.6%
<i>Structural Position*</i>	
Completed High School or GED	20.0%
Still in School	29.6%
Currently Employed (legal work)	10.4%
Unemployment Rate	71.6%
Steady Girl or Wife	12.0%
Father of one or more Children	46.9%
Ever Owned a Gun	94.1%
Involved in Violence	99.0%
Involved in Drug Economy	84.1%
Ever Been Incarcerated	91.1%
Witnessed serious violent incident	91.4%

*Valid Percentages. Not all information was obtained for each respondent.

TABLE 3-3. Matrix of Event Domains

	NO WEAPON	GUN	KNIFE
LOCATION			
SPARK OR REASON			
INITIATING ACTION			
RELATION TO OPPONENT			
RESPONDENT'S ROLE			
OPPONENT'S ROLE			
TYPE OF WEAPON USE			
RESP. FRIEND'S PRESENT			
OPP. FRIEND'S PRESENT			
ROLE OF THIRD PARTIES			
ALCOHOL OR DRUG USE			
POLICE ACTION			
OUTCOME			
INJURIES			
AFTERMATH			

CHAPTER 4. THE NATURAL HISTORY VIOLENT EVENTS

In this chapter and the next, we identify systemic patterns that violent events follow. The heterogeneity of violent events was examined focusing specifically on context, motivations, relationship to the opponent(s), the role of co-offenders in violent situations, the role of third parties, the linkages of violent events to subsequent events, and arousal states. We found many similarities and differences between and within gun and non-weapon events (see Wilkinson, 1997; 1998 for more detail). The event data were coded on fourteen different dimensions including:

- the type of weapon,
- type of weapon use,
- who was armed (respondent, opponent, respondent's boys, or opponent's boys),
- role of the respondent,
- role of the opponent,
- relationship between combatants,
- the role of the other parties present in the situation including: the respondent's boys, the opponent's friends, and neutral bystanders,
- a classification of collective decision making in violent events (co-offending),
- reason or spark of the event,
- location or context,
- the role of alcohol and/or drug use in the event,
- the role of the police, and
- an analysis of outcomes of the violent event including injuries and conflict resolution.

The data are presented by each of these domains in an effort to illustrate the heterogeneity of violent situations among adolescents. The detailed examples provided often illustrate more than one theme requiring multiple references to specific event descriptions across domains. Because weapon type is centrally important to the research questions of this study, all categories are examined across type of weapon. The main focus of the first chapter is an examination of the "motives" or "sparks" for violence conflict among adolescent males. Respondents described a variety of reasons to engage in violent situations. To date, there is little available information on violent events where adolescent and young adult males are main participants.

The next chapter explores a variety of situational factors including: the context, the relationship between combatants, the role of third parties, alcohol or drug use, the role of the

police, injuries, outcomes, and the aftermath of events. The interactional process (actor by action sequences) by which an interaction escalates toward a violent outcome is important. The developmental literature would suggest that the violence process may be different during this period reflecting immature decision making by younger actors and other contingencies.

A. Type of Weapon and Weapon Use in Violent Events

Respondents are asked to describe violent events with guns, knives, and other weapons that were both “completed” and “defused.” They are also asked to describe fights without weapons. In total, respondents describe 151 gun events, 37 knife events, 14 other weapon events, and 111 events with no weapon (just hands). Events are classified by type of weapon according to whether or not a weapon is part of the interaction between actors. For example, if any person in the situation had a gun, the event would be classified as a gun event. Weapons could be brought into the situation by either the respondent, the respondent’s friends, the opponent, or the opponent’s friends. Each of these situations is coded for level of lethality. Table 4-1 presents the lethality level by type of weapon used.

1. Gun Events

Research on gun violence tends to confound gun carrying with gun use. To overcome this problem, we classified each gun event by different types of gun “use.” Respondents report having guns in 102 violent events, opponents have a gun in 88 situations, respondents’ peeps have a gun at 69 events, and opponents’ boys have a gun in 35 situations. Of the 151 gun events, guns are used to threaten 22.5% (N=34), to beat 6.6% (N=10), and to shoot or shoot at someone 70.9% (N=107) of the time.

Gun Against Gun. As shown in TABLE 4-2, there are 55 gun situations where both the respondent and his opponent have guns. During 40 of these events the respondent have the assistance of his friends who are also armed with guns. The respondent face the opponent alone in 15 of those 55 incidents. Twenty-one of the events are “shootouts” between the respondent’s crew and the opponent’s crew.

Gun vs. No Weapon. Respondents have a gun facing an unarmed opponent in 43 situations. In 18 of those situations, the respondent’s peeps are also armed. The respondent is

armed and alone in 25 situations against an unarmed opponent. The respondent describes 3 situations where he is armed with a gun while the opponent has a knife.

Unarmed vs. Gun. Respondents describe 31 unarmed situations when facing an opponent with a gun. In ten of those incidents, the opponents are backed up by friends who with additional guns. In a small number of cases, an event became a gun situation because of the actions of other parties. Guns are introduced by the respondent's peeps in ten situations while the opponent's peeps bring 3 situations to the gun level.

Respondents describe both offensive and defensive moves in gun events. For example, 70 gun events are initiated by the respondent (both alone and as a group) while 63 events are started by an opponent(s). The "options" available when armed with a gun include: pulling out (to threaten), shooting in the air (to threaten), pistol whipping, shooting to injure, shooting to kill, attempting to shoot (failure), and drive-by shootings. The "options" available when confronted with an armed opponent included: stalling or talking one's way out of the situation (with no retaliation), stalling or talking one's way out of the situation (with planned retaliation), negotiating another type of violence (disarming), pulling out a gun and facing off (no shooting), having a shootout, friends pulling out a gun and forcing the opponent to back down (overpowering arms), and fleeing the situation to escape harm. Respondents decide which action to take based upon their prior knowledge of the opponent's willingness or ability to use violence (or their on the spot impression of the opponent), the respondent's assessment of his own ability to out perform the opponent, the likelihood that other parties would get involved to aid either party if needed, the level of angry arousal during the event by both parties, and the respondent's assessment of risks and benefits to his social identity for using or avoiding violence. Guns clearly tip the scales of power in favor of the person who is armed.

2. Knife Events

Knives are used in 37 or 11.9% of the violent events described by the sample. For the knife events, the combatants both have knives in 6 situations, the respondent alone is armed in 11 situations, and the opponent alone is armed with a knife in 13 situations. The respondent's and opponent's friends each introduce knives to 3 additional situations. As shown in TABLE 4-1, knives are used to threaten 31.4% (N=11) and to stab or slice an adversary 68.6% (N=24) of the time.

3. Other Weapon Events

Events where other weapons are used are less common among our sample. Other weapons include: bottles, broken glass, bats, rocks, sticks, pencils, bricks, and forks. In these types of situations, the actor (s) typically pick up an object present in the location and use it as a weapon against an unarmed opponent. The respondent fights his opponent in 7 situations with some other weapon. The respondent is unarmed in 5 situations where his opponent has this type of weapon.

4. No Weapons

Violent situations where no weapons are present or used occurred in 111 of the 306 events described. In these situations, the unarmed respondent fights an unarmed opponent. In addition, if either parties friends are present and involved they also did not use any type of weapon in the situation. The majority of these conflicts result in a physical fight, however 15 events are resolved before the situation escalated to violence.

B. Reasons or Sparks: Respondents' Definitions of the Situation

In this section, we examine the causes or sparks of violent events. These situational definitions reflect a variety of issues and concerns for the actor(s) that are both situational and normative. The reasons or justifications respondents offer include both motivational and interactional domains (the two are often impossible to disentangle). Respondents describe a number of reasons or sparks for conflict including: challenges to identity/status, jealousy/competition over females, self-defense, robbery, drug business transactions, revenge or retaliation, defense of others, rumors (he said, she said), territory or neighborhood honor, money or debts, unfair play (e.g. sports and gambling situations), misunderstandings, and fun or recreation. First, we present the descriptive statistics for the sample of events. Second, we examine the detailed narratives of the most common contingencies within each type of event. The excerpts provide a partial glimpse into the content and context of these violent events. Some of the events are used to illustrate multiple domains. In these cases, the event descriptions are presented in sections throughout the chapter. As shown in TABLE 4-3, many violent events involved more than one reason or spark.

Existing data on offender motivations often makes broad claims about the overlapping

existing of several motivational factors. Below, a correlation matrix of the different types of motivations illustrates the degree to which respondents' motives did or did not overlap. The data show that violent events among adolescent males in these two neighborhoods reflect a wide variety of issues and contextual dynamics. As shown in Table 4-4, some economically motivated violent events are significantly correlated with each other. Specifically, drug business transactions correlate with events coded as igniting over neighborhood or turf concerns and the repayment of debts. Both drug business violence and robberies were negatively correlated with events erupting out of identity or status concerns or over females. The results suggests at minimum two separate motivational trajectories. Consistent with prior research, both the drug business violence and robberies are significantly correlated with guns as the choice of weapon.

1. Challenges to Social Identity or Status

In this section, narrative reconstructions of violent events are analyzed as erupting out of some type of challenge or test to one's social identity or status. These events could be called "character contests," strategies of "impression management" and/or "face saving" situations. An event is coded as sparking out of identity or respect concerns if either the opponent or respondent feels "dissed," challenged, or "played." These situations typically involve the denying of personal status or identity manifested through insults, ridicule, bump, slight, ice grill (hard looks), lack of proper acknowledgment, cheating, deception, domination, cunning, unwarranted threats, or unprovoked physical attack. One hundred twenty-nine situations reflect identity or respect concerns according to respondents. These violent events account for 66.5% of all of the events described by respondents.¹

Three distinctive types of challenges to identity are described: personal, material, and social. Personal attacks challenge who a person has a right to be (projected self-image), material affronts contest what possessions a person has a right to have, and finally, relational assaults who a person has a right to be in relationship with. The parameters of a character contest are determined by social interactions among actors of differing status ("mixed interactions") in specific contexts. The data, show that the "character contest" is indeed prominent during the adolescent years for our sample. In chapter 6, we develop a series of hypotheses regarding the role of violence in shaping, maintaining, and recovering social identity.

a. Personal Attacks. Respondents describe a variety of situations where the non-verbal communication between two or more parties in a setting resulted in violent conflict. These situations most often involve a direct challenge to the rights of each individual over defining and controlling both the situation and space. In some cases, the initial exchange is simply an attempt at defining a situation or what Luckenbill has called the “naming” stage. As illustrated by the examples below, many factors effect situational definitions in potential conflict situations. Several examples below show how violent events can erupt out of what respondents call “ice grills,” “icing,” “grilling,” “hard profiling,” or “stare downs.” This form of communication between strangers within certain age-demographic groups is common on the street. In some situations, a look may be targeted at an individual with the goal of discovering more about his intentions in the setting. In other cases, ice grills are aggressive attempts to defend against any potential threat anticipated by the presence of a stranger in the neighborhood. These gestures speak loudly in a variety of settings to ward off attacks and identify situations where attacks may be successful.

The first example the opponent is ice grilling the respondent and he becomes angry to the point of thinking about getting his gun. He interprets the opponent’s ice grill as an extremely hostile threat and anticipates the opponent’s return to the scene with a gun. This conflict may have escalated further if a third party who is a mutual friend had not intervened. He explains:

(DB) Tell me what happen. (ENYN09) We went to the spot to buy weed. (DB) Mmm Hmm. (ENYN09) So this dude came up start ice grilling me. (DB) What caused the beef? (ENYN09) he was grilling [me] Then he ran up straight to the block. He went for his gun and I was gonna go for mine but my man came over. My man right there, [we] use to go to school with each other. So we just dead that, squashed it. (DB) What made you decide not to hurt your opponent (ENYN09) Cause he [was] my man’s peoples.

Looking back on the situation, the respondent feels that “if I had a gun and was by myself I probably woulda shot him.” The ice grill is perceived as serious personal attack. The respondent only feels willing to drop his grievance with the opponent because of his relationship with the third party.

Many violent events result from taunting and ice grills between the combatants. One such event occurs during a baseball game in jail. The respondent “ices” his opponent for making a “slick comment” and pays for his transgression against this powerful individual with a physical

injury.

(DB) Alright. Try to remember....three or four times in the past, in the past year or two, in nineteen ninety-four and nineteen ninety-five and nineteen ninety-six, that you got into fights with people. I want you to describe the scene so I could picture it, anywhere from jail, in the streets? (ENYN20) The fight, the main fact I can remember is when I got jumped and I had to get a hundred and forty stitches across my eye. Right at the bottom and the situation was... it started on a baseball field where someone said a slick comment towards me and I turned around and I iced him and that person was well known, he was, basically he ran [in] the building and he got all his peoples that was on my unit, my wing [in jail], to take care of his business, so when he was there, I was fighting at least eight people, guys who was doing eighteen to life, lifers and there was not no skinny, you know, they wasn't no skinny puney people, they've been there, they've been working out, they've been, you know, so called disser, so it was, it was a rough battle. (DB) How the fight had started? (ENYN20) I already told you how it started, it started because... (DB) I mean like in your unit, how did they approach you? (ENYN20) They approach me, they approached the way, you know, handled their business, they just said, 'pardon me may I speak to you.' and once I came inside that room then, we got it on.

b. Outsider Status and Identity Uncertainty. One central theme in identity or status related violent events that identity challenges which result in violent events are more often between strangers. The examples presented below illustrate how these conflicts unfold a variety of situations.

Bumps represent a personal attack. One respondent reacts to a bump by swinging at the opponent. While this seemingly spontaneous conflict could have resulted in a physical fight without a weapon, the actor choose instead to get his gun. He explains the situation:

(DB) Can you tell me about a gun event that you was involved in? I want you to tell me what happened, what it was over, everything. (SBN71) I was walking through the projects one day. I was going to a party. It's not around my hood, [I] ain't know nobody around there. And this kid bumped me. And I swung at him. Then he ran to go get his people. And he came back and he shot at me twice. (DB) So you so you said he bumped you? (SBN71) Yeah. (DB) And then what you did? (SBN71) I swung at him. (DB) And then he ran and and got his gun? (SBN71) Yeah. (DB) Um was there some type of argument before the gun got involved? (SBN71) Nah just when he bumped me and I swung at him. (DB) Why you swung at him for? (SBN71) Cause he bump me and then he look back like he was like he was going to do something. So I swung. (DB) What he say? (SBN71) 'What's the fuck wrong with you man?' (DB) What was it about this situation that made it necessary to handle it the way you did? (SBN71) They way he talk to me. And he never knew me before. (DB) Who made the first move

toward violence? (SBN71) Actually I did. (DB) You swung at him? (SBN71) Yeah. (DB) What did he do after that? (SBN71) he ran to get his gun. (DB) Was anybody else around? (SBN71) His peoples. (DB) What kind of stuff was they sayin? (SBN71) Kill that nigger. (DB) How did you feel about what his friends was sayin? Were you afraid? (SBN71) I was. Man with a gun shooting.

The other individuals in the situation are clearly against the respondent and verbally promote the opponent's gun use. The event escalates to a gun incident quickly and the respondent flees the scene successfully without injury. Several factors make SBN71's status in that neighborhood problematic. He is vulnerable to attack because of his outsider status and he did not have a gun.

In the gun event example below the respondent is confronted by a member of the Deceptacons crew while walking with a female through a park. The unarmed opponent is known to the respondent as a "Big Willy" from a nearby neighborhood. The opponent makes the first physical move toward violence by hitting the respondent and continues to attack him. The respondent, as described below, reacts by pulling out a gun from his pocket and shoots the opponent in the leg. He explains:

(DB) Can you tell me what happened and describe the situation, how it happened and what it was over? (ENYN58) All right, in the park a crew named Deceps (Deceptacons) came. This kid smack me, he smack me in front of a female, and you know you can't have things like that. I was about 17 at the time and I had a lil' two five in my pocket. (DB) All right, what happened next and how did it turn to a gun situation? (ENYN58) Well, first of all, I knew it was on for the simple fact is, every time he got close I backed up, he got closer, every time I backed off he, he came closer. I knew it was gonna turn into a gun situation for the simple fact I know what I had on me, and I kept sayin, ' you know, the next time I back up, I'm not movin' no more, and then he come messin' me, whatever he do, if he don't knock me out, I'll shoot him. That was on my mind. You know and after he did it, I jumped back at him but I ain't swing, my mind was tellin me, why swing when you can just hit this nigger off right there and get outta there, you know. So, I took a couple shots at him, hit him in the bottom of his legs...

In this description we see how the respondent uses his anticipation of the opponent's actions to make a decision for his own action. Since the respondent has the gun in his pocket and the opponent did not as he explains "knock me out" he looks for options for using the weapon in self-defense. In the heat of the situation, he concludes that his opponent's failure to disable him equals an opportunity for a defensive move against the attacker. According to this account, the

respondent is pushed by the opponent to a point where violence is necessary.

Another respondent became involved in gun conflict when his opponent bumped him in a party. The respondent is high and did not accept the apology of the opponent. The event unfolded in the following way:

(DT) All right, let's talk about the gun event. What happened? Can you describe the situation? And how did it happen, what started it? (ENYN56) It's like, like I said before, you know, just me and my man was just jiving and bugging out, dancing and shit, you know, drinking, smoking. Shit, some niggers just wanted to try to play you and shit, make us look stupid. So, you know, pulled out the gun and started shooting in the fucking house and shit, everybody screaming and shit. Me and the niggers shot back at them. They shot my man twice. So and then after that, like everybody just started screaming and running, so we like, just started shooting. (DT) Was there some kind of argument before the guns was used? (ENYN56) Nah. Yeah, of course, you know, of course, you know. (DT) So tell me like everything that was said. (ENYN56) All right, like me and my man, right, we was dancing and shit, smoking, all that, drunk like a motherfucker, you know? So like one of, some, some punk, you know, like bumped my man and shit, you know. So, you know, they came out arguing and shit, you know, pussy and this and that, you know. So we was like, all right, so then I went up to my man I was like "what's the deal and shit", he was like "I don't know somebody just trying to play you. So I just started shooting at them, you know? Fuck it. (ENYN56) We was high and shit so I was like, I'ma shoot these motherfuckers, so that's that...

As the example below illustrates, individuals may react to bumps or "hard profiling" in a less confrontational way. In this case, the "bumpee" waits to attack the "bumper" when he is least expecting it. The respondent makes sense this experience as a punishment for his foolish behavior. He explains:

(G-44) I got shot over here [showing interviewer the scar]... I got stabbed twice in my back too. (RM) For what? (G-44) Bullshitting, I got fucked up one day and I just when I first started out. I just thought I was *the man*. (RM) How old were you? (G-44) Um. Fifteen, um yeah about fifteen. (RM) And you got stabbed twice in your back? (G-44) It's cause... I was... it was a whole bunch... we went to this party and I sometimes (at that time) I thought I was the man cause I smoked weed so I thought I was *the man*. So I use to act like a fool, profile, I use to profile hard. Going into parties rock my shoulders bumping people and after the party was over I got jumped and I got stabbed twice. (RM) You got stabbed twice? (G-44) Yeah. (RM) By somebody in the party that you bumped? (G-44) Yeah. I don't even know who stabbed me I just know I got jumped and somebody stabbed me. (RM) You was leaving the party and some guy just ran up on you? (G-44) Yeah. I wasn't by myself though everybody that was with me ran. Everybody that was with me

ran. (RM) So what went through your mind when you got stabbed? How you felt? (G-44) How I felt psst. Tell me you could see it (showing his scar)? (RM) Yeah I see it. (G-44) You see both of them? (RM) Yeah I see them one up and one down right? (G-44) Yeah. Yeah. (RM) What they stabbed you with a knife? (G-44) Huh. (RM) A knife? (G-44) Nah. I guess it was a ice pick.

In the next example, the respondent immediately senses the opponent's hostile stance toward him as soon as he enters a party. Again, the respondent is an outsider to the neighborhood and puts himself in a risky situation by attending the party. In this case, however, he comes prepared to protect himself with his gun, if necessary. The story suggests that the respondent probably attends the party because a girl he is interested would be there. He explains:

(JM) You wasn't scared or nothing? (G-80) Nah I wasn't scared I was thinking about murdering the nigger. I'm saying nigger came up to my face talking shit. (JM) So that night, so how did y'all get into that beef? (G-80) We went in the party...we walk we walked up in the party. (JM) Who started it? (G-80) Ain't nobody really start it you know I'm saying. As soon as I walked in the party niggers was looking at me hard. (JM) True. (G-80) So I tried to ignore that know [what] I'm saying. So I started with this chick in there kid. Niggers was looking at me wrong from when I first stepped in the party. Niggers was playing themselves. Talking about, 'look at the new faces up in here.' Cause I ain't from around there. (JM) So what, true true. Who made first moves out there..? (G-80) When we was in the party I, I made the first move I told money 'let's go outside.' He came up to me so I told him 'let's go outside.' It was in a small ass little apartment. A little room. With the lights off. All his peoples were there. But I wasn't sweating it cause I had my gun on me. (JM) True. (JM) You know if money was strapped? (G-80) Nah he wasn't strapped. Cause when he went outside, he went back... he ran back inside when I pulled out, he ran back inside. (JM) You don't know if he had a joint in there? (G-80) Yeah. He musta have a joint inside there. Yeah. I'm saying. It was his party.

c. Accusation: Attacks of Honor. Many violent events result from situations where one or more individuals make accusations or claims to the other for some wrong that he supposedly commits. The accused would typically respond with a hostile reaction which would almost always push the dispute further toward violence. These exchanges could be classified as attempts at obtaining justice or as Black (1983; 1993) has called "self-help." The accusations anger the respondent and the respondent's denial of the claim fuels a physical fight between the two parties.

(RM) What was ya'll fighting for ya'll money? Drugs? (G-41) I mean the nigga

came home talking some bullshit, talking about this drug king and his girlfriend or whatever. He can't find his girlfriend or whatever. [That] "we killed her" or whatever some bullshit, it was over bullshit. (RM) It was... it was bullshit. (G-41) Yeah. It ain't nothing to die for. (RM) I mean when you think about it now. (G-41) Yeah. I think about it now and psss..... It's like you saying, "it was bullshit" that ain't nothing to die for man not for bullshit man. Word up! I'd die for my moms, my kids that's it. I ain't dying for no words man. Word!!!

The description above gives only the middle event in a series of related exchanges which result in several deaths. This example illustrates the seriousness evoked by accusations.

Hostility is a common response to accusations of stealing or dishonesty. False accusations in front of others are often taken extremely personally and are most frequently denied by actors in the situations described. Being accused is typically received as personal threat or attack of one's name or personal honor. Accusations often open situations which eventually moved to violent events.

(DB) Tell me what happened, describe the situation so I could picture it how it happened what it was over? (ENYN64) A fair one all right. I remember I got in a fight at school. Cause me and my man we was cutting and shit. And somebody coat got stolen out they locker. The kid approached me and he was like I heard you got my coat. I told him I didn't have it. So he started getting loud and shit. So I snuffed that nigga. So he went and told his peoples and then they came back and they tried to jump us. My man was there so we just was fighting, we got beat up and all but we got him back. (DB) Was there a specific point you realized you was going to have to get violent? (ENYN64) Yeah. (DB) How did you know? (ENYN64) Cause I was like I ain't got your coat and he stood up in my face trying to yell and shit. So I was yo man back the fuck up you know, and the nigga was still talking shit so I was like alright we going to have to brawl. We going to have to do this shit.

Respondents explain that the way in which an individual makes a claim or accusation makes a difference in the way he would respond to it. Depending on the situation, there is a "right" way and a "wrong" way to express a grievance. Fighting or other violence is an important part of defining these contests.

d. Material Attacks. Identity attacks often include the taking of another's possession as a statement of dominance or control. Respondents describe a variety of situations where they had taken the possessions of others, others had taken their possessions, and the battles that are waged

to keep possessions. These material attacks reflect attempts to identify, maintain, and degrade social identity. Three examples are provided below. In the first example the respondent defends himself and his cousins against a personal and material attack. The event starts when the seventeen year old respondent is sitting on the stoop of a tattoo parlor in another neighborhood with his cousins when four guys walk towards them from down the block. He explains:

(RM) So tell me about the time you had to pistol-whip somebody? (G-42) Oh. We went downstairs we was chilling in front of the place it was kind of hot upstairs, we was getting bored so we wanted to go outside so we just stepped outside and sat right outside on the stoop. And, I don't know for one reason or another there was like four black kids walking on the block, we over [here] talking amongst ourselves, we not paying attention to them you know what I'm saying. They a little older than us so we like yo they ain't acknowledging us we ain't acknowledging them. We carrying on our conversation. And so me and my cousin in front of one stoop and about like two feet over there's another stoop and my man was sitting there and he had on little New York knickerbocker hat a little phat hat that just came out. The first two set of kids walk by and they was just kind of looking but I kind of ignored them cause I was talking to my cousin but my man he's a little guy too so he wasn't looking for no trouble or nothing like that but he ain't going to let nobody disrespect him neither. So the first two walked by they ain't even look at nobody, the second two that's walking behind them they just looking and you know carrying they little conversation too. They walked by me and my cousin and as the passing my friend they just, one of them snatched his hat of his head, and put it on his head he was like 'what money, what you want to do for this?' so my man kind of stepped up and he was like 'yo what's up man I ain't trying to have that.' And kind of snatched it back, he got a chance to grab it back and my cousin had stepped up too. It was four of them and it was like three of us so we was like damn whatever, whatever they going to have to leave us here on the floor, leave all of us here. So they was like what and then the other two that was in the front turned around they was like oh. What's up man ya'll nigga's want to do these nigga's or what? They tried to treat us like we was herbs. So that's kind of like, I kind of felt funny.

The respondent reports "they tried to treat us like we was herbs." He feels disrespected and becomes angry. As the respondent explains, he takes a gun from his aunt's purse and pulls it out to protect his man from the opponents' threats. The gun gives him the ability to counter challenge his opponent's personal and material attack.

(G-42) For one reason or another my aunt just happen to be coming down the steps and at that point soon as she open the door I just grabbed straight for the purse and I pulled the joint out and I was like 'yo what man what ya'll nigga's want to do now?' (RM) Umm. (G-42) And the first two they was like 'yo' and

they started taking off and the other two they was like yo they didn't know whether to run or if I was going to bust or not. So I got kind of close to him where I could swing on him and I swung on him with the joint (boom). And I hit him in his head and that was it. He had to step after that. Then after that I just, I turned around and it was kind of like a cop car coming down the block and I'm glad my aunt grab the joint again and she put it back in her purse and she went upstairs.

The second incident occurs in jail and is a common experience for an individual new to a facility. The young man from East New York explains what happens:

(DB) Can you tell me about a fair fight that you had? (ENYN63) Yeah. (DB) I want you to tell me about what happen? What it was over? What started it, everything? (ENYN63) Well it was when I was in jail, in the sprung. And shit as I went in my bucket and I was missing something I had in my bucket, you know and I saw another kid with it on. So you know I went and I asked him if it was mine. He told me no. So then I didn't stress it for that day, but he kept going around telling everybody he had my shit. So then one of his boys told me yo, my boy said 'if you wanted it back to go in the bathroom.' So I went in the bathroom. (DB) Which sprungs? (ENYN63) Sprung two. I went in the bathroom and there were mad heads there so I thought I was going to get jumped. So the kid gave me the fair one. He rocked me and shit but that I got mines, cause I earned it back and shit and that's it. (DB) How did the situation end? (ENYN63) Well after the fight he came up to me and he told me that since I went out for mine's that if I want my shit that I could have it but that you just don't play him close and he won't play me close. And we just left it like that.

In the third example, the respondent takes ownership of his former friend's dog and refuses to return the dog after keeping him for several weeks. The grievance stems in part from the ability of the respondent to claim the rights to the dog. In the situation, the actors fight for the right of ownership over the dog. Enyn73 reports:

(DB) I want you to tell me about a fair one you had. I want you to tell me what happened what it was over, everything... (ENYN73) I had a fair one right across the street at my house. Last year. Are talking about recently? (DB) Last year, yeah recently? (ENYN73) Recently um, this boy I had a fight right in front of my building. Cause I had this, he had his dog so he had no home so I was like I'll take it. The dog's name was Homicide. I trained that dog to be mean to chase cats, fight when I wanted him to fight. Shit, when I wanta make him shit. I did all that. I could put him on the corner and walk around the block or go to park somewhere, he'd be right there when I come home. (DB) What you all had the fight for? (ENYN73) Over that dog, he was like, 'yo, why you took my dog?' I was like,

'no I didn't take your dog. You gave your dog...' [I] took it and I trained it, and I ain't giving that shit back. Cause I wasted like two-three hundred off that dog, for the shoots, everything. Come on I had that dog for everything. (DB) Who made the first move towards violence? (ENYN73) He did. (DB) What was it? (ENYN73) He wanted to smack box me, and I didn't want to just smack box. And he swung on me, and I like he smacked me so I punched him in his jaw. Then me and him... I started keep on punching him. (DB) What was you trying to accomplish when you hit him? (ENYN73) To stop playing with me, I wasn't playing with you so don't play with me. (DB) What was the outcome of the fight, after the fight did anything change about where you hung out at? (ENYN73) I had to watch my back cause he come back for me. (DB) After the fight did you do anything extra to protect yourself? (ENYN73) Yeah. (DB) What? (ENYN73) Carry my gun. (DB) What sort of relationship did you have with the guy after the fight? (ENYN73) Me and him still ain't friends to this day.

C. Competition over Girls, Social Identity, and Violent Events

Social interaction among males in adolescence reflects a growing interest and preoccupation with sexuality and heterosexual companionship (Collins and Repinski, 1994; Brown, Mory, and Kinney, 1994; Eder, 1995; Gilligan, 1982). Violence is one of many strategies used by young males to obtain and sustain relationships with females in a context where competition is perceived as great. "Girls" are cited as the cause of violent events in 94 of the 306 incidents described by our respondents. These situations typically fall into five main categories: sexual competition (both maintaining and acquiring), the protection of a girl's honor and reputation, the defense of a female after physical victimization, girls spreading rumors and the escalation of disputes through gossip, and the amplification of impression management in the presence of a *relevant* female. Like toughness, relations with females may provide males with opportunities for developing valued social identities.

The role of competition over females involve a number of interesting social processes which reflect both a normative system and violations of those rules. The competition for females often reflects multiple definitions of the situation including: (a) the definition of the young man who perceives himself as having a particular girl; (b) the definition of the young man who wants a particular girl, (c) the definition of the female who may or may not consider herself to be in a relationship with a particular male and (d) the definitions of observers to these social relations who may make public judgments and pronouncements. These differing definitions of the

relationship or dating situation often produces conflict and results in violent encounters among competitors.

The social world of dating and sexual behavior among young males is described as highly competitive, status conferring, and potentially dangerous. Respondents frequently characterize several unspoken or implicit rules of the dating game. For example, the rules for one male (who “has” the female) to another (who wants the female) seemed to include: don’t look at, talk to, talk about, befriend, touch, have sex with, or attempt to have sex with another man’s girl. Although these norms are understood by the young males in our sample, they are frequently violated when the opportunity presents itself.

Violations of these rules also seems to be *relationship dependent*, meaning that young men generally avoid selecting potential “mates” from among those females who are in relationship with members of the young man’s own social network. Girls who are not part of this social network are considered “fair game” for competition. Again, we see that respect (in this case, applied to the rules of dating competition) is granted almost exclusively to members of one’s social network. Violations of dating competition among members of the same social network is frequently characterized as one reason for serious violence among peeps and the break up of long lasting male friendships. It seems the ambiguity associated with determining exactly *when and how* a girl became one man’s girl could become a source of conflict among males. Meanings attached to “dating” situations and female “commitment” to these males typically is defined by the males who often internalize definitions of monogamous relations with females (regardless of the females definition of the relationship and often outward evidence to the contrary).

Violence comes into sexual competition in two ways, first, defending existing relationships and second, challenging others for the right to new relationships with females. Once this definition takes hold, respondent describe the need to defend that status at any cost. It seems that the rules of competition for females is defined differently for those who are seeking to attract a certain female.

1. Sexual Competition

Respondents describe many scenarios where rule violations regarding relationships with

females result in violent events. The escalation of these situations seems to follow certain patterns including the identification of an advance on one's girl by another man, the lack of a respectful account to the "boyfriend," and physical rebuttal without a verbal account by the opponent. The example below illustrates the "don't talk to my girl" rule.

(JM) Tell me one that you remember the most? (G-83) One time I was chillin, we was chillin, me and my boys on fucking corner, ...chillin talking to fucking girls. Next thing you know, nigga fucking roll up in a fucking Lexus, and niggas said 'yo, you niggas talking to the fucking wrong bitches. These bitches are trouble kid.' So we ain't pay no attention, we just keep on talking to bitches, them bitches looked good. We wanted to hit the bitches up. (JM) True (G-83) So we keep on talking to them, ...and their fucking men came... and them niggas just started fucking talking shit, kid. So we just pulled out, and they pulled out. Niggas started running and shit, so we just did some crazy shit. Shot and shit, ...and the cops came and we all broke out (left) man.

The next example illustrates the "don't touch rule" and what happens when one party does not give a proper account for his actions. The respondent interprets the touching of his girl as a disrespect and asks the opponent for an acknowledgment of his mistake, instead he gets challenged to step outside to fight for the girl. The event unfolds into a shooting as described by the respondent. He explains:

(G-76) Yeah, man, we was at a party, man, this cat started throwing his arm around, ...this girl I was with and everything, he was trying to rub up against her.... (DT) What he was trying to dance with her? (G-76) Yeah, man, but she didn't wanna dance with him, and he was rubbing up, he was drunk, and shit, boom, I tell him, you know how you be trying to avoid shit? I tell him 'you know I'm with her don't disrespect me like than, man,' and he was like 'what son, what what, let's take this outside, son, what you want!' I'm like 'say no more, say no more.' Everybody go outside, and once I walk out, *Bong*, he snuffed (punched) me. He caught me, I wasn't really dazed, I was upset though. *Boom*, my man passes me the .380, and shit, the Chrome. *Bong*, I hit him with the butt of it. I pistol whipped him, right in his head. Then he snuffs me. So then umm his man is going to get him something I don't know what it was, look like it was a Revolver. His man hit 'em off, right when he hitting him off, *Bong*. I blazed [shot] him, I hit 'em two times. I caught him right there, on his back, his stomach and his back, his stomach first then he turned around and I caught him in the back. Then I bounced, I got caught half an hour later.

The next example illustrates what happens when a guy befriends another man's girlfriend with the intention of winning her away from the other man. Friendship is used as a mask for

additional intentions. The respondent who explains this event is pulled into the beef to assist his brother who has become friendly with another man's girl. He explains:

(RM) Did you ever get into a fight that accelerated into something else? (G-44) Yeah. (RM) What? Tell me about that what happen? (G-44) Alright um. One time, one time my brother he was messing with this girl in [name of housing project]. And um. Pssst.... she had a man and um. Every time her man use to go there it's like my brother use to give him this dirty look. ...And um. Pssst. I don't know one time the dude just got sick and tired of it and um. Pssst. Screamed on my brother. My brother shut up and he didn't say nothing. (RM) When was this like? (G-44) It was like pssst. Like two years ago. (RM) Alright. Where they was when he screamed on him? (G-44) They was in [HOUSING PROJECT NAME]. At the girl house. (RM) And he was there? Your brother was with the girl? (G-44) Yeah. (RM) And her man came? (G-44) Her man came yeah cause they act.. Let me tell you her girl, I mean duke girl always told him that 'Nah. we just friends we been friends for a while after that it was dead.' My brother use to give him this dirty looks. He not suppose to, he supposed to be some DL (down low) nigga, but my brother wanted more from her you know cause she use to tell him that she wanted more from him too. So my brother was trying to get her to leave him and come to him. So the dude, um, I guess he was [not] trying to hear it. ... Like a week later or two, a week later or two he flipped on him he flipped on him and um then. (RM) You all beat him up? (G-44) Yeah. (RM) Why? (G-44) I guess cause of what he said. My brother never went out kid. (RM) Cause of what he said cause he just screamed on him? So Ya'll jumped him? (G-44) Yeah. We jumped him. And then.... (RM) I mean what made you do that? What was going through your mind you know when you did something like that? (G-44) What was going through my mind? (RM) Yeah. (G-44) I mean I was upset.. (RM) You was upset? (G-44) I was upset. I was just upset at the fact that um. That he played, that duke played my brother and shit I wasn't thinking about that he had probable cause or nothing. (RM) Yeah. You was just rolling with your brother? (G-44) Yeah I was just down with my brother. (Laughs) I was just down for my brother. (RM) Alright.

This example also shows how girls can play an important role in facilitating and escalating conflict through talk and playing one male off another. The young men in this situation believe that the girl has told her boyfriend where to find the friend even though the girl denies doing so. He continues the story:

(G-44) And we just flipped him and then I guess his girl, I guess his girl had told her man where we stayed at and where we live at and nigga's started coming around looking and asking for us and stuff but nobody wasn't saying nothing. (RM) The kids was coming to Brownsville? (G-44) Yeah. They use to come into our projects. They use to come I mean come like pss. Two cars deep two cars, I

don't know that's not much heads but still they use to come in two cars deep so um. My brother had um. My brother had told anytime the next time we see those dudes to call him. And then they came around again [in] the same car. This time they use to just come around searching they ask [people] like one or two, three times and then they stopped asking they just was with the searching just in case they see us. My brother had told my man the next time you see the car call me. We had called my brother and um... (RM) How that made you feel knowing that now these guys are looking for you? (G-44) I was scared, I was scared to death. I was scared out my sock. I was scared to death. And um. My brother he was scared too but he wasn't showing it. Me I use to look at every corner. Them nigga's probably got guns, want to take me out or something and I use a gun so I knew you could die, die. So um. My brother had two guns he had a four-fifth (45) and a three eighty (.380) in the house. So um my man had called me one day saying that he saw the car. [He said] '[that's] the car right there, the car right there, oh shit.' We ran upstairs and we got our ghats. So they was still riding around the block so we just started shooting at the car and shit. (RM) You was shooting too? (G-44) Yeah. I was shooting. (RM) Did anybody get hit in the car? (G-44) I don't know. (RM) Oh. Was this um day light? Nighttime? (G-44) Yeah it was day light. (RM) Did the cops come? (G-44) Nah. They came but not for us. (RM) How about those guys what they do drive off? (G-44) Yeah. They drove off. And didn't never come back every since. (RM) So um. After that, that was it? (G-44) Yeah after that, that was it my brother pss. Afterwards, the next time, he saw the girl he smacked her and told her why, what she doing telling people where, where he live at and she talking about she didn't tell nobody nothing. He told her to tell her man 'fuck it, if he want it just keep bringing it' talking shit out his mouth. (RM) Who your brother? (G-44) Yeah he be talking shit out his mouth. He keep telling the girl 'yo tell that nigga to come back.' They never came back...

Several respondents blame females for these types of problems. Females are expected to uphold traditional values while males are not. One respondent explains how he recently handled a situation like this:

(ENYN16) Well, recently, this guy stepped to me about being with his girl and shit like that. You know, he came at me on a aggressive tip, like 'I heard you been fucking with my chick and the whole nine.' So, you know, I'm not a nigga to fight over a broad. And obviously he was a nigga that wasn't used to having many girls and shit. That's why he was ready to fight for this one. So I had to school the nigga, I was like, 'yo, don't ever step to another man over a girl. Because nine times out of ten, it's the girl's fault. You know, if the girl doesn't mind, then it doesn't matter. That's something that you got to step to your girl over,' and that's what I let the nigga know. It's mind over matter. If your girl don't mind, it don't matter. Half the time, like the saying goes, your bitch chose me. Fight your

broad, don't fight me. I'll leave the chick alone. If that's the case, I mean, if you stressing them like that, but that's not my bag, you know? I have to let him know that, so that shit is squashed. He respected me more, being a man, to let him, now. You know, he was a young nigga, so you know that was that.

Parties, clubs, and other social settings where members of different social cliques intermingle are often hot beds for violence. Competition over the attention of females is frequently cited as a source of this conflict. Respondents' describe several assumptions about how public gatherings are important for gaining and maintaining male-female relationships. Males who already have girlfriends perceive these situations as opportunities to show off their girls and have a good time. Males who are not with a female perceive parties or clubs as locations for picking up or hitting on women. As one respondent explains girls at clubs and parties are fair game. He explains:

(JM) ...What was they saying when the beef went down? (SBN33) My man...one man was talking to, dancing with this girl, and I'm saying, he was like, 'nigga's it's a party, niggas is dancing with everybody, I didn't know that was your girl. Don't bring your girl to a party if you don't want a nigga dancing with her.'

(JM) So what you, what you was telling that kid? (G-80) Nah I'm saying I just explained ...the girl was in the party, ...so we was just dancing. He wanna act [hard] come out his face, talking 'bout that's his girl. I'm saying straight up and down I don't care if that's your girl. She's was in the party, ...she looking good, ...that's about it. (JM) True true true.

According to respondents, many of the neighborhood or territorial disputes are connected closely with girls. Many respondents describe frequenting other projects or parts of the neighborhood where they are generally not welcome by the young men who live there for the purpose of dating or rapping to the local girls. Of course, this is considered an outward display of disrespect toward the young men who live there. Many conflicts erupt back and forth between different groups whose "interests" are at stake. One respondent explains what happens in East New York,

(RM) So what you was saying about you know using the Projects? (G-18) Yeah. We was walking through there and shit. Actually, one of my peoples went up to see a girl, that's mostly what beefs come from too. Girls and shit. Niggas do the weirdest things for girls. But we went up there. He told us wait outside and shit.

We had some weed and shit. We was smokin' mindin' our own business and shit then the niggas from the other side come up and ask mad questions, 'who this?' you know, like 'who the fuck are you?' and I'm like, you know, 'who the fuck are YOU!?' and shit. What the hell are you, what's the problem, man, we just chillin'. So, you know, we started with the lip and shit. And one thing led to another and we was fightin' and everybody started pullin' out and we started bustin' each other, and I think nobody got hit. One person got hit from the Brownsville side. Cause my man hit him up against the chest. I didn't get hit. So, it was a lot of gun play and shit and we started blastin', not really paying.... When people blast I don't think they really aimin' at anyone, you know, a blast is just a blast. A lot of stray bullets be going everywhere, you know. I'm glad we got out of that situation.

2. Projecting the Right Image in Front of your Girl

Identity attacks in front of one's girl was also a source of conflict according to our sample. The presence of girls reportedly increases the stakes of impression management and shows of disrespect by other man. As illustrated in the example below, the display of disrespect may have been an intentionally effort to make the respondent look badly in front of his girl. He explains:

(DT) I'm saying, tell me about that, son, tell me about you pulling out on somebody, son? (G-62) Pulling out on people who try to act hard, try to put my style down and who I represent. (DT) But why they wanna try to diss you though, son? (G-62) Cause they see I got a fly chick, they call me a fagot or pretty boy, pretty boy loose, nigga tried to put me down one day when I was with this chick, so I pulled out on him. (DT) So, you was with the chick, you pulled out on him? (G-62) Yeah. He tried to play me in front of a shorty (girl). (DT) Why he tried to play you though son?... (G-62) This nigga was jealous, man. (DT) Oh jealousy? (G-62) Jealousy, jealous ones envy all the time, that why a lot of shit be happening, cause jealousy. They see you got this, they ain't got it, they want and they wanna do something about it. (DT) So, was it good for the girl when you pulled out? (G-62) Nah, she was kind of scared, but I had to calm her down. After all that I ain't never seen duke again.

The next example shows how a respondent thought that pulling a gun on a guy who is accusing him of stealing a car is done in part to save face in front of his girl and to protect her from harm. He explains:

(G-58) Well, one time I was up in my girl's projects, and some dude came up to me and said I stole his car and I was like 'I ain't steal your car' he was like 'yeah,

it was you, somebody pointed you out,' I was like 'look the first thing I don't steal in the Bronx, second thing is I got a car, I got everything I need in my car' why would I wanna steal his? So he came up to me and told me he had a fucking knife, that time I used to carry the gun in my car cause like I said I did the car jacking, you know, I used to walk everything on me, prepared just in case I might see a car I like. And umm, I reached under my seat and put the gun dead up in his face, you know, I'm in the middle of the housing projects, I wasn't thinking. ...(DT) So why do you think you did what you did? (G-58) You know, I ain't the way he approached me, you know what I'm saying? I said he try to step to me with a knife. (DT) When he approached you what went through your mind? (G-58) I was like 'aw, shit,' I was like 'here I go again with fights,' you know what I'm saying, cause you know, he disrespected me, I'm chillin there with my girl, I got beef. Take me alone, but he gonna take me when I'm with my girl, I look at it like this, I got my own personal beef, I don't need nobody else getting hurt. (DT) True. (G-58) You know, so..... (DT) What was happening with you that day? Was you stressed out, busy? (G-58) Nah, I just went to pick her up, keeping myself busy, thinking about a cool date, and he comes up to me with his hand on a fucking knife, like I was suppose to run or something, c'mon I got a fully loaded in my car. I wasn't stressing it, I wasn't stressing nothing. I looked at it like this 'if you get shot up by me you just get shot up,' I wasn't hesitating back then, you know, cause I always looked at shit like this 'you do what you gotta do.' (DT) How long did the dispute between you and that dude went on, you know, after you pulled out on em? (G-58) After that, umm, nothing, he was saying 'oh, I know where you live at,' this, this and that, to him, I felt that was a personal threat against me, ...trying to scare me, but ...as soon as I pulled out he, man I haven't seen him since.

3. Protecting Her Reputation

A young man is supposed to fight for the name of his girl whenever possible because her image reflects directly on his own status among peers. When one individual makes fun of or says negative things about another man's girl it is taken as a disrespect of him and becomes a source of conflict or beef. The next example illustrates this process.

(RM) What happen? A shootout? (ENYN02) Not a shoot out but I shot at somebody. (RM) when after that.? (ENYN02) This year like a week ago. (RM) like a week ago? (ENYN02) Like two weeks ago. (RM) what happen? (ENYN02) We was chasing after this kid that I beef with. He live on the other side in the back of this building. (RM) Why you got beef with him? (ENYN02) Cause I told some stupid shit I told this girl to take off the wig. (RM) You told a girl to take her wig off? (ENYN02) (Laughing) yeah! Then he came in my face riffing (talking shit) and I was like ah-ight I'ma see you again so I saw him

walking, started just shooting at him. Hit a little kid in his leg. (RM) You hit a little kid in the leg? (ENYN02) Yeah the kid like thirteen. (RM) word!

The example described below starts over a comment about a girl and later escalates into a knife event between multiple participants. The respondent's 17 year old friend did not like the way a stranger on the train is talking about his girlfriends. After this first confrontation, the friend relays the story to his clique and they go back to find this man who frequently sold incense on the subway. He explains:

(ENYN04) This Muslim man was selling incense on a train and my man was on the train with his girl and another girl. So the Muslim man was going through the car and he's like, oh you a pimp. My man was like, the nigga big, that's why I don't think my man didn't nothin' by himself. So my man is like, 'fuck you talking about, that's my fucking girl, you trying to call my girl a whore, what the fuck wrong with you man.'

4. Defending and Retaliating for Girls

Several respondents describe situations where girls are involved in their own violent conflict and the young men get involved when the female has been victimized. The following example shows how several males are drawn into the situation to obtain justice for their man's girlfriend after she had been robbed and injured by other females. He explains:

(JM) So how did they rob her? (SBN31) What happen it was three, when I hear her story, I'ma tell you her story, her story was, three *morenas* came up to her, morena is black, black females and they... They just took the earrings from her, they just took them, man. (JM) They just took them? (SBN31) They just took them, snatched them of her ear and left the rip mark in her ear, they didn't even bother to tell her to take it off, they just ripped the shit off. (JM) So she went back to your neighborhood crying? (SBN31) She went back after she came out the hospital. ...(SBN31) ...They robbed her for her earrings, so we were going back there with my man 'n shit with his girl (JM) All right. The girl and the guy was from your block? (SBN31) Yeah, the girl and the guy was from my block. They robbed my man, my family member, they robbed his girl. (JM) What she was doing, she was walking out there? (SBN31) Yeah, she was walking through and since my family member has money, he bought her these awesome earrings and these black bitches robbed her. So we went back to get these black bitches, not to hurt them, 'cause I don't hurt females, just to go tell them we wanted the earrings back or the money back. The females' mans fronted on us. They started busting at us, so we said fuck that, man. We busted back. ...(JM) So how many

were y'all like? (SBN31) It was eight of us, man. ...(JM) All right, so what went down when y'all went back? (SBN31) When we back, we went back with intentions to either get the ear rings back or hell would have to break loose and I don't care. (JM) So was this in the night time, the evening? (SBN31) Yeah, yeah, we went back approximately 12:00, man, 12 (JM) At night? (SBN31) Yeah, 12 to 1:00. After we got our crew together. (JM) So it wasn't nobody out there really, right? (SBN31) There was really nobody out there. But them kids that started busting at us. (JM) How many were there about? (SBN31) It was, I think, I seen, from what I seen, I was under the car, but I took a peek, I seen three kids. I seen three of them. ...(JM) All right, so what went down after that? (SBN31) After that, after they shot at us and we shot at them, we left, man. We went back to our block and to tell you the truth, we ain't never go back to do nothing. My man bought his girl some more earrings the following day, she couldn't put them in because her ear was ripped, so she stitched her ears up and that was it. And now she's wearing her earrings in '96. (JM) So nobody got hurt? (SBN31) Nobody got hurt from what I hear. ...(JM) ...What was going through your mind? (SBN31) What was going through my mind? Well, a little bit of fear and anger. Fear and anger. Anger because I don't like the way they robbed us and fear because I didn't know what was going to be ahead of me when I got there, I didn't know what was coming... said man, fear, 'cause I didn't know what was going to be in front of me, I tell you I can't tell the future, man, I'm not a gypsy, man. But I was scared. I had fear and anger.

Another respondent describes a situation in a club where he was working as a doorman. In this situation, the respondent gets involved in a physical fight between a man and his girlfriend. The respondent is attempting to protect the girl and ends up getting arrested for assault when the opponent and his girlfriend press charges against him.

(ENYN16) I worked in a club, and this kid was beating up on this girl, you know. So I went to jump in to break up the fight. So at that time, you know, he swung at me. He ended up wanting to fight me, swung at me. I swung back, caught him in the jaw about two or three times, you know. Dropped him on the floor, pulled out my gun and I pistol whipped him. Then I kicked the shit out of him and left him there.

In sum, girls or young women play a significant role in the social construction of violent events among our sample of inner-city adolescent and young adult males. These roles reflect certain social processes that have been observed in a variety of other settings (see for example, Eder, 1995; Kinney, 1990; Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1985; Horowitz and Schwartz, 1974; Majors and Billson, 1992; Hagedorn, 1997; Oliver, 1994; Polk, 1994; Campbell, 1993;

Kruttschnitt, 1995; Bourgois, 1996; Connor, 1995). Again, we find strong support for hegemonic masculinity in the violent events stemming from competition over females.

D. Self-Defense

An event is coded “self-defense” if the respondent feels he is forced to use violence to protect his own safety and health. In this regard, the respondent feels this is the main reason for using violence in the situation. Self-defense is the main reason for the respondent’s involvement in sixty-seven incidents. Young men will fight back when attacked by another for his possessions. Despite the risk of injury the respondent fights his opponent who is armed with a knife at the time. The respondent describes his efforts to keep his bike:

(JM) So, um what happened? Can you tell me from the beginning? (SBN30) We was riding the bike and he wanted to fight me so I was like for what and he was like 'cause I wanted your bike and you didn't want to give it to me. So I was like, 'nah, I couldn't give it to you. It's not yours.' So he started fighting me. (JM) So how did knife get involved? (SBN30) He pulled it out and I was like, 'you really want to kill me?' He was like, 'yeah give me your bike.' So I was like, 'well then let's throw the hands if, you know, you got the knife.' He was like 'nah, nah,' and so he started swinging with the knife and I picked up a bottle and we started fighting and I hit with a bottle and he cut me and dropped the knife and we started fighting with the hands. (JM) So how did this situation end? (SBN30) We started fighting and he didn't get to take my bike and he left. It ended -- he left. He was like, 'I'll catch you next time.' (JM) He told you? (SBN30) Yeah. I was like yeah whatever. You know? (JM) Yeah.

In the second example, the respondent is attacked and pistol whipped by an older brother of an individual he had problems in the past. The respondent attempts to defend himself but gets beaten in the process. The respondent describes his impetus for the initial attack on the opponent’s little brother as stemming from an attack on his reputation. He explains:

(RM) Any accidents? (ENYN02) Yeah I got pistol whipped. (RM) Word? (ENYN02) In East New York a month ago. (RM) For what? (ENYN02) Beef. (RM) Word. (RM) What happened? (ENYN02) Riding to cypress to my girl house and these grown men from the back of [PROJECT NAME]. I'm riding [a bicycle] and I see a car slowed up in front of me so I didn't pay it no attention and I just see a grown man jump out a car and cock back his gun. I tried to ride off. He chase me and just pulled me and just started pistol whipping me in my face

and I was ah-ight and I went back through there. (RM) Why you got beef with them? (ENYN02) Yeah. (RM) Why? (ENYN02) I got beef with his little brother cause at a party. His little brother was shooting at us and I went back through there and was shooting at them and almost hit his aunt. (RM) When was that? (ENYN02) This was like two months ago. (RM) Ya'll was shooting back and forth at each other and this was in June at a party and ya'll was shooting back and forth at each other? (ENYN02) Un huh. (RM) Over what it was over? (ENYN02) Beef. Dumb beef like I don't like that nigga he think he get busy or he a fagot this and that. (RM) But why ya'll try to shot each other over shit like that? (ENYN02) Cause I felt disrespected. He going around telling everybody that I'm a fagot. (RM) That you soft? (ENYN02) Yeah. (RM) Fucking up your rep? (ENYN02) Yeah. But I know I'm not but I just ain't like it going around telling everybody. (RM) So his older brother he caught you? (ENYN02) Yeah. (RM) So now, so what you did after that? (ENYN02) Well I could keep going back through there but they don't never be out there. (RM) What this was at night? (ENYN02) Huh? When I got pistol whipped? (RM) Yeah. (ENYN02) This was like in afternoon like at four o'clock. (RM) Broad daylight? (ENYN02) Yup. (RM) Ain't no cops come or nothing? True.

Similarly events where the respondent believes he is drawn in to a conflict situation to assist or defend others are classified as “defense of others” events. In these situations, the respondent gets involved violently to either fight for one of his friends or fight with one of his friends. The respondent is not involved with the incident at all until he steps in to defend his friends. Respondents come to the defense of others in thirty-four of situations. The next story about a fair fight in the South Bronx illustrates how individuals get drawn into conflicts to defend others. In this particular case, the respondent comes to his drunken friend’s rescue. The event unfolds outside a house party in a nearby neighborhood. The respondent feels his participation in the fight is necessary to protect an association from his same neighborhood. He explains:

(JM) Could you try and remember three or four different times in the past two years that you got into fights with people? (G-88) Past bout two years? Yeah I got yeah man I've gotten into four fights like them time to Bee. Plus some hectic shit man. One time I had this fight man I was with my man and shit he was out of it, but I was still there. Some nigger try to come up and shit, try to smack him around and just tell him oh you don't belong around here. Yo fuck that I got to defend my peoples from my neighborhood. I fought this nigger Bee. He cut me in my fucking arm and shit. I still got that fucking scar there [showing interviewer]. Everything I look at that shit I just wanna eat this nigger Bee. (JM)

So what started it a bump? A looks? (G-88) Nah I'm saying it was with my man and shit. My man I say was drunk and shit. And he coming up to my man popping shit. Since I was there I gotta defend my man, he can't defend himself. So I took care of the shit I just cuffed this motherfucker B. And right there you know I'm saying. Just shot one on one right there. (JM) So you said there was a gun involved there? (G-88) Nah not in this one over here. It was not a gun and violence, is fair one over here. (JM) Oh all right. So there wasn't no gun involved? (G-88) Nah it was just fair. Fist to fist. (JM) So umm what y'all did you....tell me when it first started? Did it start with the hands? (G-88) Yeah it was with the hands you know what I'm saying. First of all he was trying to play my man so I came up to him, I snuffed him in his fucking face. Cuffed him there. He flew back and shit and I was like oh that shit he threw the hand's up. I like he didn't take shit out on me. He just baw baw...my man was too fucked up, my man wasI was like yo this is for me you know I'm saying. Baw we fighting and shit, the nigger... he struck me like I say he gave me a black eye and shit. But I cuffed him a few times I caught him I did. (JM) True true true. (G-88) That was a good fight be.

This event is about respect according to the respondent. His performance confers respect from the opponent and other observers. He explains:

(JM) So what you was saying when the beef was going down? (G-88) Yo when the beef, at that time kid yo, you mind blanks out. You just go crazy man. Especially me I went crazy. I didn't give a fuck what was going to happen to me Bee. I just soon....I just want to get the shit done you know I'm saying? To you it's all about respect. You gotta get your respect out here man. Gotta get your respect. Is he gon die, is he gon say that shit? It 'bout longevity kid, how long you last. You know. (JM) y'all fought with the hands or y'all was blazing at each other? (G-88) Nah we fought with the hands that's why I like this shit Bee. Fought with the hands, yeah with this motherfucking Dominican that we fought hands and shit. Cab money gave you know he caught me a few times and shit. I ain't gon front. He gave me a nice black eye and shit but fuck it you know I'm saying. As battle kid I caught there a few times too. (JM) Yeah. (G-88) He had his skills and shit like that but I didn't go out like no pussy. Right now I look into his face motherfucker got respect for me, I got respect for him. But if he ever try to play me again yo it's on again. Fuck it.

In the example below the respondent becomes actively involved in a fight to assist his brother. The argument preceding the fight involves both the respondent and his brother against the opponent however ENYN75 left the scene. While he is upstairs the opponent and Enyn75's brother start fighting. When ENYN75 comes back outside he joins the fight. He explains:

(ENYN75) Awright, boom, me and my brother was coming from my cousin crib, we entered the block, right, and there was this guy and this girl on my block, she had her boyfriend with her, so we walking and he looked at me, so I didn't pay it no mind, we walked, so I went in my house. I came back out, so I saw my brother try to fight 'em, so I told my brother to chill, and I went to fight him, and it was over stupidity, it was over argument with his girl.

E. Robbery

The robbery category is fairly straightforward. A robbery event takes place when violence or the threat of violence is used in order to get material goods from people. These situations have nothing to do with the respondent having conflict with the victim. Sixty-one violent events are classified as robberies. The majority of robberies involve gun use (42 of 61 events). Respondents are perpetrators in 39 robbery situations and victims of robbery in 22 situations.

Several examples of robberies are presented below. In the first example, the respondent and several friends use a gun to hold up people attending a party. According to the respondent this robbery is unplanned but reflects rather a spontaneous decision. The respondent describes himself as being the main leader in the robbery.

(RM) So um you can't remember any other robberies after that? (ENYN02) Um. This happen a week ago at party. We was just there chillin, then I saw chains on people neck that I wanted and I had a gun on me and I was with my friends so we just crashed the whole party and I just robbed everybody taking chains and stuff, money. (RM) Just two of ya'll? (ENYN02) Nah it was like bunch of us. (RM) Word. Ya'll had guns? How many of ya'll had guns? (ENYN02) Nah. Only I just had a gun. (RM) Oh word. Anybody know it was you? (ENYN02) Nah I didn't know the kid. (RM) Oh ya'll just went there? (ENYN02) Un huh. (RM) Cops came or whatever? (ENYN02) Everybody that was with me was beating up everybody in the street people was getting rob and I was just taking everything. No cops ain't come or nothing I'm surprised.

In the next robbery situation, the offenders wait and scout out an appropriate target. Once the group identifies the target they each handled their perspective jobs in the situation. The respondent directly confronts the victim and maintained control over his actions. The victim complies with the respondent's demands. His boys actively attack the victim by ripping his pockets out. Another individual watches for police or other people who may have interrupted the

robbery. G-18 explains:

(RM) Did you ever commit any other crime? (G-18) Yeah, I used to do stick-ups, I used to stick up people in there near LOCATION. You know, I need the money. (RM) tell me about that. A time you rob somebody or whatever. (G-18) One incident that me and some group of kids, like three of us, we went up to the NAME area and we was under the train and we started watching people get off the train and shit that's how we did it. So one time this man walked out, right and shit, and we decided we was going to take him out. So we followed him for a few blocks, to see where he was going, we was like across the street, opposite him but like a block down. But we had him in view. So, he didn't notice that we was there. But he started going down this dark alley and so when we seen that we started to run up on him. So I had the gun, I came right close behind him and, I puled my gun out, and I said, yo, I came out real corny. I said, 'yo, can you have the time?' So he turns around and sees this gun in his face. He sucked [his teeth], He don't say shit. I told him to shut the fuck up. I didn't have to say no more after that. You know, I said, 'put your hands up and shut the fuck up, I'll kill you.' (RM) You took the money? (G-18) Yeah. Then my man runs up behind him, rips his pockets out, takes his wallet. I had this other guy he was like the look-out, he's watching for cops or anybody trying to get to be a hero and shit. So, after we shake 'em down and take his shit, I told him to get on the floor. So once he got on the floor I kick him in the head. And we jet. (He laughs). I guess he don't remember faces, cause I kicked him hard.

In the final robbery example, the respondent is one of a group of six who hold up a Manhattan jewelry store. The robbery is planned ahead of time and respondent is asked to join in. According to the respondent the robbery goes off as planned. He explains the activities of the day:

(JM) All right. You said that you used to stick up jewelry stores. Right?
(SBN28) Yup. (JM) Can you tell me what happened from the very beginning?
(SBN28) Well, my man called me up in the morning. One morning. So, he ... he told me what was going down. So, he gave me the address to be there. In the morning. So, I went there. He give me his gun. He give me a little 38. So, I went back home and stashed it. So he called me back through ... he gave me a time to be there. He gave me like to the night time, to the evening, when they closed down. So, we went. I waited till that hour. So, I took the train downtown to the address he gave me. (SBN28) So all right. So we waited till the people closed down. It was like six of us. So we all had guns. So ...we was waiting to them... when people closed down. We had the plan. So, we went in there. Just got like ...like a handful of jewelry... (JM) So what ya'll did to the man? (SBN28) My man just yoked the man. Put a gun in his face. Just ... he just say, 'Give me the money. Everything you got in the counter. Everything.' So my man and this

lady that was in the store too, she was just scared ...scared like a motherfucker. ...my man had a gun pointing to her face. And then... as I was umm, taking all the jewelrys that was in the ... the back, just packing them shits up, I just ran out. The next morning, we had everything. (JM) So when ya'll did this stick up, what... what ya'll was telling the owner? (SBN28) Just to shut up. To stay the fuck down. And just give me the loot that's in the counter. We, he was scared. (JM) He was scared? (SBN28) He was scared to death. (JM) What was the guy telling ya'll? What was he saying? The owner? (SBN28) The owner? He just saying a lot of stuff. 'Why are we doing this?' You know, just talking nice shit. Cryin' too. (JM) He was cryin'? (SBN28) Yeah. Scared. (JM) How about the lady? What was she saying? (SBN28) She was screaming. (JM) Ya'll didn't hit her? (SBN28) No, we didn't her. We put a tape over her mouth. (JM) Oh, ya'll put tape. (SBN28) Yeah, and that's it. (JM) So when she was screaming, what ya'll think? (SBN28) No, when she ... when she started screaming, we just ... we just had her up under ... closed her mouth. She was biting my man. My man had his hand on her mouth. So she was trying to fight him. (JM) She tried to fight him? (SBN28) Yeah. (JM) So how ya'll split the money? How much you had? (SBN28) I had \$800 to spend, and two to just.. (JM) How about in jewelry? How much you had? (SBN28) Nah, I didn't really took no jewelry money, yo. (JM) Just money? (SBN28) Just the money. (JM) Ya'll wasn't worried about the cops or nothing? (SBN28) Yeah, we was worried about the cops. But we just ... you have people looking out too. (JM) Outside? (SBN28) Yeah, outside.

F. Drug Business Transaction

An event is classified as a drug business transaction if it had the following features: took place in drug spot or area, as direct result of the buying or selling of drugs, or between co-workers in the drug business. Fifty-three violent events are sparked by some aspect of the drug business.

A variety of drug business-related gun events are described by our sample including disputes over selling turf and customers, product price, quantity, and quality, shortages of drugs or money, retaliation for dishonest business practices, or protection from robberies during the course of drug selling. Some of the situations include: shootouts involving just two parties (both had firearms), two parties (only one had a firearm), multiple parties on one or both sides of the dispute (armed), multiple parties on one side but not the other (one side armed), drive-bys, sniper attacks from roof tops or other distant locations, and set ups. The world of drugs and guns are closely linked together although there is a considerable amount of gun use that has little or nothing to with the drug business. Below one respondent describes a gun event related to a

business dispute over the crack spot. He explains:

(DT) How did it happen and what started it? (ENYN26) Well what happened was this, on my block right the niggers crack spot. Now and let me tell ya, my man got killed and this is basically why -- let me tell you how [he] got killed, but what led up to it was he had beef with the niggers from the crack spot and that's my man (we grew up together). And he fucked up the manager of the crack spot and he was like a monthly shit, he'll fuck him up and beat the shit out of him. So I guess the nigger from the crack spot was tired of getting his ass whooped so one day they pulled out on him. And he was telling him just kill me, you motherfucker, kill me. They didn't he shoot him. So, I -- So he started, the day -- thing is we could run to our roofs, and shoot at them from down you know like they won't know who the hell is shooting at them so my man did that, he went on his roof and he had a assault rifle M16 so he was pow, pow, pow, pow, letting loose from the top of the roof and niggers was scattering all over and they didn't know who did it, but I am sure they [the guys from the crack spot] knew it was him.

(ENYN26) So then like about a week later, there is some new niggers at the crack spot some young nigger, mad young, he like sixteen years old and he was up there with two other cats. It was me, my brother and my man, rest in peace, you know what I'm saying. He -- we were walking to the corner because we were going to go to weedgate (phonetic) and get some weed and all of a sudden the nigger stepped to him, then I yell what's up man, you know, you diss nigger and I ain't mentioning no names, but you diss nigger and they were like, and he was like yeah why, he was like yo -- that shit is over son that nigger got to chill with shit you know whatever. You know like telling us either dead it or you are dead you know what I am saying. So my man says like what, what, stupid son this is my fucking block man. Those niggers don't own shit, this is my block so that moony (phonetic) pulled out, he pulled out a two-five on my man and it jammed. He aimed that shit at me, my brother and him, it jammed and you know it didn't want to shoot. So my man snuffed him, *boom* and he ran back up into the crack spot 'cause it was [a] house. So he ran up in there and then I thought the man was going to get his tech, 'cause I know he got a (tech), so he ran back to the house and came down with nothing. He stepped to him again, this time that kid bust open the door and came out with a nine and starting shooting *pow, pow, pow* and my man ran around a Van. He caught him at the other side of the Van and lit six shots into him man and he died in my arms that day son. The man died in my arms man and to this day man, niggers still be shooting at the niggers, but the niggers-- because they fucked with some Morello's (phonetic) from my block and the Morello's are crazy, buckwild. Those niggers live like five or six them heads in the last three months. 5-0 (the police) always rolling around so those niggers broke up. So his man dead right now. They don't even know who was shooting at them from like that. Those are my peeps. The Morello's are my peeps, because we all grew up together. -- each other.

In the next example the conflict stems from an attempt by a competing drug dealer to take over the respondent's drug spot while he is out of town. He describes his feelings and need to retaliate for the transgression:

(ENYN05) I got a little story. I got into some shit I will run it to you real quick. When I had went away my aunt was sick, I went down south with my cousin, God bless him he dead right now, me and him went down south to see my aunt. I came back I had a spot, You know what I'm saying my spots was making 2, 3 g's a day each spot I came home niggas was telling me all they sold was a 100 dollars. I had been gone 10 days, I'm like, 'yo what is going on?' Niggas was telling me these niggas was in the store tell my worker that they can't be out there hustling. So I stepped to the niggas, and the nigga was like yeah. The nigga gabbed me and that is the worstest thing he could do. And I went and got my joint and I came back. I put the shit in his mouth but it would go off right, so I was like alright cool then he went and told the cops on me, he was hustling too. The cops was looking for me, boom he tell my little sister, tell your brother I'm going to kill him. So I was like alright, it was snowing and I told my father I'm going to sit out there, I hope it snow, cause I'm going to lay in that snow and when they open that store I'm going to murder them. Whatever, whatever happen, the next day came I went down there and I took care of what I had to, I did what I had to do and you know the rest.

(DT) Tell me about the guy, that you did your thing with did you know him?
(ENYN05) I'm saying, yeah I knew him, I didn't know him personally but I knew him from the store. I knew the guy that owned the store me and him was raised together, he was my man. And I told yo that nigga can't disrespect me son, before you all even you all even moved around I been around here hustling. (DT) So he had a store and he was selling drugs in the store? (ENYN05) Yeah they was selling in the store and we was selling on the corner. (DT) So he told your workers not to? (ENYN05) Yeah and you was touching me, touching me, I don't like when nobody touching me yo. (DT) So what did you know about him besides?
(ENYN05) Yo I'm saying the nigga was working in the store, but he was smoking crack and shit, stupid mother fucker talking shit, always talking shit. And then what was so fucked up the nigga wouldn't even buy they crack. He would come to me and buy my crack but tell my workers that they buy, he telling other people that is coming in the store they can't buy from me but he buying form me. (DT) When you pulled the gun on him and put the gun in his mouth what were you thinking at the time? (ENYN05) Word, son I'm going to smoke this nigga. I just turned on him and he was like oh, oh, oh, you going to shoot me and I just clicked the gun and said shut up but shit just didn't work, shit had a double safety on it, but the shit didn't go off that time so whatever but I got him I took care of my business. (DT) Were you concerned about whether you would kill him or

something and get locked up? (ENYN05) Nah, I wasn't thinking about that, I wasn't thinking about that because whatever happened cops didn't find out what I did. I wasn't never concerned, I wasn't afraid to kill yo because you know why I wasn't afraid to kill because I'm saying I seat and analyzed killing I know everybody done killed from the smartest person in the world to the illiterate. Why because you done killed a roach or a bug so everybody can kill. (DT) Were you concerned whether he had a gun that day, when you pulled out a gun and it didn't go off? (ENYN05) Yeah, I was concerned actually because I knew he did have guns so I knew that is why I want to take care of what I had to, because I knew you was going to try to smoke me.

G. Revenge or Retaliation

Events are coded as being motivated by revenge or retaliation when a violent event is precipitated by the outcome of a previous interaction with the opponent or his associates. These prior incidents are typically unsuccessful, incomplete, or unsatisfactory to the respondent resulting in the "need" for additional violence. Respondents are often drawn in to these situations as "torch takers" or "avengers" just get "justice" for wrongs committed against the individual and/or group. Unlike the self-defense code, this domain includes both parties involvement in revenge. Fifty-three events are sparked out of issues of revenge or retaliation.

The first example shows how an individual may rally the support of another peer to increase the chances of successfully avenging an enemy. In this case, the situation is retaliation for the loss of sneakers. The respondent explains:

(DB) Tell me about a gun event, the last gun event that you did, tell me what happened, describe the situation, how it happened and what it was over?
(ENYN81) The last gun event that was probably when I got robbed for my sneakers, I called my cousin and shit. And then he seen the kid again he had the sneakers on. Me and my cousin just asked him what's the deal. He went to reach [for a gun], and we shot him. (DB) He went to get his gun? (ENYN81) Yeah and we shot him. (DB) You don't know nothing about the guy you was fighting right? (ENYN81) Yeah he lived in my cousin's projects. (DB) Oh you knew the dude, and he knew you when he robbed you? (ENYN81) Yeah. He just played his self that's what he did right there? Yeah that's what the whole point was he disrespected me.

In the next example, the respondent participates in a gun event related to the drug business. The initial shooting is an attempt took over of the drug spot. The respondent reports

the days events to his boss and the more powerful drug boss gets into his car and goes looking for the opponents. The respondent describes the situation:

(RM) Yeah? Alright so what happen, did something happen after that? (G-61) It was a little beef had started soon, one day we went back, it was like all of us, so the boss gave us a gun so we can hold up the spot then, so we went to hold it down, we was just walking and one of our people came over there, they was working too, everybody, he gave everybody a little position, so we was like 'alright.' So one day the guys came back, so we saw the guys and one of my friends started shooting at the guys, the guys started shooting back, so we all running, running frantic, everybody running and shooting, so then nobody got hit.

(RM) Was you shooting? (G-61) Nah, I wasn't shooting but, I was there, then I got out, we all ran back to the, back to our complex, and we lounged there bought some beer, told the boss what happen, so we told 'em what happen, so we came driving around, blah, blah, blah. He, he saw one of the kids and one of the kids that he was with they was walking in the store, so and then he killed both of them.

(RM) Who the boss? (G-61) Yeah. (RM) What he just jumped out the car?

(G-61) He came around he's like 'yo I'm gonna take care some business' then he drove off, and then when he came back he asked us to go around there and check, see what was going on.'just go around the corner and check and see what's going on.' We went around there and seen two niggas laid out on the floor. (RM)

Yeah? (G-61) Yeah. (RM) He did it? (G-61) Umm-hmm.

(RM) So, how that made you feel? (G-61) Ahh, in a way I was like 'yo man,' that's my first time I ever seeing somebody killed. And it was like, it was like, yo, my conscious, it didn't bother me 'cause I was like yo, the way I seen it was the time was for a good cause of that they probably came back for us and did the same. There's no saying who would've been in the spot at the time, boy, they just had to go down that way, you know? It's like 'oh whatever, whatever.' I could see I had that I don't care attitude, now I'm developing that attitude, because of that attitude I don't care. Because I see that in order to be around these people you gotta be real and in order to be real it's like being true to yourself, who you be with, and whatever goes on stays, whatever goes on, what happens it stays in, in, it stays where its at. And you gotta keep it real with you people, you know what I'm saying, anything happens a few, you know, if you get knocked you gonna have to keep it to yourself. You can't snitch cause you be breaking the, you just be breaking the code. (RM) What's the code? (G-61) Like I'm saying being real. (RM) Being real? What's being real like? (G-61) Like I was saying you gotta be real, it's like a dedication. It's like you gotta dedicate yourself. (RM) To your clique? (G-61) Yeah, to your clique. You know all the people's you with, anything go down they gonna be there for you, which anything I have been through they been there for me. And everything they went through I was there with them. And that's how it was. We ain't never looked at ourselves as a clique or a posse, we looked at ourselves as a family, but we did dirt, fell, we did a little dirt and shit.

(RM) Alright, so what happen after that. (G-61) After that they, they got killed.

H. Gossip, Rumors, or “He Said, She Said” Situations

Rumors or what respondent call “he said, she said” situations cause some violent events. These situations usually involve the discovery that an individual is talking negatively about another behind the other person’s back. In other cases, false information spreads through gossip causes actors to engage in violence. Eighteen conflicts develops as a result of rumors or gossip. One respondent describes a rumor-based event in the following way:

(G-15) Just had a fight. I got beat up one time. (RM) One time? When was that? (G-15) I wasn't really beat up, you know what I'm saying? A hit in the head and fell and then it was broke up. (RM) [You] got hit in the head? (G-15) Yeah, nigger bust me. (RM) Nigger bust you? For what? (G-15) Nigger snuffed me when somebody broke it up. (RM) Oh, you was fighting somebody and then somebody broke it up then the guy got a chance to rush you? (G-15) Yeah. (RM) Why ya'll was fighting? (G-15) Huh? (RM) Why was ya'll fighting? (G-15) Oh, he thought I said something. I ain't said nothing. (RM) Somebody told him you said something? (G-15) Yeah. (RM) And he came back and asked you did you say it? (G-15) Yeah, and I said just get out my face, man what you talking about? (RM) Why didn't you just say no I ain't said it, you told him to get out your face? (G-15) Yeah. (RM) Then when you said that what did he do? (G-15) He said come on I want to talk to you over here. Kid live on the other side though. (RM) Kid live on the other side of the projects? (G-15) Yeah.

Other examples of these types of situations relate to females and relationships. Gossip or talk about who’s seeing whom, who’s talking to whom, and who’s having sex with whom often creates problems for adolescents which result in violence. Sometimes these situations are resolved with very little violence other times the outcome is death or injury. One situation where violence is avoided is described below.

(WW) Did, did you ever been in a, have you ever been in a situation where nobody ended up getting hurt? Like you confronted somebody or.....? (G-02) Oh yeah. Yeah when I was in high school I had it happened. Where like you know, there was like a lot of he said, she said thing going around you know and like some guy had felt that he was disrespected cause his girl or whatever, he thought like his girl wanted to talk to me or something like that you know and he thought that I was disrespecting him. So I just like spoke with him about it, and... I

was like there's plenty of women out there. There's plenty of women in the school you know what I'm saying. I don't need to stress you, yours ain't really all that. You know you can keep her, I ain't already talking to your girl. We came to the point that we spoke about it and we said, we just left it at that. (WW) Okay.

Another respondent finds himself in a near violent situation over some false information that is being spread by his opponent's girlfriend who happened to be a friend of his girlfriend. The situation gets heated up but ends peaceful as the respondent walks away from his opponent. He explains:

(RM) What happened, tell me about that? (ENYN17) It was over a girl, telling my girl something about me. (RM) Yeah? (ENYN17) When it wasn't true. Her man got into it. (RM) Oh. (ENYN17) So me and him are arguing, I'm telling him to mind his business. He telling me to shut up. (RM) Word? (ENYN17) My girl ain't say none of that. (RM) Yeah. (ENYN17) I'm like, 'your girl did so, my girl told me,' so he arguing with me and then it almost lead... (RM) Yeah. (ENYN17) To a real, it was going to lead to something real big man, but I just walked away. (RM) Oh you... oh really? (ENYN17) Yeah. (RM) While he was, you knew the kid? (ENYN17) Na, I ain't know him, I just knew his girl, and his girl was going with, his girl used to be [friends] with my girl. (RM) Did they hang out? (ENYN17) Yeah, they hang out together, but she told my girl something about me, that wasn't even true. (RM) Yeah. So he say, she say shit? (ENYN17) He say, she say. (laughter). (RM) So what happened after that, everything dead? (ENYN17) Everything, I ain't never seen him no more. (RM) Oh, so how about, how about your girl and her homegirl, they still hang out? (ENYN17) They still hang out, still telling those stuff.

I. Territory or Neighborhood Honor

Events are classified as erupting out of non-drug related territory or neighborhood honor issues when either the respondent or the opponent reports being in the "wrong neighborhood" as reason for an attack. Violence could occur if an outsider is just walking through an area that according to the "insiders" of that neighborhood he should not have been in. Sixteen events are coded as having erupted out of non-drug related territory or neighborhood honor issues. In the example presented below the respondent describes a project level conflict that has continued across generations. He explains:

(DT) Um can you remember another event that probably a weapon event that?
(ENYN70) That happened. I could tell you one and shit about. One time and shit we had a little prob problems with these guys and shit from their projects and shit. So we use to constantly [get into] it really. It started from the older dudes in our projects. They always had beef with the dudes in this next project. From us whatever. It started from them. And it like it was passed down to our little generation or whatever. You know we end up getting into beef with these heads...

(DT) What kind of beef was it though like drug or gang related or projects?

(ENYN70) Yeah it was like a project thing. It was more it was basically a project thing. We didn't get along with them. They didn't get along with us. We always consider them as pretty boys or whatever the case may be. They always though of us hard nigger dogs or whatever. But we always bumped heads and shit. I recall one time. It was like an ongoing thing. Every night we was getting it on with em. One night they had called us on our pay phone. They we beefing with em on the pay phone and their like yo meet us at so and so and we going to settle this. Like we was going to end it that night or whatever. Whatever the beef was whatever the case may be. So we goes up there and shit. They like no guns whatever shit like that. So we goes up there with bats and shit. But we got 'em stashed or whatever the case may be. Some dudes got bottles and little you know razors or whatever. So we waited for them and shit. They took a little minute to show up and shit. So when they did show up you know we get up start walking towards the street. And it's only like three of them. So we know it's like yo where is the fuck those bastard niggers at. So we like looking at the corner or whatever. So we walking over there or whatever. So while we walking over there the niggers just unzipper man like one of them gym bags and shit. So we looking we walking or whatever. Some nigger just drawed and shit man slow. It's like he taking his time with a gun and shit. So we looking at the like hell this nigger got.... By the time anybody could really realize what it was. Man the nigger just started hitting off and shit. He had a HK. (DT) A word? (ENYN70) Not even a AK didn't have the HK and shit man. Nigger was hitting them shits was hitting garbage cans everything man. We took the fire whatever the case may be and shit. (DT) So the beef was like a a old beef and shit? (ENYN70) yeah it was like that shit was old beef man. That shit was crazy old and shit.

J. Debts or Money

Some incidents are sparked by unpaid debts of money including loan sharking and drug business debts. In most of these situations, violence is used to force payment. Money or unpaid debt is the reason for sixteen violent events. One example of a gun event which results from an unpaid debt. The young man from the South Bronx reports:

(RM) So how 'bout when you shot that guy? (G-82) My only mistake with doing that was that it was over a hundred dollars. (RM) But what...what

about... You... you don't admit it was a mistake cause he might come back. (G-82) I say he got the drop. I guess it was my time to float. But if he freeze and I could get away... (RM) But at the time, what was you thinking? (G-82) At that time I was thinking about he owed me money and he tried to play me. And he tried to play me bad. (RM) What was you worried about mostly? (G-82) It's just that he tried to take something that...that was mines and it was mines. (RM) It was bothering you? (G-82) It was bothering me. I felt that he tried to really play me. I was worrying 'bout me getting money.

K. Unfair Play

Respondents are involved events where “unfair play” is the cause of conflict. The majority of these situations occur during the course of playing sports, pool, or gambling. Cheating, unfair fouling, and rule violation typically result in fights. In most cases, the “cheater” would deny the claim of cheating and react by counter challenging the accuser until the situation escalates to a physical battle. In some “unfair play” situations an actor would leave the setting, get a gun, and return to express his grievance. Fifteen conflicts result from unfair play either in a gambling or sports situation. Fights erupting out of sports or gambling situations usually consist of non-weapon situations. One such example is presented below:

(JM) Would you tell me a little about that, what happened? (SBN30) Well one time we were playing football and the kid you know played rough with me so I was and we were gonna fight. so then we kept playing so he made me fall so I got up and I just swung at him and we were fighting, fighting and fighting. (JM) So you all went a fair one? (SBN30) Yeah, we went for a fair one. Nobody stopped us. We just kept fighting and fighting. It was like a year ago. (JM) So what were you doing? (SBN30) We were just playing football. (JM) What happened? Who started what? (SBN30) He was the one that started it 'cause he was pushing me. I told him to stop pushing me. I did, I just hit him. I had enough of him. I hit him and we just started fighting and fell on the floor and -- (JM) What were you trying to accomplish when you was fighting with him? (SBN30) We was struggling and I hit him. (JM) Did he bleed? (SBN30) Yeah. (JM) Where through? (SBN30) The mouth. (JM) His mouth. You busted him open? (SBN30) Yeah. (JM) Did you plan to fight with this guy that day? (SBN30) No. (JM) Do you think it was going to be a fair one? (SBN30) Yeah. (JM) You didn't use no weapon or nothing right? (SBN30) No. (JM) Where did this fight go down? (SBN30) In the street. (JM) About how long did the fight go down? (SBN30) For a while. (JM) For like how many minutes. (SBN30) Like seven minutes. (JM) How did this situation end? What happened? How did it end? (SBN30) We left. I left. (JM) But how you all broke up? (SBN30) Donnie, he's the bull, he broke it up. (JM) Oh yeah. (SBN30) the dude was like, 'yo break it up, break it up.' The kid wanted to get

me... (JM) After the fight did you all keep on playing I mean what happened after that? (SBN30) Na. We stop playing and we left. I left. (JM) Everybody left? (SBN30) Smoke blunts. (JM) You just went home? (SBN30) smoke blunts with my boys.

L. Other Reasons

Finally, five of the conflicts are classified as misunderstandings, five result from no apparent reason, while four events are classified as for fun or recreation. These events will be more thoroughly analyzed in future work.

Notes

1. Unfortunately, we have no idea if this percentage is typical or atypical. Few studies have classified violent events especially among adolescents.

TABLE 4-1. Intersection of Type of Weapon by Level of Lethality (N=306)*

	Total		Gun		Other Weapon		No Weapon	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Level of Lethality:								
Threaten	68	22.7	34	22.5	13	25.5	22	19.8
Used (Fired or Stab)	138	46.2	107	70.9	29	56.9	-	-
Beat	93	31.1	10	06.6	9	17.6	89	80.2
Missing	7		0		0		0	
Total Valid	299		151		51		111	

*Data were missing on different domains. Percentages are for valid cases only.

TABLE 4-2. Intersection of Level of Lethality of Gun Events by Who was Armed (N=151)*

	Total		Type of Threat		Gun Fired		Use Beat	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Armed Actor:								
Respondent Armed Total	99	65.6	19	55.9	75	70.1	5	50.0
Respondent Armed Vs. Unarmed Opp.	43	28.5	12	35.3	26	24.3	5	50.0
Resp. & Peeps vs. Unarmed Opp.	18	16.8	6	17.6	10	9.3	2	20.0
Resp. Armed & Solo vs. Unarmed Opp.	25	23.4	6	17.6	16	15.0	3	30.0
Respondent vs. Opponent Both Armed	55	36.4	6	17.6	49	45.8	0	0.0
Resp. & Peeps Armed. vs. Armed Opp.	40	37.4	4	11.8	36	33.6	0	0.0
Resp. Armed & Solo vs. Armed Opp.	15	14.0	2	5.9	13	12.1	0	0.0
Respondent's Team vs. Opponent's Team (crew on crew)	13.9	0	0.0	21	19.6	0	0.0	
Opponent Armed Total	86	57.0	15	44.1	69	64.5	2	20.0
Opponent Armed vs. Unarmed Total	31	20.5	9	26.5	20	18.7	2	20.0
Opp. & His boys Arm. vs. Unarm. Resp.	10	6.6	1	2.9	8	7.5	1	10.0
Opp. Arm. & Solo vs. Unarm. Resp.	21	13.9	8	23.5	12	11.2	1	10.0
Total	151		34		107		10	

*Data were missing on different domains. Percentages are for valid cases only.

TABLE 4-3. Intersection of Type of Weapon by Spark or Reason for Event (N=306)*

	Total		Gun		Other Weapon		No Weapon	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Spark or Reason for Event:								
Identity/Status	129	42.2	61	41.2	21	41.2	48	43.2
Girl	94	30.7	38	25.7	20	39.2	39	35.1
Self-Defense	67	21.9	30	20.3	17	33.3	20	18.0
Robbery	61	19.9	42	28.4	8	15.7	10	9.0
Drug Business	53	17.3	40	27.0	3	5.9	9	8.1
Revenge	53	17.3	32	21.6	9	17.6	13	11.7
Defense of Others	34	11.1	16	10.8	8	15.7	10	9.0
Rumors	18	5.9	7	4.7	3	5.9	8	7.2
Territory (non-drug)	16	5.2	10	6.8	3	5.9	3	2.7
Money or Debt	16	5.2	12	8.1	1	2.0	3	2.7
Unfair Play	15	4.9	9	6.1	3	5.9	13	11.7
Misunderstanding	5	1.6	0	0.0	1	2.0	4	3.6
No Reason	5	1.6	3	2.0	0	0.0	2	1.8
Fun or Recreation	4	1.3	3	2.0	0	0.0	1	0.9

*Data were missing on different domains. Percentages are for valid cases only. Reflects multiple sparks per event.

CHAPTER 5. PROCESSES AND CONTINGENCIES OF VIOLENT EVENTS

Prior research suggests that violent situations occur under specific relational, social, and physical conditions (Miethe and Meier, 1994; Fagan, 1990; Anderson, 1990; 1994; Oliver, 1994). Clearly, certain locations are "hot spots" for violence, such as drug markets and drinking spots. These situational contexts offer some type of facilitating features where violence is likely to be tolerated, if not expected. Most theories of criminality assume that a motivated offender, suitable target, and absence of agents of social control in a facilitating environment are necessary conditions for violent behaviors.

These theories fail to account for the interactional dynamics between actors and observers in these settings. Several important factors of violent situations must be examined in order to explain why some actors choose to be violent in some situations and not in others. A number of factors are needed for an encounter between two parties to result in a violent outcome. For example, victim-offender relationship contributes significantly to the type and sequential process of violent situations. Each actor's perception of the situation, both in terms of threats and risks, also are important. Perceiving a personal threat or identity challenge as discussed in Chapter 4 sets up a number of contingencies which actors typically address through the use of violence. For adolescents, peer group involvement and support for violent events further accounts for individual level participation in those events. Peers often act as co-producers or at least cheerleaders in many violent situations.

Violent events among young males in the inner city are by-and-large public performances with multiple participants and observers. According to a symbolic interactionist framework, the focus of event analysis should be on the interactions between and across actors in specific socio-cultural contexts. Indeed, the findings presented in Table 5-1 through Table 5-13 illustrate how frequently these violent events involve collective definitions of the situation by multiple actors. As defined by Heise:

A definition of the situation identifies the setting and relevant persons and objects that are present, so it presents the actors and objects that can be combined into recognition of events in that situation. The definition of the situation also entails inferences about social institutional context, knowledge on the part of the observer of ritual or scripted behavior, and negotiation with other observers present at the

scene. (Heise, 1979: 9).

One aspect of defining the situation, is for respondents to make sense of what happened by attributing blame and responsibility to some "defining moment" of the interaction, either the acts of the self and/or others in the situation. Respondents use a variety of information sources to develop definitions of the situation. Events are coded across different domains. The classification is aimed at understanding the basic "facts" of each event — who was there, who did what, and how did each party's involvement effect the respondent and his actions.¹ Other researchers have emphasized the contributions that third parties or bystanders make during violence encounters (Decker, 1995; Oliver, 1994; Tedeschi and Felson, 1994). For example, Slaby (1997) explains:

As a conflict escalates toward violence, the participants often seem to take turns auditioning for the roles of aggressor, victim, and bystander, as though they were involved in a game of "musical roles." When a gun fires, the music stops. Then, and perhaps forever after, the individual holding the gun has been cast in the role of an aggressor, the one on the ground is a victim, and the one who has been encouraging the violent encounter is a bystander who has contributed to violence. P. 175-76).

As shown by the examples presented below, actors play a variety of roles in producing violent events. In addition, each category is analyzed for intersections with theoretically relevant categories among other dimensions. Especially relevant is the respondent's action intersecting with the opponent's actions. Oftentimes it is difficult to differentiate between a perpetuating vs. a victim role among participants in a violent event. We found that there is no significant difference between events where the respondent describes being the clear aggressor and those where he is attacked across the fourteen domains. This finding highlights Slaby's notion of "musical roles" in violent events. The only exception is for injuries, in situations where the respondent is attacked he is more likely to also get injured while in situations where the respondent attacks his opponent, the opponent is more likely to suffer an injury. The involvement of peers in the assault of others seems to also play an important role in this role-injury relationship. The dynamic exchange between actors will be examined further in future analyses.

A. Location or Setting of Violent Events

Some settings or locations have been shown to be "hot spots" for violence. 90.6% of the violent events described by our sample occur in five types of locations: drug spots (locations for drug selling and/or using), the corner or block, house parties or clubs, schools, and jail. As shown in Table 5-1, the majority of events (149 or 49.8%) occur on the block or street corner. Respondents describe 19 events that transpired inside jail, 31 events in drug spots, 36 conflicts in clubs or parties, and 36 in school or on school grounds. The remaining events occur at stores, houses or apartments, public transportation (stations, trains, or platforms), parks, or outdoor pools.

Location plays some role in choice of weapon in violent events. As shown in Table 5-1, 54.5% of gun events, 49% of other weapon events, while 44.9% of non-weapon events occurred in the street or on the corner. 18.6% of gun events, 0 other weapon events, and 3.7% of non-weapon events happen in drug spots. Twenty gun events or 13.8%, 6 or 11.8% of other weapon events, and 11 or 10.3% of no weapon situations transpire in a club or party location.

Respondents report no gun events in jail, 8 other weapon events, and 12 no weapon events in that context. Schools are locations for violence with guns in 6 events or 4.1%, with other weapons in 6 or 11.8% of these situations, and with no weapons in 24 or 22.4% of non-weapon events.

Respondents often indicate that drinking places themselves are especially prone to violent confrontations, often independent from the drinking patterns of the people present. Young men prepare for these potential dangers by carrying guns to parties or clubs in anticipation of violent events. In many cases the potential danger of drinking places increase the appeal of attending with groups of friends when one was prepared to defend himself. In other cases, the risk of injury at parties may deter future attention and participation. One person, describing an event where he was hurt, said that:

Interviewer (RM): You ever been shot? Respondent (G-17): Nope, I been grazed. (RM): You been grazed, where? (G-17): My back. (RM): Why, was they shooting at you deliberately? (G-17): Nah it was a mistake. It was..... (RM): What happened, tell me about that. (G-17): It was, it was, it was a whole bunch of things, it wasn't meant towards me, it was meant for somebody else, and I was just sitting on the corner drinking beer and it just happen. I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. But I thank God that it didn't hit me, you know what I mean? (RM): Yeah.

B. Sorting out the Roles of Participants and Observers

1. The Role of the Respondent

Respondents describe a wide range of violent situations including events where the respondent is the "clear" initiator, the opponent attacks the respondent, and no party seems to dominate in the opening stages of the confrontation. The variability in types of involvement by actors further complicates the task of sorting out what is happening with youth violence. We coded each event according to the respondent's description of his own actions and role in the events. This information is drawn primarily from the descriptions of how the event first starts and the exchanges that transpires between people. Each role is analyzed to get a fuller understanding of how the respondent makes sense of his own actions in the event. The coding allows for simultaneous role taking among actors in the event.

Respondents are involved in violent events as a solo initiator, group initiator, victim, active supporter, passive supporter, avenger or rescuer of others, mutually consenting participant, and witness. According to the event data, respondents are initiators in 123 situations, of those 69 are solo and 54 are with a group of friends. They are involved in violent events as supporters of others in 34 different situations. Of those, respondents actively participate in 24 situations and hold their peeps back or passively support in 10 situations. Respondents are attacked by an opponent(s) in 124 situations. In 48 situations, the respondent believe a mutual agreement to fight is reached between himself and the opponent during the conflict. The respondent gets involved in 29 violent events in order to avenge or get justice for some previous conflict. And finally, respondents describe 3 violent incidents where they are just witnesses.

As shown in Table 5-2, respondents initiate 70 gun events, of those 30 or 20.3% of those events they are alone and 40 or 27% with co-offenders. In contrast, respondents initiate 41 or 36.9% of non-weapon situations alone and only 7 or 6.3% with others. Respondents are attacked by an opponent in 63 or 42.6% of gun, 20 or 39.2% of other weapon, and 38 or 34.2% of non-weapon situations. Respondents play an actively supportive role in 17 or 11.5% of gun, 0 other weapon, and 7 or 6.3% of non-weapon events. Respondents describe mutually consenting roles with the opponent in 10 or 6.8% of gun, 4 or 7.8% of other weapon, and 23 or 20.7% of non-weapon incidents.

2. The Role of the Opponent

Similarly, the opponent plays a variety of roles in the opening stages of the violent events described by respondents. According to the respondents' version of the events, opponents initiate violence in 124 situations. 82 events start with the opponent making a verbal attack or threat on the respondent. A total of 85 events began with a physical attack by the opponent against the respondent. Opponents deny the respondent's claims or demands in 16 situations, use violence in a defensive way in 24 situations, did nothing in 23 situations, and opponents ran away to avoid violence in 8 situations. After the initial exchange between the respondent and the opponent, they reach a mutual agreement to fight in 48 situations.

3. Relationship to the Opponent

Violent crimes are typically classified by type of relationship between the participants. We explore the respondent's relationship with his combatant(s) as source of defining the situation and understanding the way the event unfolded. Respondents describe violent conflicts against friends, co-workers, neighborhood acquaintances, rivals, and strangers. As shown in Table 5-4, respondents became entangled with strangers in 130 situations (45.9%), with neighborhood acquaintances in 86 conflicts (30.4%), with rivals in 53 altercations (18.7%), with friends in 34 situations (12.0%), and finally with co-workers 21 times or 7.4% of the time. Relationship to the opponent was found to be an important factor in choice of weapon, type of weapon use within violent events, and reconciliation between adversaries.

Events have different trajectories and characteristics according these relationships. When respondents have no prior relationship or knowledge about the opponent, they are classified as strangers. Respondents report that they "never seen him before," "didn't know him from a hole in the wall," or "just some head." Respondents report having little or no knowledge about opponents who are "strangers" and make attributions of not only hostile but lethal intent to these opponents. As shown in Table 5-4, violent events with strangers more often result in weapon use, serious injury, and a lack of closure compared to each of the other relationship types.²

Violent events with an acquaintance from the neighborhood are situations where the respondent at least was aware that the opponent lives or hangs out in the neighborhood. In most cases, respondents report recognizing the opponent by face, previously attending the same

school, previously meeting through others, growing up together but not being friendly, or seeing the opponent hanging out regularly in the neighborhood.³

Conflicts with opponents classified as "rivals" include situations where there is an on-going dispute between the parties. Rivals typically reside in adjacent neighborhoods, compete for drug business, females, or status/identity with the respondent. Although a rival may be also be an acquaintance from the neighborhood, individuals who are considered rivals are classified as rivals and not acquaintance or strangers. Many of the conflicts that are classified as "on-going" are between rivals.⁴

Violent events that erupted between the respondent and a close friend rarely involve serious violence. For example, violent conflicts between friends are often likely to either get "squashed before" violence occurs, less frequently involve weapon use, or result in minor fights with few serious injuries. The majority of these situations are fair fights even when one or both parties are armed with a weapon. Respondents seem to rely upon the relationship to assess the potential risk in conflict situations. Violent events among friends most often includes closure and reparation. There are a few exceptions where friendships end after a violent interaction.⁵

Violent events between co-workers are all related to the drug business and typically involve some type of dispute related to cheating, branching out, or stealing. Situations rarely move beyond threats (with and without guns) among co-workers. Co-workers frequently back down or comply with the request of a more powerful opponent. Gun use among drug workers is considered detrimental to the business and more likely to have lethal consequences if allowed to escalate. However, gun use is also important for ending business associations and avenging betrayal.⁶

4. The Role of Others in Violent Events

In addition, we examine the role of third parties who may be viewed both as part of the socio-cultural context and as participants in the co-production of violent events. These "third parties," for lack of a better term, may be neutral, aligned with the respondent, aligned with the opponent, or aligned with both sides of a violent event. They may play an actively violent role in the situation or may make up the supporting audience for the violent performance. We also describe the role of peers or members of an actor's social network in co-producing violent

events.

5. The Respondent's "Peeps"

The involvement of friends in the co-production of violent events makes the analyze of roles complicated. The data shows the respondent's friends or "peeps" are at the scene of 194 violent altercations or 79.2% of the time. Peeps are "involved" in the co-production of 121 or 63% of those events. These individuals use violence in 96 events, verbally press the respondent's use of violence in 18 events, discourage or break up only 7 events, and do nothing in 46 events. As illustrated below, peeps play an important role in shaping participants initial definitions of the situation, mid-process definitions of one's performance, and attempts to bring an event to or prevent closure.

The involvement of the respondent's peeps is significantly different across the three weapon types. The respondent's friends are even more likely to be present if the situation involves a gun (85.9%) compared to 65.8% of other weapon, and 74.7% of non-weapon events. Peeps are also more likely to get actively involved in violence if guns are involved. Specifically, the respondent's peeps use violence in 71 or 68.9% of gun, 12 or 54.5% of other weapon, and 38.6% of non-weapon events.

Rallying the support of peers is an part of the violence process of this event. In the incident described as an accusatory identity challenge, the respondent describes the involvement of his friends as a source of backup and protection. The respondent's friend "shared" the burden of the initial attack. He explains:

(DB) Was there any third parties around? (ENYN64) Yeah, his friends was there, my friends was there. I only had one friend with me cause we had went to the school out of the n'hood and he lived over by the school. He knew a whole lot of people over there and I didn't hardly know nobody over there. (DB) Did anyone else get directly involved? (ENYN64) Yeah my man who was with me, cause we was going out for each other. If he was going to get in a fight I was going to jump in, if I'm in a fight he jumping in, that's how it was. (DB) Did having your people there effect the fight? (ENYN64) Yeah. (DB) How? (ENYN64) If he wasn't there they could have all just focused in on me. But when I mean they still had the advantage you know, but when we was fighting he could just come in a snuff somebody boom and get somebody up off me and I could do the same for him. (DB) After the event did you do anything extra to protect yourself? (ENYN64) Yeah, the next day I came up there with my peoples and jump them.

(DB) What sort of relationship did you have with the guy after the fight?

(ENYN64) You know it was like, we still had hard feelings for each other but, they was going to kick us out the school if anything was happening with us. So niggas just cool shit down, it was squashed. We didn't ever talk like friends or nothing though.

(DT) So were there any third parties? (ENYN05) Word, word, it is like radio in the mind, you reading in my mind now. Boom whatever his man, his man tried to pull out a joint on me right. So it was like they was trying to go against, they was trying to tag team, they was trying to make it a handicap match, but I handicapped them. It is like his man came out the store and tried to bust at me. His man came out the store and pulled out a 45 but the police was parked up the block, so I was like, 'duke look up the block, police is right there. You better shoot but if you don't I'm going to get my joint. What is fucked up you can't shoot cause if you shoot you going to get arrested cause the cops is right there but I going around the block and get my gun and I'm coming back.' That is what I told his man. (DT) So were your people there, how many of your people? (ENYN05) Oh let me tell you how smart the God is or whatever. I told my man, I said that nigga is in there, this is what I want you to do. With all your people out there you all get to hear my shit, don't go try to use my shit. It could back fire. I told my man to go in the store, I gave my man a dollar. Cause the guy didn't know my friend had nothing to do with it, I said go in there and buy a soda. He went in there and bought the soda, he went in there. And when he came out I opened the door and said hello, and he looked at me and I took care of what I had to.

6. The Opponent's Boys

We were only able to classify 164 events according to whether or not the opponent's boys were present during the violent. Of those cases, the opponent's boys are present in 123 violent events or 75% of the time. We determined that the opponent's boys are "actively" involved in 80 or 65% of those violent events. The opponent's boys use violence in 62 events, verbally press or "amp up" the respondent use violence in 17 events, discourage or break up only 1 event, do nothing in 23 events, and leave the scene in 5 events.

Gun events are more likely to have the opponent's boys present (79.3%) compared to other weapon (70.8%), and non-weapon situations (69.6%). The opponent's boys are significantly more likely to get actively involved in violence in weapon situations. In fact, the opponent's boys use violence in 44 or 81.5% of gun, 10 or 71.4% of other weapon, and 11 or 29.7% of non-weapon events.

7. *The Co-Production of Violent Events*

This dimension captures the active participation of all relevant actors described by the respondent. As shown above, many of the violent events are group conflicts with multiple actors on both sides. In fact, 76 of 280 events or 27.1% are situations characterized as group conflict or "crew on crew" battles. Another 63 cases have the respondent and at least one friend against a single opponent. The respondent is alone facing multiple opponents in 23 violent events. Despite the high frequency with which third parties are present at these scene of violence, 118 events are classified as one on one conflicts, that is, one respondent versus one opponent with no one else getting physically involved in the situation. Pooling the three categories of co-offending yields a total of 163 violent events. We determined that co-offenders are actively involved in 58% of the violent events in my sample.

There are stark differences across the three weapon types in violent situations. For example, 66.6% of gun events involve multiple offenders (41.8% are crew on crew situations) while only 23.4% are one-on-one incidents. In contrast, situations without weapons are more often of the one-on-one variety (58.8%). This finding may in part, reflect the seriousness introduced by guns in conflict situations. In situations without weapons, an actor's friend(s) may actually play a controlling role when present protecting in integrity of some one on one fights without weapons. Knife and other weapon events are half multiple and single offender pairs.

The role of third parties as amplifiers and co-participants is illustrated by the event described above by G-80 from the South Bronx. In this example both the respondent's peeps and the opponent's peeps play a role in the violence process during this event. Individuals on both sides of the conflict promote the use of violence. The respondent describes the crowd as "rowdy" and giving specific instructions for him to inflict harm on the opponent. These comments register with the respondent. The story continues as the respondent describes how others are involved. He recalls:

(JM) So umm did any of your...did any of his people get involved with it as soon as he and you walked outside? (G-80) Yeah. All his...you know I'm saying he was with all his boys. I'm saying I was with a couple a niggers. That's why he was acting rowdy. Cause he was with his peoples. (JM) Ah true true true. (JM) So your peoples from your crew... (G-80) Yeah my boys was telling me, shoot the nigger. Slice him, stab him. I'm saying, shit was running through my mind. (JM) So how bout his peoples.. (G-80) Yeah, you know, they were shouting

shit out. 'Just shoot that cat.' (JM) How you was feeling when your peoples was instigating? (G-80) I was gonna do it you know I'm saying. I was gonna do it. Cops pulled up too quick.

The initial event is disrupted by housing authority police officers. The party breaks up and the combatants flee the scene to avoid arrest. The conflict continues and intensifies into a shootout between the sides. In the subsequent incident, previously uninvolved third parties become actively engaged as co-offenders in the "retaliatory" gun event.

(JM) So what happen when they left? They broke out? (G-80) Yeah they broke out. We just...we broke out too. But we caught the niggers the next day. (JM) Hmm. Y'all caught them the next day. What you mean? (G-80) Yeah we caught em like I said. We went back over there the next day. With a bigger crew. We just, we did what we had to do. (JM) True true true. (JM) So when y'all went back what y'all what y'all...you say you went back with a stronger crew... (G-80) Yeah. (JM) ...and what y'all did, y'all saw the people? (G-80) Yeah we saw them out there. We rolled up on them. We just flipped on them. Say everybody bugged the fuck out. (JM) So everybody got violent? (G-80) Yeah. we pulled out on them. they pulled out too. (JM) Oh so y'all had a shootout? (G-80) Yeah. (JM) The next day? (G-80) Yeah. (JM) So umm [during] this shootout, Anybody got hurt? (G-80) Yeah. Yeah the kid that I was fighting with, I'm saying he got shot in the chest. (JM) You don't know if anybody else got shot? (G-80) Nobody else got shot. I'm saying I know he got shot. (JM) True true.

Robberies, for example, often involved groups of young men as co-offenders. The following example of robbery turned shootout was explained by one respondent from East New York. He describes a robbery of a drug spot that did not go down the way the group had planned. First, the respondent describes "the robbery plan," then he describes the encounter. He gives a very detailed account of his thought processes during the event. He explains:

(RM) What happened? (G-54) Well somebody got shot and shit, the man and shit. We went up in there and shit and.... do you want to hear exactly what happened? (RM) Yeah yeah. (G-54) All right. I had the Bama, the shit was in Queens, we went over there we parked there, this kid was setting up the plan and shit, me and my man. My man had four-fifth and I had a thirty-two and shit. So the kid he just told us the plan, you go in there tell 'em Dan sent you and tell 'em this and that and shit so, me as being Spanish should have an advantage for I could talk my Spanish and shit boom boom bam. And since them being Spanish too and shit know I could blend in and they give me a little more... (RM) Trust

and shit. (G-54)Yeah.

According to the respondent this is the first time he is taking a leading role in setting up the exchange with the victim. He describes being nervous and worrying about how his performance, if inadequate, would be handled back in the neighborhood. The respondent is reluctant to carry out his mission and describes his behavior as procrastination. His actions are determined in part by the cues he receives during the event from his partner.

(G-54) So I went up we went up in there and shit, it was a record shop, a regular shop. Fat Colombia man in the front and shit, bitch in the back. So when we went up in there we like, 'yo what's up?' and shit and I'm waiting for the people to leave and shit, so he like, 'what's up?' and shit you know. That's when I stepped in and started kicking my Spanish, *yo quiero un viento cinco*, it's a one twenty-five, a hundred and twenty-five grand and shit big eighth. So he was like, 'umm all right who sent you?' and shit so I said, 'Dan' and shit. So he started getting suspicious. So he was like all right put it right here. So he went to the back, I guess he made a phone call. So he came back. And he [my partner] was like, 'umm man damn set it off set it off.' My man wanted me to set it off and shit but I was procrastinating, so he waited (RM) You was nervous? (G-54)... yeah I ain't gonna front I was kinda a nervous and shit. (RM) True. (G-54) So we waited for a little second 'cause I wanted him to set if off, if he wouldn'ta set it off no matter what, which I had to. That was the... it was the destiny I had to do it. I wasn't going back to the projects, 'ahh. He fronted!' so I had to do it. So I was just waiting for them and shit.

The respondent describes waiting for the right moment but then being forced into action when someone else enters the room and his partner orders him to act. It is at this point that the respondent took a more aggressive position. The story continues:

(G-54) So we waited... waited all a sudden another man came when the other man came my man was like, 'fuck you gotta do it now and shit!' So another man came my man pulled out click, when he pulls out I pulls out, put the shit to the fat Columbian nigger head, so I searched him. Boom pulled out, he had a nine, nine shot Taurus. [I] pulled it out put it in my umm pouch. I had a umm Columbia windbreaker type shit. So we backed him down and shit run him to the back so when we brought him to the back my man was deep inside shit. So you know I'm like look I could see the front door and shit from the back a the umm store. So my man backing him down. My man just start, 'fuck that, where the fucking money at?' shit like that so, all a sudden I just heard some motion type shit. 'Oh shut up, this and that and shit.' So I hear shot, 'bow,' so I said 'ahh fuck it. I got to shoot somebody or shit.' So I shot the nigga I had him down on the wall so I shot him, but I shot him in the leg though (bow, bow) twice and shit and I ran. When I

ran and shit I left you know I, mistakenly I left my man and shit. I should not [have] did that, so I when I was leaving the door and shit I turn around you know my man call me he's like 'yo son.' I turn around see my man get on the floor this fat motherfucker shot him in the leg and shit. So I run back and shit when I run back I shoot the nigger two times in the back (ba bow). My man get up and shit you know a clip fell out the gun and shit like damn, so we running out the store and shit we get in the car and jet. After that we was doing more shit though man, we was running up in bodegas sticking guns in.....

The respondent describes this event as the beginning of a series of stick-ups of corner stores. This situation is clearly a learning experience for him. One of his primary concerns in the situation is how others both at the scene and back in the neighborhood would view him after this situation.

8. Other Third Parties

The presence of other bystanders or observers at the violent event could be determined in only 137 of the 306 events. Third parties or observers are present in 101 violent events and absent in 36 events. Thus the total percentage presence is 73.7%. Bystanders side with the respondent in 40 violent events while siding with the opponent in 9 situations. Bystanders verbally press or "amp up" the actors in 37 violent events, break up 10 conflicts, flee the scene 13 times, and do nothing in 23 of the events.

The relationship between the presence of other third parties and weapon type appears to indicate that others are less often present in gun events (70.3%) compared to other weapon (80%) and non-weapon (75.5%). When present in gun events, third parties help the respondent in 18 events, assist the opponent in 4 events, do nothing in 9 situations, verbally intensify 14 gun conflicts, and do not break up or discourage any gun events. Third parties got involved to break up 10 or 25% of non-weapon events. There is no such involvement in either of the weapon event categories.

In the first example the respondent describes the role of third parties as "instigating" on the side of the opponent. Although the crowd was involved by verbally "amping" the situation, no one else got physically involved in the conflict. He explains:

[Fair one G-88] (JM) There was people around when you and him when the beef

was going down? (G-88) Yeah they was people... (JM) What they were doing? (G-88) Yo instigate Bee. Instigate. Oh shit oh oh shit, that's that type a shit. They want to make a nigger take out a gun or some shit. [It] Be all about blast this nigger. I want to be *THE FUCKING MAN*. Everybody saw that shit. Nobody gonna fuck with me. I don't think like that you gotta think about yourself. (JM) True true. (JM) Did anybody get in? (G-88) Nah nobody got in you know I'm saying. We just a fair one, one on one you know I'm saying. (JM) Was they people talking shit? (G-88) Why yes. Never heard so much shit, have to be that night man. People 'oh hit him hit him, take out your shit, stab him, shoot him.' YO man ain't no need for none a that shit. Nigger had a pull shit out on me, fuck I'ma pull out some shit. I consider that shit being pussy. Word up kid. I eat the shit. I don't be a pussy. Word up. (JM) True true.

Clearly, G-88 is concerned about how he is handling the situation and how the audience would view him after the performance. He feels satisfied with his performance in the fight and with the fact that the two combatants are able to have a fair fight when handling conflicts with guns is more common. There are several situations where third parties got involved to stop the violent event from continuing. A gym teacher breaks up one fight in school. The respondent explains:

(DB) How did the situation end? What was the outcome? (ENYN61) Gym teacher broke it up. Grabbed him, I busted his fucking nose. He just went to the doctor to get hiss shit patched up, get a little ice pack for that eye piece. (DB) After the fight did anything change about where you hung out at? (ENYN61) Nah fucking niggas ain't scaring me. (DB) Did you do anything extra to protect yourself? (ENYN61) Just let my peoples know what time it is, if the niggas want to jump me jump me. (DB) What sort of relationship did you have with the guy after the fight? (ENYN61) You know what I'm saying What's up? That's about it no words, keep it moving. (DB) Was there any talk after the fight? (ENYN61) Yeah this bitch in class tried to gas shit up. They got into a little argument. She that is why he lumped your shit up look at your eye. She was like, 'nigga fucked you up.' Nigga said, 'he didn't fuck me up, I'll go back there and snuff the shit out that nigga.' So I said, 'what?' I jump up, 'what?' You know what I mean teachers came and broke the shit up. His bitch jumped up, my bitch jumped up, getting ready to go at it. (DB) How did you feel about what was being said? (ENYN61) Nigga trying to play me, we already see one eye, he want the other one bust the fuck open, what the fuck wrong.

In many cases, third parties do nothing in these situations. Witnesses to violent events according to one respondent are intimidated or threatened not to report what they have observed.

(DT) Beside you and them two guys were there other people present during the altercation? (ENYN05) Yeah there was, there was a lady out there where I did it.
(DT) What was she saying? (ENYN05) That bitch better not say anything or she would have got smoked too.

C. Role of Alcohol and Drug Use

Drugs are part of both the *background* and the *foreground* of gun violence in the South Bronx and East New York. Background signifies the social context or cultural landscape which influences and shapes perceptions and experiences of inner-city residents. Foreground refers to the immediate influence of drug and alcohol use effects on the processes and outcomes of violent events. Together, drugs and alcohol are a pervasive influence on the daily lives of young people, fueling events in several ways. Rampant drug use and drug selling dwarf other activities as social contexts for interactions, conflicts, and public stages for status attainment in the social world in these neighborhoods. These events in turn contribute to and form the norms and expectancies that regulate street behaviors and the ecology of "danger."

Drinking, drug use and drug selling are clearly part of the social context of violent events among our sample. As shown in Table 5-9, respondents report being drunk or high in 111 of 193 violent events. Respondents are not high in 62 of the situations. They are certain that their opponent is also high or drunk in 20 cases (most often they state that they 'didn't know' the opponent's status).

Respondents frequently get involved with gun events while under the influence. The ratio of being high or drunk to not being high/drunken is 3.8 for gun events vs. 1.2 for events where no weapon is involved. In fact, respondents report being drunk or high in 61 of 76 gun events or 80.3% of the situations.

We identify a range of dynamic processes that show the interactions of intoxication effects, situational contexts, and individual propensities to contribute to violence or its avoidance. Some involve affective states following intoxication, others involve events that occur in drinking or drug use locations, and still others involve problems in drug businesses that spill over into other areas of social life. Throughout all these, guns are present as a strategic factor

and also as a threshold criterion in decision making about violence.

Drug and alcohol affects are evident in decision making, cognition, intensified emotional states, exaggerated affect, diminished capacity for self-regulation, deviance disavowal, and other cognitive processes. For example, respondents indicate that language when intoxicated is more provocative, and language often “amped up” otherwise minor disputes into violent encounters. Some said they tend to take bystanders’ provocations to fight more seriously. More boastful language and exaggerated verbal displays of toughness and “nerve” are commonplace during drinking events:

(DT) Do you know if he was high? (G-75) Yeah he was drunk, high or drunk the nigger was fucked up man. I think that is why he thought he was superman for that night. (DT) Everybody drinking think they somebody. (G-75) That just goes to show that superman can’t stop a bullet. Everybody got skin, this flesh under that is bone.

(WW) Do you know if the other guy had been drinking or using drugs before you guys started fighting? (G-02) He looked pretty much out of it. So I guess yeah. (WW) Do you think the use of alcohol influenced the way he handled the situation between you and him? (G-02) The way he spoke, yeah. (WW) How? (G-02) ‘Cause he just, you know, he said like a lot of dumb things that like, just really, like it heated up the moment more.

(RM) Do you feel think that the situation was relating to you using, drinking? (G-78) Yeah I think so yeah I know so batter of fact because if I wouldn’t have been drinking I would have handled in a more calm manner. (RM) It was more impulsive because of the drinking? (G-78) I was very much more aggressive.

(RM) Umm, you ever have got into any beef or a fight while you was drunk? (G-17) Yes I did. (RM) What you, what that was about? (G-17) Well, about me having a big mouth. (RM) Oh, when you get drunk you start joking and shit..... (G-17) When I’m drunk, when I’m drinking and smoking weed, talking shit to people, you know what I mean, you talk to people..... (RM) What happened with that? (G-17) Well, I was smoking weed one day, alright, my man, I was smoking weed one day, drinking, getting fucked up, we got into a little technical difficulties, you know, we had a fight, I got my ass wiped. (RM) What y’all fought over, some bullshit? (G-17) Just bullshit, just talking, you know, talking out your ass, arguing back and forth, you know what I mean, so niggas said ‘yo pipe that shit down, dead it,’ nigga ain’t pipe it down, I’m still talking out my mouth. (RM) Who said ‘pipe it down, dead it.’ somebody else? (G-17) Yeah, one of my home boys, you know what I mean? Nigga said ‘I ain’t with that shit no more, you know,’ and I’m still talking out my mouth, so you know, niggas told me it was a lesson to be learnt, so it happened it happened, you know, it happened to

me like three times, you know, but you learn from that. (RM) All three times was anybody trying to calm the situation down? (G-17) Yeah, but I wasn't trying to hear that. (RM) It wasn't working 'cause you up on the influence and shit. (G-17) I was in the influence of drinking and everything and like, 'fuck you, get the fuck outta here,' you know, 'let me do my thing, let me handle my business.'

(DT) Did you plan to do this? (ENYN05) Yeah I told you, I meditated the night before, I said I hope it snow all night. I ain't going to lie, I used to smoke cocaine, I sat up and smoked cocaine blunts mixed with weed. About five of them bitches talking about how I'm going to kill this nigga in the morning. (DT) Were you high at the time? (ENYN05) Yo, back then I was smoking angel dust kid. So You know what I'm saying I probably was high from a angel dust blunt the night before, you know how that angel dust is. (DT) Did you know if them two guys was high on drugs? (ENYN05) Hell yeah them nigga was high. Them niggas was smoking trees. (DT) How about the other party do yo think they were on drugs at the time? (ENYN05) Yeah, yeah he looked liked like he was high, but I fixed his ass cause he wasn't high when I got finished. (DT) Do you think alcohol and drugs influenced the way he handled the situation? (ENYN05) Yeah I'm sure it did because if he wasn't high he wouldn't have touched me that day. And if I wasn't high it would have happen. It was like we both was high or whatever cause I had just came from down south so you know I went and got me a bag of weed. And if he wouldn't have touched me I knew he was high, I seen the high. It is like regardless of whether he was high or not be me being God I ain't got to let no man touch me.

Some people simply make bad decisions while high, leading to fights that might have been avoided in other circumstances:

(RM) Did you have any kind of strategy you were going to use to win this confrontation? (ENYN13) Not at the moment no, I was tipsy, I was off focus.

These behaviors often increase the stakes in everyday interactions, transforming them from non-challenging verbal interactions into the types of "character contests" whose resolution often involves violence. Alcohol exaggerates the sense of outrage over perceived transgressions of personal codes (respect, space, verbal challenges), resulting in violence to exert social control or get retribution.

A wide range of drug effects is reported. Some "chill" when smoking marijuana, others seek out victims to dominate or exploit, and a few report becoming paranoid and avoiding any type of human interaction. But paranoia also contributes, for some, to hostile attributions that created an air of danger and threat, leading to defensive or pre-emptive violence:

(WW) I noticed you were drunk when all of this happened. (G-05) I wasn't really, I wasn't not really drunk I was just like "nice." (WW) But the drug, did the liquor had anything to do with your actions? (G-05) Nah, you crazy? (WW) Huh, if you weren't drinking you wouldn't react the same way? (G-05) It's worst, I feel I'm worst when I'm not drinking, not that, like when I smoke weed I turn soft, you know what I'm saying, like when I smoke weed, I get nice and shit I, shit be having me nervous and shit, yeah. (WW) Paranoid? (G-05) Yeah, that paranoid and shit. (WW) And you don't really wanna get into it? (G-05) Nah, when I smoke weed, nah, sometimes I get paranoid, I don't like smoking weed.

(RM) Thinking back, why do you think you did what you did? (G-78) In that instant, cause I was drinking and my state of thinking was altered to a more how would you say "machismo." When I had to prove that I guess at that moment feeling the way I was feeling buzzed up like that. (RM) You felt dissed...? (G-78) I felt disrespected and you gotta to prove yourself.

Still others note the human guidedness of drinking behaviors, where drinking often is an intended behavior that creates the emotional and affective conditions where violence is likely. Consider the two opposite descriptions of marijuana effects:

(WW) Had you been drinking or doing drugs before that fight? Were you high? (G-32) Smoke some weed. (WW) So you was high? (G-32) Yeah I was kind of fucked up. (WW) Do you think alcohol or drugs influenced you the way you handle the situation? (G-32) Nah. Marijuana keeps you fucking..., it keeps you down, it keeps you more or less in a mellow state. Alcohol will take you to that level you wanna fucking hurt someone. I wanted to chill and watch a basketball game. I didn't want to go out there and fight on no hot fucking summer day.

Several respondents report that their decision making within violent events is compromised. Some feel invincible, and instigate fights that they lost. Some made disproportionately aggressive responses that became instigations for fights, responses that in retrospect seemed unnecessary and stupid. Still others say they are "too fuzzy" to make good decisions about whether or how to fight when high.

While cognitive impairment is evident for some, others note that their decisions while drinking reflect complex strategic judgements about the "chess game" that often precedes the decision to fight or withdraw. The decision to "squash" or to "dead" a fight involves reading a series of cues and perceptions as well as using verbal skills. One respondent tells how he and his friends withdrew from a potential fight at a party after deciding that they could not win, that their

opponents outnumbered them, and that even if a temporary peace could be negotiated, it would be fragile and short-lived. But their withdrawal required that they offer “accounts” that permitted both sides to maintain a share of the “props” while not appearing to be weak. This requires both mental and verbal agility, skills that had to be summoned despite a long night of drinking.

Intoxication also appears to have indirect influences on violence, or may even be an outcome of violence. Some respondents describe violent events while intoxicated where drinking or drug use is unrelated to violence. Still others disavow responsibility for their violence, blaming it entirely on being high. Others get high after violent events as a form of self-medication and/or celebration:

(DT) You was high that day? Drunk, high, weed? (G-63) No I wasn't high. I wasn't drunk. (DT) What about after that? After the fight? (G-63) After the fight, when I got back around my way, I told my friends about it and we planned to go back. (DT) Y'all got high and started laughing after that? (G-63) No we didn't. We got high, but we wasn't laughing. (DT) What kinda drug did y'all use to get high? (G-63) Marijuana. (DT) And that's it? (G-63) That's it.

Finally, one respondent tells of how the complications of drug addiction and the drug business spill over into other social interactions. The social standing of frequent drug users is quite low in the street context. Drug users are used, played, and manipulated into a variety of chores and actions by more powerful characters on the street. As the example below illustrates drug addicts who are also friends or family members are pitied as “fallen victims” by those who are close to them. Consider the following story that weaves together these themes:

(G-42): And then like my cousin right I had a cousin. He was black too, and he was skinny you know he was a good kid and he was young. Then he started smoking, he got caught up in the game he started smoking. And you know the rest of his friends was looking down on him they was like, ‘yo what’s wrong with you supposed to be chilling with us, look at us we chilling, we phat. What you over here smoked out (from crack) why go there?’ They use to dis him and all that. They use to look out for him and all that, pay him, ‘yo here go to the store for me yo here, here.’ look out for him. They always took care of him and all that but he never degraded himself where he was robbing people, snatching anybody’s chain, robbing peoples moms of something like that. He never went low like that but he just liked to smoke he liked to get high. And umm. He was chilling with this other crack head that was the bad, He was the opposite of him. He would always be sticking nigga’s moms up, sticken, he stick anybody up. Catch a little nigga for his work, take him, take his money take whatever. And he use to always rob this one

guy constantly. And them two since they stood together you know a lot. And they like to get together because the nigga, he would rob mad people and he would have mad work and he would come and be 'yo what's up man come get high with me.' 'Alright, alright Fuck it yo.' So they kind of stood together and the other person saw that. He was like 'yo damn I want that nigga but I guess I'm gonna have to use him to get to him.' So they kind of made a set up one day. He tried to set him up in the building. And my cousin he didn't know what time it was. He was like, 'yo what's up come get high with me alright.' He was supposed to bring the other nigga, that's were they went wrong. Cause he told my cousin he was like, 'yo come get high go tell Billy come' and the other guy Billy he was like, 'Nah.. Nah. I'm not trying to hear that yo.' So he tried to stay away from that. He was like Nah.. He felt funny he was like, 'Nah. I going with that I'm always sticking you up and you trying to light me up now.' (support his habit) 'Nah. I ain't fucking with you.' So he got one. He got my cousin into the building and for one reason or another there was somebody waiting in the staircase with a "shoty" (shotgun) but it was supposed to be for the other guy and it was a case of mistaken identity, and they shot my cousin in the face "boom." (RM): He killed him? (G-42): Killed him. (RM): Pssst. (G-42): And that kind of, it didn't happen to me, it happen, it was my birthday that day. The last time I saw him was right there on the corner before I went upstairs. I had a little joint, I was puffing it and boom and he you know whenever I had blunts I always smoked with him too, get high off of this. Leave that other shit alone that stuff ain't good for you. (RM): Yeah. (G-42): So I was smoking my joint with him and before I went upstairs I gave it to him. I was like yo I'm out see you tomorrow and he was like 'ah-ight.' Usually sometimes and I was kind of close to him. In the mornings he use to come to my house, I use to cook a fat breakfast for both of us he use to always eat with me and we use to just kick it, chill, bugging watching TV and everything. Then it happen like three in the morning that night and I had went upstairs about twelve. That was the last time I ever saw him.

Many respondents report avoiding serious drug use before planned violent events such as robberies of stores or drug spots. These individuals explain that drug use would impair their ability to carry out the planned crime. When asked about being high during the robbery described above, G-18 explains:

(RM) Was you high when you robbed that dude? (G-18) Nah. When I do my shit I like to be sober. Cause I'm better on that point. There's some people that smoke weed and they be all like commando. But I got to be sober, Cause I got to have my thoughts correct, you know what I'm saying? I can't be slipping out here.

D. The Role of Law Enforcement

In a small proportion of cases the police are involved in controlling, mediating, and sanctioning participants in violent events. The classification of police presence for this domain includes any mention of the actual or anticipated presence of police including seeing a car or officer, hearing sirens, direct confrontations with police officer, and after the fact investigations.

Using this conservative definition of police presence, respondents report that police were present in 47.1% of the 172 valid cases. In the majority of these situations, the police arrive well after the actors have fled the scene of the violent incident. As shown in Table 5-10, the police are more likely to be present (typically after the fact) if a weapon is involved. Of the 81 valid cases for gun events, the police are classified as "present" at 49 events or 60.5% and 15 or 62.5% of the other weapon events.

Respondents rarely describe using law enforcement or the justice system to handle criminal attacks or victimization experiences. These adolescent males are generally nested or embedded in the illegal economy where the legal means of resolving conflicts is general not "available." Not only are they involved with criminal activity but a normative system prevails that punishes or sanctions the use of police or other authority figures to resolve disputes. Respondents describe their experiences with the police as hostile, abusive, and oppressive. Cooperation with the police is viewed as disloyalty to the street and may be punished.

In terms of the violent events, the police are viewed as not around when you need them and not at all helpful when present. Respondents complain that police officers are more concerned with gathering evidence and making arrests than trying to save the life of a gunshot victim. Despite these frequent and heated expressions of dissatisfaction with the police, respondents describe at least 20 violent events where police officers play a significant role in stopping and/or preventing a situation that would have otherwise escalated. Events where the police intervene and either made an arrest or broke up a fight seem to move to closure more readily or at least temporarily reduce the opportunity for retaliation. In addition, hearing police sirens during an event often results in a premature ending of a fight or shootout so that the combatants could successfully flee the scene before the police arrive. The story of Enyn05's drug related gun event (described above) illustrates the most common scenario of police involvement. He explains:

(DT) Did the police come to the incident when you shot the guy? (ENYN05)
Yeah [they] came but I was gone already when... They was looking for me

because they told them who I was. Police just coming through looking for me. Going in my grandmother crib. My pops they walking up to my pops giving him cards like tell your son to come see me. I thought I was going to hit America's Most Wanted for a minute.

In this case, the respondent flees New York and goes down south until he feels it is safe to return without capture.

E. Defining Closure or Outcomes of Violent Events

Previous research has generally neglected the importance of defining closure in violent events (See Oliver, 1994 for an exception). Data on the outcomes of violent events beyond the immediate incident are generally not available in traditional data sources. The issue of event closure is especially problematic for adolescents. We explore the “outcomes” of these violent events with a primary focus on defining closure. I compare and contrast different aspects of squashed, completed, and on-going conflicts to identify situational contingencies. At least seven different types of outcomes are described. The descriptive results for outcomes are presented below in Table 5-11.

One goal of this study is to capture respondents' involvement in potentially violent situations and compare those situations to completed events. Accordingly, we ask respondents to describe “squashed” or “deaded” events. Respondents describe at least three types of situations where beefs are “squashed.” Conflicts can be squashed before violence occurs, after violence occurs, and temporarily until the next opportunity.

1. Squashed Before Violence

In the sample of 306 events, twenty-seven situations result in a non-violent outcome, that is, the conflict is settled before violence ensued. In these situations, mutual agreement to end the argument without violence is achieved between the respondent and his opponent(s). In some cases, third parties play the role of mediator and prevent the situation from escalating. In these situations, both parties usually enjoy the approval of others in the setting for squashing the conflict before violence. Squashing situations before violence most often occurs in situations without weapons. Specifically, 20 of the 27 squashed events involve no weapon, 5 involve guns, and 2 involve other weapons. This represents 18.0% of no weapon events, 3.5% of gun events,

and 4% of other weapon events.

One common feature of defused or events that are squashed before violence is the respondents' relationships to the opponent. The more closely tied the two combatants are the more likely they are to defuse heated situations. In the gun event example presented below the respondent describes being angry and mad at the opponent but that the relationship bond took priority. He explains:

(DB) What happened? (ENYN57) what I did? this nigger was bitchin at me in my hallway and he pulled out a gun on me. So I took it from him, I disarmed him and pointed it at him, threatened to shoot him, you know, get the fuck out of my hallway. Told him to get out. (DB) What you all riffin about? (ENYN57) Nigger was like, yo, you a bitch ass nigger, you know, acting all big cause he got the gun there. You know, one thing led to another. Well, I had took this gun from my man, caused. What kinda gun? (ENYN57) Little nine. (DB) Did you think it was gonna be a shootout when things started to heat up? (ENYN57) Nah, I mean, the nigger was my man, so I didn't really think he was gonna shoot me, you know, but I knew neither me or him was gonna shoot each other. It was just the fact that we was mad at each other that time. (DB) All right, what did he do or say after that? (ENYN57) He's sorry. (DB) What did you do or say after that? (ENYN57) I gave him the shit back, threw it out the window to him. (DB) He saw it? (ENYN57) Hm mm, Took it back home. (DB) How did the situation end? What was the outcome? (ENYN57) After he went home and came back to my crib later on that night and apologized. (DB) You accepted it? (ENYN57) Yeah. Yeah, it's my man.

Apologies and backing down from a threat are sometimes sufficient reason for actors to drop a conflict before it escalates into physical violence. In the example below the opponent verbally insults the respondent's friend. By reinforcing the norms of no fighting inside his aunt's house the respondent may have helped to defuse the situation however it is the opponent's apology which allows the actors to back down while still saving face. Sbn71 describes the situation in the following way:

(DB) Where at? (SBN71) and in the Bronx. And this kid this kid started arguing with my man. And so when we was when was ready to do our thing he came back. He just got punk ass with my man. (DB) He did what? (SBN71) He got punk ass. (DB) What caused the beef? (SBN71) I don't know. I ain't know what was going on. I just know my man was arguing with him. (DB) And you got your man back? And I seen'em arguing. I told my man to go downstairs and

handle his business. Cause I didn't want I didn't want no fights in my Aunt's house. (DB) Um who made the first move towards violence? (SBN71) My man had bottle in his hand ready to pop his head open. (DB) And what was the second move? (SBN71) The second move. There wasn't a second move. After that he [the opponent] apologized. That's it. It was over.

2. Compliance Before Violence

Another 24 events end without violence due to the total compliance by the victim in the situation. Violence is not used in these situations because the actor(s) achieve their goal without it and is not considered necessary. The majority of these situations are armed robberies (N=21) where the victim comply and the actor did not use the weapon or other violence.

In a situation below the respondent and a friend are paid by a woman to stick-up a man. The victim complies fully, and according to the respondent, he and his co-offender would have injured the victim had it not been for the police presence in the area. He explains:

(JM) So what he was saying when this was going down? What, what did he try to fight back or he thought, he thought it was a real gun? (SBN18) Yeah, he was cooperating. (JM) Did you all hurt him? (SBN18) Mm? No, I was going to like my friend was going to hit him on the head before we left. And then we heard sirens and shit so we just left. (JM) So that's how it ended, you all just heard the sirens and you all left? (SBN18) Yeah.

In the armed robbery of the jewelry store described above, the owners of the store comply with the demands of the robbers without much resistance. The respondent explains how the group gets away, splits the proceeds, and spends the money.

(JM) Ya'll didn't hurt nobody or nothing? (SBN28) Nah, we didn't hurt nobody. (JM) So you said that people saw you. When ya'll got away, was there people like chasing ya'll? (SBN28) Nah, nobody was chasing us. Everybody just shocked. (JM) Everybody was shocked? (SBN28) Yeah. We had masks on our face. (JM) Ya'll had masks? (SBN28) Yeah, black masks. (JM) So how did this situation end? How did it end? (SBN28) It just end like that. Hey, we had a ...we got it, got it. Some kid through with the money. That's all we needed. (JM) And what you did with the money? I mean, what you bought you know? (SBN28) Just bought school clothes. I just bought a lot of stuff, man. (JM) A lot of shit? (SBN28) Yup. Equipment, system. All that.

3. Squashed After Violence

Respondents are able to achieve closure after engaging in violence with an opponent in 57 of 19.1% of violent events. Events that are “squashed after” include some type of resolution or abandonment of the conflict. In many cases, incidents of violence may have occurred between combatants but eventually they agree that the beef is “over.” Mutual agreement or mutual disinterest in continuing the battle are necessary for a beef to be “squashed after” violence. In these cases, the respondent report that no additional violence is needed or expected.

The majority of events that are “squashed after” involve situations with no weapons. Of the 56 events that are squashed after 17 are gun events, 6 are other weapon events, and 33 are no weapon events. Only 12.1% of gun events are coded at this category compared to 29.7% of non-weapon events. Clearly, gun events are more likely to continue or result in multiple incidents.

An example of a gun event that is “squashed after” is presented below. In this conflict classified as a resulting from hood or territory issues, the combatants come to reconciliation after several incidents back and forth. Enyn70 explains:

(DT) Alright how did the situation end? You still got beef with the nigger now?
(ENYN70) Nah, we all became close. We like started we started affiliating with each other. Hanging out whatever. I was telling you about his little team all of us. We started hanging out. Started became close. So it was just basically a young thing I figured out. It was just a young thing. Cause we all started getting cool after that. (DT) What you say your friend got hit with the garbage can? Nobody else got shot right? (ENYN70) Nah nobody else got shot. (DT) Was it a minor wound or? (ENYN70) yeah it was a little scratch. It was kind of deep though. He needed stitches. Cause the garbage can or whatever. I think you know shit is metal so the shit it cut in to him. But it didn't go in and stick or nothing. But he was alright.

The respondent feels that the conflict was “a young thing” and the two groups ended up becoming friendly after several shootouts and fights. Although the potential for serious injury is present in these situations no one is seriously wounded. It seems the outcome of these conflicts may have been less amicable if the “gun play” had resulted in death or serious harm. The narrative where one inmate had taken the respondent’s belongings and set him up to fight for them is an example of a squashed after the fight. Enyn63 explains that by putting up a good fight (despite losing), he wins back his property from the opponent. The event also defines Enyn63's status with the opponent. The opponent warns Enyn63 “not to play him close” and tells him he

would do the same.

4. Temporary Closure: Events that Just Ended

According to respondents, 88 violent events “just ended.” In these situations “closure” occurs without agreement or resolution, thus, it appears to be more temporary than permanent. Respondents note that they are not actively planning to seek out the opponent to keep the conflict going but rather that it could happen. Violence may erupt again between the parties if the opportunity arises. Events “just ended” either as a consequence of what Oliver (1994) called “internal closure” meaning that the “incident was over immediately after the respondent had dominated his antagonist” (p 121). In addition, events that “just ended” typically involve serious injury of either the respondent or the opponent. The actors in these events are frequently strangers (47 of 88 events). One interpretation of this finding could be that routine interaction or opportunity may play a part in the continuation of violent events. Social distance may limit the opportunities for future conflict or may offer legitimate reasons to walk away from conflict without losing face.

Actors use a variety of tactics to get away from armed opponents. Oftentimes the incident is a last time the two parties ever see each other. In the situation sparked by a stranger’s bump Sbn71 describes how he gets away:

(DB) How did the situation end? What was the outcome? (SBN71) I went to... well when he was shooting at me. I tried to run to the train station but then I got up the train. I mean I got up to the train station and started walking through the police precinct. (DB)Is there anything else that you forgot to tell me about that event? (SBN71) When we came back over there we didn't find them. (DB) Oh alright.

After the incident he goes back to that neighborhood to get revenge on the opponent for the gun attack. Although the respondent is motivated to seek revenge he could not find the opponent a second time.

In the incident describe as a personal and material attack in front of the Tatoo parlor, G-42 had the following to say about how the situation ends:

(G-42) ...but the man who own the tattoo place had came downstairs and he was

like 'yo, you know what's going on?' And we was like, we was like 'yo some kids tried to play us.' He was like 'yo they always doing that yo watch yourself don't be outside too much.' So we went upstairs and we stood up. But that was kind of an incident I don't know I kind of felt happy that I had a joint cause I you know what I'm saying I wasn't letting nobody take advantage of us like that so I felt I could defend mines, it gave me more confidence. And I intimidated them and it kind of worked out and they broke-out. (RM) So that was the end of that, that was the, ya'll got ya'll tattoos and ya'll broke-out? (G-42) Yeah. We got our tattoos and stepped. (RM) Word? (G-42) Yeah. (RM) You still got it? You got a tattoo? (G-42) Umm huh. (RM) Let me see it? Oh word? (G-42) yeah. (RM) True. (RM) Um. Your aunt never said nothing to you about that afterwards? Nah. She was like 'yo see? Fuck with the bulls you get the horns.' She made a little joke out of it.

The respondent concludes that the event is a good experience for him because he successfully defends his rights, friends, and property. As the respondent explains it is a confidence builder for him. The owner of the tattoo parlor reinforces the "successful" performance by warning the kids about the dangers of being outside in the neighborhood. His comments like: "they[re] always doing that," "watch yourself" and "don't be outside too much" are supportive of the respondent's definition of his own actions as appropriate and good.

Compared to other outcomes there is an equally large number of events that are classified as just ended across each of the three weapon types. For instance, 33 or 23.4% of all gun events have this outcome, 25 or half of all knife and other weapon events, and 29.7% of the no weapon events "just ended."

5. Forced Endings: Disrupted Violence

Events end prematurely in 21 situations. In most cases, endings are forced by police officers, school officials, security guards, or others. Typically the immediate threat of punishment or social control prompts actors to either try to get in one last punch or shot or just flee the scene. The disruption is often enough to allow the conflict to dissipate. In fact, respondents rarely describe the desire to reignite the violence in disrupted situations. There was very little difference across the three weapon types for this outcome (5% of gun events, 8% of other weapon events, and 8.1% of no weapon events).

Many of the gun situations involve threats and even firing the weapon by further action or harm is interrupted by some external factors. In the example below, the security guards prevents

G-23 from shooting his opponent. He explains the situation:

(RM) What about after that? (G-23) We go to this club. My girlfriend didn't go with us that night. I was talking to a girl, dancing. I had heat on me. I had a 45. Dancing, dancing. This guy push me. I look and said, 'DON'T TOUCH ME!' [he said] 'What you gonna do? You dancing with my chick.' I dancing with your chick. Her, I didn't know she was your chick. Nah, you disrespect me, I gotta do something. He swung and punched me. I moved back and laughed at him. I pulled out in the club. I tried to blast him. The security guards all charged me. That's it, they busted me, two months. I stayed there for December to February. Still got in a couple of fights, beefing, but no more jail.

6. No Endings: On-going Beefs

Nearly twenty-eight percent of the violent events are classified as on-going (N=83). On-going violent events are serious conflicts. Situations continue beyond the first violent interaction for a variety of reasons. Personal injury to one's health or reputation usually evokes the desire to retaliate against an opponent over other more peaceful alternatives. Harm to others, especially lethal or serious harm, often sparks the continuation or "torch taking" by close friends or relatives.

Of the many event narratives presented in the first half of this chapter are classified as "on-going" and likely to result in additional violent events.⁷ Some of the events described are the second or third event in a series of incidents.⁸

The violent conflict described below actually consist of five separate but connected incidents with the same combatants. The initial incident results from the respondent's dislike of the opponent. The first event involves threat with a gun after a verbal challenge. The second encounter involves a fight without weapons in which the respondent lost. The third event follows immediately thereafter when the respondent attempts to stab the opponent following the loss. The respondent gets glazed by a bullet on his ankle after firing three shots at the opponent in the fourth event. This situation, although an extreme case for the sample, illustrates how the "end" of one fight could spark the beginning of the next if the outcome is not satisfying to the participants. SBN65 explains:

Event #1 (DT) Let's just go with a gun. Okay so what happened describe the situation? (SBN65) Alright um, I am coming home one day from school, right?

And I see this black kid right next to me, you know. So I am smoking a blunt. So the next thing you know. I puffed the blunt. I all the ashes on his leather jacket on purpose. Because he was acting like a monkey. Listen to that rap music diddy bobbin mad hard. So the next thing you know. We walk down a block. So we beefing and shit. The next thing... He go he went up in his building. I went into my projects right. So boom next thing I went upstairs I go get my toast, boom. So he in the middle of the project boom. He just ripping [talking loud]. 'Ahhh you talking mad shit.' Yeah boom boom so I show him my shit and all that. He know that I got my burner on him but he still want to pop shit. So I aim and didn't bust him in broad day light.

Event #2 (SBN65) The next morning we going to school I see him so when that next day whoop we shoot a quick 5 minutes. Do do do do da da do da doom you know he did his thing. He had a little weight. He lift me up on my feet got me down boom. But I rocked him cause I am good with the hands.

Event #3. (SBN65) I went back upstairs. I ran back I ran up got a butcher knife. I knew and he was going to school. So I chased up after him in the school. I try to stab him up in front of all his friends. Like six kids. His friends helped him pushin him away from me and everything. He got on the train then I broke out.

Event #4 (SBN65) Then the next night. I hadn't seen him and shit. So boom he was coming with his people and shit. But he ain't had no gun on him. I had my gun on me. So next thing I see this man in the store right. Soon as I seen him in the store. I just open the door like 'yo what up nigger hold your head man it's coming for you.' So boom as soon as the door closed. I walk up into my projects. So he walk through. Next thing you know he walk through I started licking on him. Beka beka beka I let off three shots at him. He started ducking. He started running under the benches. Started throwing the garbage can on the floor. I am starting to run too. I smell cops all over. So the next thing you know His man come down. His man already he had his was ready downstairs with a burner. He had like some fucking. He had a tech, yeah some shit. Yeah cause this shit was lick licking like some bwig ga ga ga it was licking. So next thing you know. I am running up in my building. One of them shit hit me in my fucking ankle. Hit me in my ankle I ran upstairs to the ambulance. You understand? I didn't snitch on him or nothin. I said to myself 'Yo you know what? This nigger shot me. I got caught by a unknown bullet and I am going to see this nigger. Wait till he try to blaze me.' So the next thing.

Event #5 So I seen him the next weeks right. I got my hoodie on. He ain't even see me. I got a couple of peoples with me. I got like three fellows with me. So the next thing we at a party and shit. We drinking 40s and everything like that. I didn't drink nothing that night. Everybody started drinking the most. He gets happily drunk and everything. So the next thing you know. I got a hoodie. He couldn't see me. The next thing you know. I put on my hat my gloves and

everything. Ran up from behind with my three boys. My two boys grabbed his arms. I just ran up through him and just cut him slashed him in the neck. I don't know if he lived or died. He was drunk. He thought every thing was all forgotten. Little do he know in his sleep is the cousin of the death. But I never see this guy after that day.

(DT) Did you know the guy? (SBN65) nah some cornball, some cheesecake ass nigger. He live around my way put it like that. (DT) What was it about the situation that made it necessary to handle beef the way you did? (SBN65) Cause he do what he had to do. I do what I had to do. (DT) And what was that? (SBN65) Stand up and approach my business. (DT) What made you shoot at him? (SBN65) What made me shoot at him? Cause I ain't I trust him. He had gold teeth in his mouth. He had gold teeth on the bottom. He had fronts the gold fronts. I don't trust guys with gold fronts. (DT) After all of this happen did you change where you were hanging out? (SBN65) Yes I had to change where I was hanging and where I lived at. (DT) Why? (SBN65) because that's provoking danger to me and my family. My family doesn't have anything to do with it.

Gun use events are more likely to lack closure than other weapon and no weapon events. Indeed, 40.4% of gun events are classified as "on-going" beefs. Twenty-four percent of other weapon events and only 14.4% of non-weapon events are characterized as on-going.

Respondents report that they anticipated completing an act of retaliation against the opponent(s) in 29 of 83 situations in the near future (20 of these were gun events). According to the respondent, these conflicts are festering in his mind. The event would come to life when the respondent felt the time is right, or more accurately, when the odds are tipped toward a favorable outcome for the respondent. The remaining 54 conflicts would just simply continue according to respondents, implying that resolution, without some significant change of position, would not occur.

7. The Intersection of Spark or Reason and Other Situational Variables by Outcome

As indicated by the narrative descriptions certain types of violent situations result in different outcomes. As shown in Table 5-12, outcomes correlate with situational factors depending on the type of event. Each of the six outcomes are examined specifically below. The only significant correlation for events that are disrupted is when the respondent is having a conflict with a co-worker (drug trade). Situations where compliance is reached, or rather that the

victim did not resist, are typically armed robberies of strangers committed by multiple offenders in the absence of third parties. Situations that are squashed or defused before violence tend to be unarmed conflicts between friends. Violent events stemming from unfair play or cheating and events over girls are significantly correlated with the outcome category "squashed after." Situations that are squashed after violence are likely not to involve weapons. A negative correlation is found between event that are squashed after and gun use. Situations that "just ended" have no significant correlation with any of the motivational categories. Weapon type was significant, in that, knives and other weapon events are positively correlated with situations that "just ended" while gun use is negatively correlated with that outcome. The presence of the respondent's boys is negatively associated with "just ended" situations whereas respondent's status as drunk or high is positively correlated.

Events classified as "on-going" correlate with a wide range of motivational and situational categories. For example, events sparked over drug business transactions, identity challenges, money or debt, revenge, and self-defense are positively correlated with the outcome category "on-going." These situations are less likely to result in closure. Gun use is positively correlated with on-going events while no weapon events are negatively associated with this outcome. Disputants in violent events that are on-going tended not be friends or strangers but rather conflict rivals. The presence of the opponent's boys is positively correlated with events that are on-going.

8. Injuries

Respondents report that serious injuries resulted in 124 of 191 violent events (64.9%). Logically, injury is more likely if weapons are involved. Of the 99 gun events with information on injuries, 72.7% end with a serious injury. 91.7% (33 of 36) of other weapon events have injurious outcomes while only 35.6% of non-weapon events did.

9. Concluding Remarks about Closure

As shown above, defining closure in these situations is problematic and needs further study. Respondents describe the anticipation of retaliation by the opponent (and usually his peeps), the anticipation of retaliation by the respondent (and usually his peeps), the actual retaliation by the respondent (and usually his peeps), and finally the actual retaliation by the

opponent (and usually his peeps). Thus, the ending of one violent event often sparks the beginning of the next. It seems that for a beef to end with resolution a number of factors must fall into place including agreement (conveyed through verbal and non-verbal gestures) between the parties (and their associates) that the conflict is over. Again, relationships are the most powerful predictor of the type of outcome these events would have. Weapon choice is also influential for determining the outcomes of violent events. As discussed above, gun events are less likely to reach closure while fights without weapons are much more likely to achieve closure.

F. The Aftermath of Violent Events

The violent events described above often have consequences beyond the immediate situation. Indeed, the ending of one violent event may spark the beginning of another. Many respondents express the need to increase their weapon carrying behaviors, rely upon the added security of their peer group, and generally be prepared for additional attacks following a violent encounter. The outcomes of violent events can have consequences for the social identity of the actors. For example, a poor performance may result in a downward slide of one's personal reputation while a successful performance is status enhancing. This process is explored in Chapter six. Finally, the talk or gossip following many of these violent incidents may also have consequences for future violence, drug business, safety, and social identity.

1. Additional Violent Events

Additional violence may occur via direct routes such as retaliatory violence or through more indirect paths such as leaving individuals behind without protection. The aftermath of one violent event may have unforeseen consequences of power plays and take overs when an individual is removed from the dominance hierarchy on the street. The story presented below illustrates some of the things that can happen after one violent event. In this example, Enyn05 describes his absence from New York as a contributing factor to the murder of two of his boys. He explains:

(DT) After this altercation happened was there talk in the n'hood about it?
(ENYN05) Oh word, police was looking for me son. Niggas was like, 'yo son, smoked that nigga son. Son shot that nigga in the head five times.' (DT) So

what happen when the police left you came back to check the scene? (ENYN05) Yeah, yeah I went back and they was like yo son you crazy kid you rocked that nigga. (DT) Niggas was amping you up and shit? (ENYN05) Yeah son you know I had to go get my little props. (DT) Were you happy or you were glad, how you felt about what people was talking about? (ENYN05) I always felt like a original killer but I wasn't happy because I was satisfied I was like yo I fucked up, that is when I realized I fucked up when it was too late. Cause now I wasn't being able to get no sleep. (DT) Did anyone encourage you not to [do it], [to] dead that shit, dead that shit like that? (ENYN05) Yeah son my partner, cause he was like yo we making money we can't afford this shit right now, and the shit took down my whole business. Word I regret doing it because all my business went down. And then after that my best friend and my cousin got killed. (DT) Was it related to this? (ENYN05) it wasn't related to it but, I could say it was related because if I wouldn't have did that then I wouldn't have had to leave New York. Cause I had to go on the run for a few years cause the cops was looking for me to give me 25 to life. My best friend had to go on the run and by us both leaving my cousin got killed because he was by his self. And by me and my best friend not being around the same way, he got killed. So I can say it is stimulated from this.

2. Need for Increased Protection

Concerns about personal safety following a violent event are very common. Many respondents describe the need to enhance personal protection. Respondents describe the concept of “sleeping” or being “off-point” as extremely dangerous. Most took a proactive stance toward warding off retaliatory attacks by being prepared for the worst. Several illustrations of enhanced self-protection sre presented in section one of this chapter.

3. Gossip or Rumors after an Event

Most violent incidents described by the sample are followed by some type of conversation about what had occurred and who was involved. Within peer group talk or retelling of “war stories” is extremely commonly. It appears that respondents make sense of their actions, look for social reinforcements, and are entertained by the stories. Telling “war stories” is described as a ritualistic part of the violence process. Many times after an incident there would already be talk on the block about what had happened before the individuals involved even had the opportunity to tell their own side of the story. Oftentimes these rumors are inaccurate, partial, and fuel additional violence. Positive gossip about one’s performance is potentially status enhancing, however, it may lead to additional problems. For example, if the performance of one individual

is rumored to have been powerful and dominant when in reality it was an even exchange, the person with the "one down" position may become enraged. Gossip may spark undeserved praise, humiliation, or simply distort the reality of the conflict. Gossip is especially powerful between individuals who are acquaintances from the same neighborhood or school. Gossip is a powerful mechanism in promoting the symbolic audience to violent events. Strangers from outside the neighborhood would be less likely to have knowledge of street gossip. Both males and females participate in gossip about violent events.

G. Summary

Guns have symbolic as well as strategic meaning. Gibbs and Merighi (1994) suggest that guns are symbols both of masculinity and identity. Respondents in this study say that showing a gun (threatening someone) is a disrespect, a violation of one's social and physical space. Guns also change the calculus of a dispute, raising the stakes both in terms of status and strategy. Once a gun is introduced into a conflict situation, it is perceived as a life or death situation. Following this type of disrespect, the opponent is expected to retaliate by getting a gun and shooting the other person. In a gun face-off situation, the main strategic move reported is to take the first shot in anticipation of the opponent using his weapon first if give the opportunity.

Violent events are described as public performances with often serious implications beyond the immediate interaction. Violent events where guns are involved included the active participation of "co-offenders" in 66.6% of the cases compared only 33% of the non-weapon events. The violent performances given by our respondents reflect concerns about gains or losses in individual and group status as one of many possible outcomes. Respondents are more likely to engage in gun violence with a stranger or rival rather than a friend, co-worker, or neighborhood acquaintance. Gun events are more likely to occur on street corners, in unregulated clubs or parties, or other public spaces with limited social controls. Gun use events are less common in schools or jails. Respondents frequently get involved with gun events while under the influence of alcohol or some type of drug. The ratio of being high or drunk to not being high/drunken is 3.8 for gun events vs. 1.2 for events where no weapon is involved. Naturally, serious injuries are more likely in situations with firearms compared to no weapons. Situations where knives and other weapons are used also result in a high rate of injury. As discussed above, gun events are

less likely to reach resolution while fights without weapons are much more likely to achieve closure. In the next chapter, we explore the process of status development among adolescent males and the role that violent events play in that process.

Notes

1. It should be noted that descriptions of violent events presented in this dissertation reflect accounts offered by respondents during the research interview. It is unclear the degree to which their reconstructions of these events would fully capture the arousal states during these situations of angry arousal and hot cognition. The best we can do with these data is to document the level of arousal in vague terms after the fact. The data provide some insights into cognitive processes, however, additional analysis and data are needed on cognitive during heightened arousal states such as the life threatening situations presented herein.
2. The following events are between strangers: SBN71, G-44, G-80, G-42, ENYN63, G-83, ENYN16-a, ENYN16-b, SBN33, G-18-c, G-18-d, G-58, ENYN04, G-01, SBN30 and G-54.
3. The following events described in the text are between neighborhood acquaintances: Enyn64, G-62, ENYN02-g, G-15, ENYN17, and SBN65.
4. The events reported by G-41, G-76, ENYN02-b, ENYN26, ENYN05, ENYN81, G-61, and ENYN70 are between rivals.
5. Two examples of violent events between friends are presented in the text (ENYN09 and ENYN75).
6. Violent events between co-workers are described in Enyn05 and G-82.
7. The following events are classified as "on-going" beefs: ENYN20, ENYN58, G-80, G-41, ENYN64, ENYN73, G-44, G-62, SBN31, ENYN02, ENYN26, ENYN05, and G-61.
8. Only a portion of those events are described in detail.

TABLE 5-1. Intersection of Type of Weapon by Location of Event (N=306)*

	Total		Gun		Other Weapon		No Weapon	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Location or Place of Event:								
Jail	19	6.4	0	0.0	8	15.7	12	11.2
Drug Spot	31	10.4	27	18.6	0	0.0	4	3.7
Party/Club	36	12.0	20	13.8	6	11.8	11	10.3
Street/Corner	149	49.8	79	54.5	25	49.0	48	44.9
School	36	12.0	6	4.1	6	11.8	24	22.4
Sports	9	3.0	0	0.0	1	2.0	7	6.5
Gambling	5	1.7	2	1.4	0	0.0	3	2.8
Store	13	4.3	11	7.6	2	3.9	1	0.9
House or Apt.	13	4.3	8	5.5	2	3.9	3	2.8
Train/Station	10	3.3	3	2.1	2	3.9	5	4.7
Park	9	3.0	4	2.8	1	2.0	4	3.7
Pool	3	1.0	3	2.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Missing	7		3		0		4	
Total Valid		299		145		51		107

*Data were missing on different domains. Percentages are for valid cases only.

TABLE 5-2. Intersection of Type of Weapon by Respondent's Role (N=306)*

	Total		Gun		Other Weapon		No Weapon	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Respondent's Role:								
Initiator	123	40.2	70	47.3	26	51.0	48	43.2
Victim (Attacked)	124	40.5	63	42.6	20	39.2	38	34.2
Supporter	34	11.4	24	16.2	2	3.9	8	7.2
Avenger	29	9.5	17	11.5	3	5.9	6	5.4
Mutual Consent	48	15.7	10	6.8	4	7.8	23	20.7
Witness	2	0.7	2	1.4	0	0.0	1	0.9
Total Valid	306		148		51		111	

Armed with Gun	102	34.1	100	69.9	2	4.1	1	0.9
Armed with Other Weapon	28	9.4	1	0.7	27	55.1	1	0.9
Unarmed	169	56.5	42	29.4	19	38.8	110	99.1
Missing (Weapon Status)	7		5		2		0	
Total Valid (Weapon)	299		143		49		111	

*Data were missing on different domains. Percentages are for valid cases only.

TABLE 5-3. Intersection of Type of Weapon by Opponent's Role (N=306)*

	Total		Gun		Other Weapon		No Weapon	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Opponent's Role:								
Verbal Threat	54	17.6	22	14.9	9	17.6	21	18.9
Denied Claim	16	5.2	7	4.7	1	2.0	7	6.3
First Move (physical)	110	35.9	56	37.8	20	39.2	35	31.5
Made Claim	37	12.1	3	2.0	1	2.0	4	3.6
Mutual Consent	39	12.7	4	2.7	4	7.8	14	12.6
Self-Defense	25	8.2	9	6.1	4	7.8	6	5.4
Did Nothing	23	7.5	17	11.5	1	2.0	6	5.4
Ran Away	7	2.3	6	4.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total Valid	304		148		51		111	

Armed with Gun	88	29.3	87	60.8	1	2.0	1	0.9
Armed with Other Weapon	30	10.0	4	2.8	19	38.0	5	4.5
Unarmed	182	60.7	52	36.4	15	30.0	106	95.5
Total Valid (Weapon)	300		143		50		111	

*Data were missing on different domains. Percentages are for valid cases only.

TABLE 5-4. Intersection of Type of Weapon by Relationship with Opponent (N=306)*

	Total		Gun		Other Weapon		No Weapon	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Relationship with Opponent:								
Friend	34	12.0	11	8.0	9	17.6	14	12.6
Acquaintance from Hood	86	30.4	33	24.1	10	19.6	42	37.8
Rival	53	18.7	35	25.5	9	17.6	11	9.9
Stranger	130	45.9	67	48.9	17	33.3	44	39.6
Co-worker	21	7.4	16	11.7	1	2.0	4	3.6
Missing	23		11		6		6	
Total Valid	283		137		51		111	

*Data were missing on different domains. Percentages are for valid cases only.

TABLE 5-5. Intersection of Type of Weapon by Role of the Respondent's Peeps (N=306)*

	Total		Gun		Other Weapon		No Weapon	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Respondent's Peeps' Involvement:								
Present	194	79.2	110	85.9	25	65.8	59	74.7
Not Present	51	20.8	18	14.1	13	34.2	20	25.3
Don't Know/Missing	61	19.9	20	13.5	13	25.5	32	28.8
Total Valid	245		128		38		79	

Did Nothing	45	26.9	22	21.4	4	18.2	16	36.4
Used Violence	96	57.5	71	68.9	12	54.5	17	38.6
Verbally Amped Up	18	11.5	9	8.7	3	13.6	6	13.6
Broke Up	7	4.2	1	1.0	1	4.5	5	11.4
Don't Know/Missing	28		7		3		15	
Total Valid	167		103		22		44	

Armed with Gun	69	38.3	66	64.1	3	16.7	1	1.7
Armed with Other Weapon	8	4.4	1	1.0	7	38.9	0	0.0
Unarmed	103	57.2	37	35.9	8	44.4	58	98.3
Missing (Weapon Status)	14		7		7		0	
Total Valid (Weapon)	180		103		18		59	

*Data were missing on different domains. Percentages are for valid cases only.

TABLE 5-6. Intersection of Type of Weapon by Role of the Opponent's Friends (N=306)*

	Total		Gun		Other Weapon		No Weapon	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Opponent's Peeps Involvement:								
Present	123	75.0	69	79.3	17	70.8	39	69.6
Not Present	41	30.4	25.0	18	20.7	7	29.2	17
Don't Know/Missing	142		61		27		55	
Total Valid	164		87		24		56	

Did Nothing	23	22.3	3	5.6	2	14.3	17	45.9
Used Violence	62	60.2	44	81.5	10	71.4	11	29.7
Verbally Amped Up	17	16.5	7	13.0	2	14.3	8	21.6
Broke Up	1	1.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.7
Don't Know/Missing	20		15		3		2	
Total Valid	103		54		14		37	

Armed with Gun	35	31.0	35	56.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Armed with Other Weapon	8	7.1	2	3.2	6	35.3	0	0.0
Unarmed	70	61.9	26	41.9	11	64.7	33	100.0
Missing (Weapon Status)	8		6		0		6	
Total Valid (Weapon)	113		62		17		33	

*Data were missing on different domains. Percentages are for valid cases only.

TABLE 5-7. Intersection of Type of Weapon by Co-offending Status (N=306)*

	Total		Gun		Other Weapon		No Weapon	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Single or Multiple Offenders:								
One on One	118	42.1	33	23.4	24	50.0	60	58.8
Two + on One	63	22.5	41	29.1	12	25.0	12	11.8
One on Two +	23	8.2	10	7.1	6	12.5	7	6.9
Crew on Crew	76	27.1	59	41.8	6	12.5	14	13.7
Missing	26		7		3		9	
Total Valid	280		141		48		102	

*Data were missing on different domains. Percentages are for valid cases only.

TABLE 5-8. Intersection of Type of Weapon by Role of Other 3rd Parties (N=306)*

	Total		Gun		Other Weapon		No Weapon	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Role of Other 3rd Parties								
Present	101	73.7	45	70.3	16	80.0	40	75.5
Not Present	36	26.3	19	29.7	4	20.0	13	24.5
Don't Know/Missing	169		84		31		58	
Total Valid	137		64		20		53	

Helped Respondent	40	39.6	18	40.0	5	31.3	18	45.0
Helped Opponent	9	8.9	4	8.9	2	12.5	5	12.5
Did Nothing	23	22.8	9	20.0	5	31.3	11	27.5
Amped Up	37	36.6	14	31.1	10	62.5	16	40.0
Broke Up	10	9.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	25.0
Total Valid	101		45		16		40	

*Data were missing on different domains. Percentages are for valid cases only.

TABLE 5-9. Intersection of Type of Weapon by Alcohol or Drug Use (N=306)*

	Total		Gun		Other Weapon		No Weapon	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Alcohol or Drug Use:								
Drunk/High	111	64.2	61	80.3	13	50.0	38	53.5
Not Drunk/High	62	35.8	16	21.1	13	50.0	33	46.5
Don't Know/Missing	133		72		25		30	
Total Valid	173		76		26		71	

*Data were missing on different domains. Percentages are for valid cases only.

TABLE 5-10. Intersection of Type of Weapon by Role of Police (N=306)*

	Total		Gun		Other Weapon		No Weapon	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Police Involvement:								
Police Present	81	47.1	49	60.5	15	62.5	20	28.6
Not Present	91		52.9	32	39.5	9	37.5	5071.4
Don't Know/Missing	134		67		27		41	
Total Valid	172		81		24		70	

*Data were missing on different domains. Percentages are for valid cases only.

TABLE 5-11. Intersection of Type of Weapon by Outcome (N=306)*

	Total		Gun		Other Weapon		No Weapon	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Event Outcome or Closure:								
Squashed Before Violence	27	9.1	5	3.5	2	4.0	20	18.0
Disrupted	21	7.0	7	5.0	4	8.0	9	8.1
On-going	83	27.9	57	40.4	12	24.0	16	14.4
Retaliation Anticipated	29	9.7	20	14.2	3	6.0	7	6.3
Squashed After Violence	57	19.1	17	12.1	6	12.0	33	29.7
Just Ended	88	29.5	33	23.4	25	50.0	33	29.7
Compliance without Violence	24	8.1	21	14.9	2	4.0	2	1.8
Don't Know/Missing	8		7		1		0	
Total Valid	298		141		50		111	

*Data were missing on different domains. Percentages are for valid cases only.

TABLE 5-12. Zero Order Correlations of Outcome & Other Situational Factors

	Disrupted	Compliance Before	Squashed Before	Squashed After	Just Ended	On-Going
Spark or Reason:						
Identity/ Status	-.08	-.11	-.04	.08	-.10	.15*
Girl	-.07	-.11	.02	.17**	-.07	-.03
Self-Defense	-.02	-.07	-.14*	-.01	.03	.16**
Robbery	-.04	.35**	-.16**	-.14*	.07	-.10
Drug Business	-.02	-.03	-.05	-.04	.01	.16**
Revenge	.02	-.10	-.08	-.06	-.11	.28**
Defense of Others	.07	-.11	.03	-.07	.05	.04
Rumors	-.02	-.08	.07	-.02	.08	.00
Neighborhood Honor	-.07	.09	-.02	-.04	.11	-.05
Money/ Debt	-.01	-.07	.08	-.00	-.06	.12*
Unfair Play		.01	-.05	-.05	.13*	-.01
	-.03					
Weapon Type:						
Gun	-.06	.23**	-.19**	-.16**	-.14*	.26**
Knife	-.02	-.11	-.08	-.05	.13*	.01
Other Weapon	.06	.05	-.02	-.03	.13*	-.07
No Weapon	.03	-.18**	.24**	.19**	.01	-.23**
Relationship with Opponent:						
Friend	.05	-.06	.17**	.24**	-.11	-.13*
Acquaintance	-.02	-.10	.03	.13*	-.06	.03
Co-worker	.12*	-.02	-.08	.03	-.05	.06
Rival	-.11	-.06	-.07	-.06	-.04	.25**
Stranger	-.00	.19**	-.07	-.22**	.13*	-.14*
Presence of Third Parties:						
Respondent's Boys	.03	.12*	-.07	.03	-.12*	.06
Opponent's Boys	.03	-.13	-.05	-.04	-.08	.20**
Bystanders	.05	-.39**	.04	.08	.07	.09
Drunk or High	.04	.00	-.01	-.02	.16*	-.09
Injuries	.07	-.01	-.07	-.06	.07	.03

*Significant at the .05 level; ** Significant at the .01 level.

TABLE 5-13. Intersection of Type of Weapon by Injuries (N=306)*

	Total		Gun		Other Weapon		No Weapon	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Injury:								
Squashed Before Violence	27	9.1	5	3.5	2	4.0	20	18.0
Someone injured	124	64.9	72	72.7	33	91.7	21	35.6
No Injury	67	35.1	27	27.3	3	8.3	38	64.4
Missing	115		49		15		52	
Total Valid	191		99		36		59	

Respondent Injured	25	20.2	10	13.3	8	13.6	8	38.1
Opponent Injured	70	56.5	38	50.7	20	33.9	13	61.9
Other Parties Injured	33	26.6	27	36.0	11	18.6	0	0.0
Total Valid (Injured)	124		75		39		21	

*Data were missing on different domains. Percentages are for valid cases only.

CHAPTER 6. GUNS, YOUTH VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

In this chapter, we illustrate how the presence of guns among adolescents creates unique contingencies that impact on the course of violent events, decisions within them, and their outcomes. We illustrate the social processes of gun violence among adolescent males in three specific areas: the development of norms and expectations for the use of lethal or gun violence, the role of guns in the development of “violent identities” and how this identity contributes to gun violence, and the impact of violent identities and guns on events involving drugs and alcohol.

A. Guns and Social Norms in an Ecology of Danger

First, we examine normative social processes that influence cultural norms, the effects of omnipresent guns on these norms, and expectancies about one’s own and others’ behaviors. As illustrated by Anderson (1994, 1999), street codes have evolved in socially and economically isolated areas. These codes establish what is important in social relations among teenagers, and the methods for redressing grievances and disputes arising from violations of the code. Street codes not only determine what is important, but also appropriate means for resolving grievances and disputes. It also places values on “toughness” and violent identities. In an ecology of “danger,” where actors presume that guns are present, conflicts and disputes arising from street codes may be potentially deadly. These beliefs have shaped the methods for resolving conflicts, and have been conflated with the means for self-preservation and maintaining identity. To the extent that these codes reflect the danger around them, we provide the following illustrations of the impact of guns on perceptions of danger and the meanings of gun violence.

1. Dangerousness and Need for Guns

Young men often characterized their neighborhood as a “war zone.” The street is described as dangerous and unpredictable. Violence is expected and can erupt out of a variety of situations. Public behavior on the streets is regulated by a general knowledge that life could be taken away at any moment (by guns, primarily). One respondent described the situation this way:

Interviewer (DT): How would you describe your neighborhood in terms of safety? Is it safe compared to other New York areas?

Respondent (ENYN13): It depends. Safe how? Your mother try to make it safe for you or does the community?

(DT): Generally.

(ENYN13): Nope. Anything could happen. That's what -- that's the thing that really gets people. Like, you come outside, you don't know if you comin back in. You know, that could be your last day walkin' or somethin,' so I really can't say it's too safe, you know. It depends you -- if you goin to school, you in school, that when they try keep you safe there. But, once you outside...

An almost daily exposure to injurious or lethal violence has had lasting effects on the young men in these areas. This stark reality shapes attitudes, perceptions, behavior, and social identity. One respondent had this to say about his South Bronx neighborhood:

Interviewer (JM): Tell me a little bit about that. How was it up there? Your experiences up there (referring to a block in the neighborhood)?

Respondent (SBN18): Very rough. People stabbing you, shooting at you. You can't trust nobody there. You get cut and stuff like that. People always bothering you, you know. They don't fight one on one, just straight up jump you. There is all drugs. People making money on the drugs. Lot of fights. Sometimes, no heat, you gotta watch your back. It is not a safe place to be.

(JM): Was it rough for you, you couldn't handle it?

(SBN18): It was rough, I could handle it.

(JM): What was hardest for you? (SBN18) Everything.

Interviewer (JM): How would you describe your neighborhood in terms of safety? You know what's safe out there to be out there?

Respondent (SBN26): Safe? If you ain't in your house, you ain't safe. And even when you in your house you know, something could happen.

(JM): Like what?

(SBN26): Like you be you could be in the living room watching T.V. and next thing you know, "bow" "bow", gunshots through the windows. They might not be

for you, but, you know. Bullets, bullets have no, you know, no names.

Guns play a big part in feelings of personal safety within this context. Another subject explained why he felt young males in his neighborhood had guns:

Interviewer (DT): So who's carrying the guns out there? Like what age?

Respondent (G-67): You got you got you got everybody carrying guns. You got the girls carrying guns, you got the shortys (young teens).

(DT): You don't no what reason they carrying guns?

(G-67): They just want to be down with everybody else you know. And the one thing is another thing is a lot a people dropping in the hood you know.

(DT): Yeah.

(G-67): People dropping, so everybody walking around they ain't safe, they don't trust nobody you know that's why they got another reason for for a lot a homicides. The reason about trust you know trust, don't nobody trust nobody. Everybody growing up, everybody trying to get that money, everybody try to knock each off. So everybody say just ah fuck it..., everybody just grab the ghat (gun), you know, just be walking around. So it just be a jungle out there.

2. Guns Dominate Social Interactions

Gun carrying in this group varied from daily carrying to carrying only when there was an on-going "beef" or conflict with others. When a respondent knew he had "beef" with someone, he tried to be prepared for the moment when this beef would heat up into gun violence. It was understood that using a gun to harm his opponent was the best way to handle the situation both in terms of what was expected on the street and what an individual had to do to maintain a "positive" (respected) identity. Most often, respondents reported having a gun close by in case it would be needed during a spontaneous conflict or retaliatory situation. They described many instances where they had time to prepare for a potential attack by going inside their building to get their guns or they sending others to get them. Individuals actively involved in drug selling, for example, either carried a firearm or stashed it in the drug spot in case of possible robbery or territorial attack.

The ready availability of guns in the inner city has undoubtably shaped and

skewed street codes toward the expectation of lethal violence. It also sets the value of violent behaviors in the social currency of the neighborhood, and, as in the past (e.g., Cohen, 1955), is the principal source of social status. It seems that “nerve,” “toughness,” and being a “punk” would take on new meanings within a climate regulated by lethally armed actors. Openly displaying a “willingness” to take the life of another when the situation “calls for it” is part of this process.

The prevalence of guns, coupled with the rapid social diffusion of episodes of gun violence, helps shape these perceptions of danger. Respondents report that “most” young males (i.e., 14-30 years old) can and do have guns in these inner-city neighborhoods. Guns are available on the street to just about anyone who has the means to purchase, share, borrow, or steal them. Even people with less powerful identities can get access to firearms, either through associates, family members, or local drug dealers.

Respondents reported that their own experiences with the world of guns began as early as eight and as late as sixteen, and were central to their socialization. Having a powerful gun was and is valued both for intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. Guns may fulfill a variety of personal needs for adolescents including: power, status, protection, and recreation. These processes begin at a young age, often before adolescence, as boys are being socialized into gun use on the street (also, see: Sullivan, 1989; Anderson, 1994). These younger gun users were described as ruthless, heartless, unpredictable actors who were attempting to make impressions on older, more powerful characters on the street.

The presence of guns also has shaped the rules of fighting among teenagers. Fair fights have been described repeatedly in tales of inner city corner life (see, for example, Moore, 1978; Anderson, 1978, 1990; Cohen, 1955; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960). “Fair ones” are defined as physical fights involving two parties of nearly equivalent size and strength who would fight each other one-on-one using their fists (with no weapons or additional guys). Fair ones, according to our sample, are not the dominant type of violent events for young men aged sixteen to twenty-four. Examples of fair fights here included altercations between friends or associates over seemingly trivial disputes, fights with family members, fights by younger boys (6-11 years old) and sometimes older men (35 years and up), fights inside jail or prison, and fights on the block by people who are

known to each other.

However, most respondents explained that “fair ones” no longer dominate conflict resolution in the inner city neighborhood street life, especially in face-offs with strangers, whose willingness to abide by time-honored values is unproven. Many situations that start out as fair fights typically involve some type of “gun play” as the “beef” escalates over time. Thus, the potential for an attack to involve guns is nearly certain for the young men in our sample. Guns raise the stakes in a variety of ways and in many instances, firearms simply trump all other logic.

3. Guns Change Decisions within Violent Events

Guns have symbolic as well as strategic meaning. Gibbs and Merighi (1994) suggest that guns are symbols both of masculinity and identity. Respondents in this study say that showing a gun (threatening someone) is a disrespect, a violation of one’s social and physical space. Guns also change the calculus of a dispute, raising the stakes both in terms of status and strategy. Once a gun is introduced into a conflict situation, it is perceived as a life or death situation. Following this type of disrespect, the opponent is expected to retaliate by getting a gun and shooting the other person. In a gun face-off situation, the main strategic move reported was to take the first shot in anticipation of the opponent using his weapon first if give the opportunity.

Some respondents reported about gun events from both sides of an attack (events where they initiated an attack and events where others initiated attacks against them). From these descriptions we are able to piece together some of the contingencies which impact an actor’s decision making process when faced with a gun threat. Some of these contingencies include:

a. *Intensity of the threat (level of arousal)*. Pulling a gun automatically increases the intensity of the conflict and limits the number of choices available to all parties. Certain actions or words warrant a violent response, if guns are available, guns are used in reply to a transgression. Actors within this context know when and where pulling out and using a gun is socially acceptable. Those who do not follow the code are either eliminated or extremely stigmatized. If either actor displays a gun in a conflict situation,

the event is described as going to the next level (the gun level).

b. Prior relationship with/knowledge of opponent. Prior knowledge and situational impressions of the opponent are important for shaping decisions about future action. Actors use this information. Gun threats by individuals with “large identities” are taken very seriously. Idol threats are not welcome, and may result in serious violence. The idea of “fronting” or faking a threat is a big mistake. Therefore, in the neighborhood individuals who have and carrying guns must be willing to use them if the situation calls for it.

c. Perception of risk and cost. Guns play an important part in actor’s decisions about the risk and cost of violent actions. One of the first and most important decisions is the extent to which one’s identity would be improved or damaged by engaging or avoiding gun violence. The actor’s original social identity factored heavily into how the stages of a gun event would unfold. Some respondents had more to gain or lose than others. Most “lost” or unsuccessful gun events were considered damaging to image and reputation of the loser especially if that response involved retreat. A “successful” gun event was described as identity enhancing. Inflicting harm on others or gaining total compliance over others were valued outcomes which were publicly reinforced through verbal and nonverbal displays of respect commonly referred to as “props.”

Retreat could also have positive ramifications for social identity if used strategically. In some situations, retreat was used as a strategic technique when a respondent was caught off-guard (without his gun or people). In certain situations, respondents describe using their communication skills to talk their way out of getting shot or employed some other neutralization strategy in order to buy some time to arm themselves and get their people for back up. Once the subjects were “on point,” they would frequently go looking for their opponent.

d. Peer influences: Co-offending, Instigation, and Torch Taking. Gun use often involved multiple shooters on both sides of a conflict. In fact, sixty-six percent of gun events involved co-offenders compared to only thirty-three percent of non-gun situations. Many of the gun events described reflected on-going “beefs” between groups or networks of young men which oftentimes meant the shooting of numerous members of rival cliques

over a single dispute. Oftentimes, the reason for the original dispute seemed minor, however, once gun play came into the situation future violence was motivated by revenge or getting justice. Avenging the shooting of one's close friends is considered honorable and necessary for future relations on the street. According to the code, the shooting of one of a young man's street family becomes personal, it becomes a disrespect, even though it may have little or nothing to do with the respondent. These uses of violence suggest a self-help dimension that illustrates Black's (1983) "quantity of law" dynamic.

e. Perception of event by bystanders (the status and identity of observers). The influence of third parties in violent conflicts has been well documented in the literature (see for example, Felson et al. 1983; Decker, 1995, 1996; and Oliver, 1994). The importance of observers is most critical during the period of adolescence where young males are developing and testing their personal and social identities (Kinney, 1993; Eder, 1995). Verbal and nonverbal expressions by others as well as the respondent's internalized "other" will have a strong impact on his decision making process. These cues help the actor decide how best to respond and what actions to anticipate from others. Others may play a central role in shaping the actor's definition of the situation and the outcome of events. The actor is concerned about how each situation will make him look to others. The "audience" as amplifier of the social identity won through violence helps to perpetuate the street code.

f. Absence of social controls. Many of the "squashed" (avoided) events resulted from interventions (real or anticipated) by parties not directly involved in the violent situation such as police, school officials, or other clique members. Some violent situations were dissolved simply because the risks of legal (and non-legal) sanctions were too great. Interrupted conflicts could dissolve temporarily or permanently depending on the street identity of the mediator, intensity of the issue sparking the situation, future opportunities to continue or respark an event, or resolution of the conflict through alternative means.

Overall, within these gun events the thought of dying is always present. However, this cost competes with other costs and returns from gun violence: achieving or maintaining social identity and status bounded in that situation or moment may hold more

value than life itself. It appears that more thought is given to what others may think of the actor and the actor's attempt to match his behavior to his self-image (mythical or actual) rather than the possibility of one's own death or serious injury. Losing respect can be damaging to one's personal safety, economic livelihood, and associations with peers (and sometimes family members). This is not simply bravado, since losing respect in one arena marks a person for future victimizations until he re-establishes his identity through a display of toughness or violence.

4. Guns and Gun Use Equal Respect

Respect is the social currency by which one attains status and protection within the neighborhood. Guns play an important role in the quest for respect on the street. Most respondents sought a tough or untouchable self-image, an image with a very high social and strategic value. On the streets, guns enhance one's potential for being tough. As one subject explained:

Interviewer (MP): What makes somebody tough or a big man in your neighborhood?

(G-56): What make 'em tough?

(MP): Yeah.

(G-56): When they got guns. When they got when they got a whole lot of friends know the guys back. Of course, he gon say he the big man, nobody could touch him. He got props, he got juice.

Another respondent explained that "bust[ing] a gun" was a primary way of achieving respect especially when there were few alternative models. He explained:

Interviewer (WW): What makes someone tough or a big man in your 'hood?

Respondent (ENYN16): In the 'hood it's easy for anybody to be called a big man, because, you know, anybody could bust a gun, anybody could rob somebody. You know, it's like most niggers out here don't really got role models, so seeing somebody do that, automatically you gain respect, or they think that makes them a big man.

Gun use is equated with status and with a high level of respect. Involvement in gun violence is described in terms of developmental achievements. The example below shows how one respondent earned a "stripe" by committing a murder. For this

respondent being “trigger happy” gave him status and also brought him into many additional conflicts. Clearly, he viewed these features of his identity as positive and rewarding. He described:

Respondent (G-61): Yeah it might turn out tragic...

Interviewer (RM): So when you shot the guy you shot, when you shot him, or when you found out he was dead or something- how did that make you feel, did that give you, did that boost you up?

(G-61): It ain't hype me, it didn't make me feel like going out there and doing it again, it just made me feel like...; I just gotta stripe, that's how that made me feel, I got a stripe.

(RM): Did you get a reputation after that?

(G-61): Well, I kept a reputation but...; 'cause I was into a lot of stuff...; and thing I did came to where I was like one of the people, I was like one of the most people they would come and get when it was time for conflict, then anybody...; that I really be around, when there beef, when it's beef time they know who to come get and outta those people, I was one of the top ones they would come and get...; 'cause they always known me...; for being trigger happy and...

The next example shows how lethal violence is necessary for building one's reputation on the street. This respondent thought about reputation in terms of how many “bodies one has under his belt.” He explains:

Interviewer (WW): How 'bout image and reputation? Describe how that's important in the projects or your neighborhood.

Respondent (G-81): Shooting somebody, right there that's image and reputation. How many bodies you got under your belt, if you don't got more than three bodies under your belt....If you ain't never killed nobody, you ain't nothing... That's how niggers look at it though but ... if it's..if it's your people ... they know... they knew you'll bust your gun but they know you never kilt nobody they'll show you some respect... But other than that they come out slick out they mouth... Like if you get into an argument wit one of them, 'Nigger you ain't never bust your gun man. I got more bodies than you. You ain't really doin nothin. You ain't never kilt nobody. I kilt more niggers than you ever kilt.' You know what I'm saying. That's, that's, that's proving it right there.

B. Implementing Street Codes: Establishing and Maintaining a Violent Identity

Social interaction in public spaces is structurally organized in small groups or

interpersonal affiliations. These groups are very significant in formation of personal and social identities in childhood and adolescence. According to Goffman (1963), group formation shores up personal and social identity. Social identity has a stronger influence because “individuals have little control over situations and especially going outside of the expected role for their particular social identity” (Goffman, 1963: 128). Many of the vital functions of adolescent social life operate through these groupings whether they are loosely or tightly connected (e.g. social learning and mentoring, play, nurturing, social support, and economic opportunity). Goffman argues that the “norms regarding social identity pertain to kinds of role repertoires or profiles we feel it permissible for any given individual to sustain” (p. 63) The process of categorizing others (from one’s own frame of reference) shapes human experience.

Goffman describes two types of honoring or (dishonoring) identities: prestige and stigma (1963: 59). We applied this notion in this research to the social identities of adolescent males in the inner-city. The issue seems to be who gets “prestige” and who gets “stigma” and how do “mixed interactions” play out within this context. Clearly, the code of the streets calls for prestige to be granted to those who are tough, who have gained respect by proving their toughness, and who reenact their appropriate role in public. Someone who cannot or does not fit into that a prestigious identity may be instead stigmatized. The “mixed contacts” between young males who are attempting to transcend a punk or herb identity with those who “hold their own” or the “killers” are the primary sources of breaking down the stigmatization. “The very anticipation of such contacts can of course lead normals and the stigmatized to arrange life so as to avoid them. Presumably this will have larger consequences for the stigmatized, since more arranging will usually be necessary on their part” (Goffman, 1963: 12).

The process of self-preservation through displays of toughness, nerve, or violent behavior is considered a necessary part of day to day life for inner city adolescents especially young males (also see Canada, 1995). Acquiring fighting skills (and perhaps more importantly shooting experience) is considered important as a means of survival in the inner city (also see Sullivan, 1989:113). Teenagers with dual identities (i.e., street and “decent”) may situationally engage in violent behavior to maintain a certain status within the broader social culture of the public community. Projecting the “right image” may have consequences for personal safety, social acceptance, and self-esteem among individuals. Individuals who make attempts to “fit into” the

street world walk a very dangerous line.

1. Guns and Violent Identities

Within the isolated social world where street codes dominate, the threat of gun violence introduces new complexities for the development of social identity. Displays of toughness in the context of gun play may involve “crossing a line” that shifts one’s view of oneself from “holding your own” to “wild or crazy,” and result in severe role conflict. Negotiating the street requires tests of character, knowledge of the rules of respect, and open displays of violence. The streetwise can spot a phony miles away. Young men who present themselves as tough better be prepared to back their presentation up with action. Putting on a “front” can be extremely dangerous:

Interviewer (RM): What about image or a reputation on the streets?

Respondent (G-61): Image? Well, a image is something, is a very, it’s important on the streets...; we just show how we come out and show themselves as somebody they not, then people, some people could look and see a fake person between a real person. A real person is the person that...; I see is that don’t take no shit, just do any thing that he wanna do or whatever or he gets down for whatever...;. A fake nigga is a nigga who talk about it but when its time to get down, he got excuses, he got to do this or come up with an excuse or all he do as politic about, talk about. They never really get in the mix...; he just talk about it...; it’s just, you know, you gotta, you just like, you look at you people as your son, daughter, you got to look out for them, and they gotta do the same for you...; That comes with my other thing, ‘cause you gotta, if you gotta problem I’m there and if I got a problem you there...; and another thing when, in the streets police is mostly hated...; they are least involved with anything...; they got, they familiar what’s goes on, but people do not want them involved with them.

(RM): Why?

(G-61): I don’t know. They feel more safer without the police than with the police.

The next example, repeated by many respondents, explained how representations of the “decent” orientation including doing well in school, staying out of trouble, going to college, or working a nine to five (legit) job was devalued on the street. Other respondents suggested that being “goody two shoes” somehow was a denial of one’s black identity. As the illustration shows “busting” a gun gain respect in the neighborhood while getting a degree was not. He

explained:

Interviewer (WW): Describe the importance of image and reputation on the street.
Respondent (ENYN16): Everything goes by image and reputation, yo. Really there is no importance, I think. It's just a way of the street. You got to have respect out there. A nigger will quicker praise somebody for busting guns than praise somebody because they got a degree. You never hear somebody say, "Oh, yeah, someone just graduated from high school and is in the second year of college, doing well." But you'll hear somebody talk about, 'Yeah, I just saw ____, you know, push a nigger wig back.' And from there it comes, you know, like respect and all that where niggers will know you steal all that shit. You know, you get a reputation as a *man*.

The status and reputations earned through these means provide street oriented youth with positive feelings of self worth and "large" identities. Anderson suggests that the alienation, social isolation and despair about the future experienced by many inner city residents may have created an alternative system of positive identities and building self esteem which is reflected in the code of the streets. The street code is a determining factor proving one's manhood and knowing how to act accordingly when confronted with a variety of challenging situations. Anderson notes that the stakes are very high in this context because manhood is dependent upon being "fearless" and "untouchable." He argues that decent youth can situationally act tough and macho but also maintain more mainstream identity in other settings being courteous and respectful when appropriate (Anderson, 1994: 92).

Reputation is something that young inner-city males take seriously and put effort into building as matter of survival. A young man may take up someone else's beef in order to make an impression on others or build up his reputation. A reputation can be won via several routes which are connected by the threat or use of violent force. One respondent explained how it works, he said:

Interviewer (RM): How you get a rep, you know? You know how some brothers, sometimes brothers just go out there looking to get a rep. Be the man.

Respondent (G-42): Those are called like new comers ... Like a person that moves into a new community he's like, he's like damn you know "nigga's out here is cool and they real I got to show these nigga's I ain't no punk yo." So when he hangs out with them, he see any of them about to get into a "scrobble" (fight) he be like "yo step back money I'll handle this for you yo" ...; he's only doing it for a rep cause it's not like that's your brother and you like 'Nah. yo you ain't going to

fight my brother. For that you fight me' (RM): Yeah?

(G-42): Nigga's is just doing it to get a name. Doing [it] so people could look at him and be like "oh word that nigga bust that nigga's ass yo word" I don't know that's the way I look at it.

The socialization process into the way of the streets is quite clear according to our respondents. The pressure to "be part of the scene" or to "fit in" is very great. Indeed, calculation about life and death is part of this pressure. The choices are limited. Another example was explained in the following narrative:

Interviewer (DT): So umm, why is it important to have a reputation?

Respondent (G-58): 'Cause if you ain't got no rep ...; it's gonna be like this, if you ain't got no rep, everybody is gonna pick on you ...; they gonna be like 'oh that nigga pussy, he don't do nothing,' they gonna try to pick you as a herb, you coming up the block niggas be trying to bump you, look at you, ice grill you, look at you up and down, you like...; like you nobody. (DT): Yeah.

(G-58): So that when you gotta go all out, man, you know?

(DT): What you mean by "go all out"?

(G-58): You gotta go all out, you go "lace" (shoot) 'em... have a fight with duke or whatever, pull out a gun and blast 'em... you gotta be, niggas ain't gonna fuck with you if you shoot a nigga...; just lace 'em, and niggas will say 'yo that nigga don't play, he lace something in a heartbeat.'

Another respondent describes why he got a gun, how it made him feel to have it, and how having a gun boosted his reputation. He said:

Interviewer (DT): When did you get your first gun you know? At what age?

Respondent (G-51): What age. I got my first gun at age of I think was sixteen.

(DT): Why why'd you get it?

(G-51): 'Cause I wanted to be bad.

(DT): You wanted to be bad, huh?

(G-51): I wanted to be like I had a reputation to keep so maybe with a gun, would have boost it up a little bit more.

2. Three Social Identities: A Continuum

Teenagers may situationally engage in violent behavior to form and/or maintain certain social identities within the broader social context of the neighborhood. Projecting the “right image” may have consequences for personal safety, social acceptance, and self-esteem among individuals. Within the isolated social world where respect and valued social standing is limited, the threat of gun violence introduces new complexities for the development of social identity. The social identities described include: being “crazy/wild” (frequent unstable fighter/shooter), “holding your own” (functional fighter/shooter), and being a punk or herb (frequent victim struggling for survival).¹ Social identities become more salient through repeated performance. The social meanings attached to each performance determines when and how an actor will be known to others in the neighborhood context, and in turn, subsequent interactions will be defined.

Thus an individual’s social identity can both prevent violence from coming (he won’t get picked on) and promote additional violence (other young men will attempt to knock him off his elevated status). The individual who performs poorly becomes known and labeled as being a “punk” or “herb.” The person who has a “successful” performance gains status and becomes known for “holding his own.” The young man who gives an “extraordinary” performance is labeled as being “wild” or “crazy.” These social identities may be temporary or permanent. This section briefly describes the characteristics of three ideal identity types. The majority of respondents would classify themselves as being someone who “holds his own” at the time of the interview. A small number would be described as fitting into the “crazy,” “wild” or “killer” identity at the time of the interview. Few, if any, of the respondents would classify themselves as a punk or herb during the period of the interview. Looking back over their life histories however, most respondents, 78% of those queried (71 of 96 respondents), reported experiencing one or more situations during childhood or adolescence of feeling like a punk or herb as direct result of violence perpetrated against them by older more powerful males. All of the 125 respondents described the importance of using violence to gain social status and personal security.

a. Being known as “Tough”: Displays of Toughness

“Toughness” has been central to adolescent masculine identity in many social contexts of

American life. Physical prowess, emotional attachment, and the willingness to resort to violence to resolve interpersonal conflicts are hallmarks of adolescent masculinity (Anderson, 1994; Canada, 1995). While these terms have been invoked recently to explain high rates of interpersonal violence among nonwhites in central cities, "toughness" has always been highly regarded and a source of considerable status among adolescents in a wide range of adolescent subcultures, from street corner groups to gangs (Whyte, 1943; Goffman, 1959; 1963; 1967; Wolfgang and Ferracuti, 1982; Canada, 1995). In some cases, displays of toughness are aesthetic: facial expression, symbols and clothing, physical posture and gestures, car styles, graffiti, and unique speech all part of "street style" that may or may not be complemented by physical aggression. While changing over time with tastes, these efforts at "impression management" to convey a "deviant aesthetic" and "alien sensibility" have been evident across ethnicities and cultures (Katz, 1988). Toughness requires young males to move beyond symbolic representation to physical violence. Firearms often are used to perpetuate and refine the aesthetic of "toughness," and to claim the identity of being among the toughest.

Respondents in this world believed quite strongly that "toughness" and "being the man" were two central concepts that rang true universally, both within individuals and across events. The perpetuation of the sense of self and the image in the minds of others also is an instrumental goal of much weapon use. There is a very low threshold for the use of violence for these ends. Some subcultures or networks may also reflect norms where excessive violence, including weapons use, is valued, gains social rewards, and gives great personal pleasure. For example, this is true in some gang contexts where "locura" acts of violence establish one's status in the gang (Vigil, 1988). It is senseless only in the fact that the violence is an end unto itself. The use of weapons, especially guns, has elevated the level of domination. Guns can be used tactically to disable an opponent, or to humiliate an opponent by evoking fear (begging, tears, soiling his pants, etc.) Even if there is little to using the weapon. Again, our data show that guns are an important part of these social processes.

The use of weapons may reflect a total identity that is geared to dominate if not humiliate adversaries. Some adversaries are created in order to express this dominance. Certain respondents in our sample described themselves or others as being "ruthless," "crazy," or a "killer." These young men seemed willing and motivated to use violence to obtain anything they

desired without much remorse or forethought. For them, violence is viewed as justified and necessary in the situation. Their identity is wrapped up in maintaining the image that they are the most violent or toughest head on the street.

At the top of the identity hierarchy of the street is the “crazy” “wild” or “killer” social identity. Individuals who perform extraordinary acts of violence are frequently feared and granted a level of respect that others cannot easily attain. A small number of respondents in our sample described themselves or others as being “wild,” “crazy,” or a “killer.” Some took on this identity temporarily or situationally while others described themselves as always that way. The performances are often socially defined as shocking or judged to be beyond what was necessary to handle a situation. Once an individual gives an extraordinary performance he may notice changes in the way others relate to him. He may also start viewing himself differently. This status brings with it a certain level of power and personal fulfillment that may be reinforced by projecting this identity. Future violent performances would enable him to maintain the image of the most violent or toughest on the street.

Respondent (SBN37): I seen him [top man in the neighborhood], one kid, everybody used to look up to, and he thought he was impossible, he thought nobody couldn't, he thought he was serious gangster. Couldn't be killed. ...He was the big man, he used to walk up to spots and rob people.

Interviewer (RM): What made him a big man?

(SBN37): I guess the way he presented his self. The way he went after people's spots, take their drugs, he didn't care. Like he was God or something, you know what I'm saying? He got shot maybe a couple of times and thought he couldn't die. So I guess that's what made him the big man or made him feel like he was the big man.

Respondent (ENYN15): Well they get respect like that, they want respect. Now a days niggas bust their gun, they ain't got to be trying to shoot you, they just bust their gun at you, make them self look big, that's the only thing, that's how it go, then they get respect, everybody going to be thinking he's a killer, he know he ain't no killer, but everybody think he a killer, unless he [just] shine [front with] a gun.

Interviewer (JM): So what you was saying when the beef was going down?

Respondent (G-88): Yo, when the beef, at that time kid yo, you mind blanks out. You just go crazy man. Especially me, I went crazy. I didn't give a fuck what was going to happen to me Bee. I just soon...I just want to get the shit done you know

I'm saying. To you it's all about respect. You gotta get your respect out here man. Gotta get your respect.

(JM): True.

A person who has an identity as someone who is crazy, wild or a killer, gives off the impression that he has extreme heart, is untouchable, and does not care about what happens. He has the capability to use extreme violence and gets respect for dominating others. Others may want to associate with him to benefit from his high status on the street. The identity itself carries privileges, expectations, and obligations which may open the individual to additional opportunities for violence. The powerful identity may be forced downward by someone else's extraordinary performance.

b. Being known as Holding your own

Many respondents described the process of "holding their own" in violent situations and how personal identities formed around displays of "doing what you got to do" are generally positive on the street. The majority of our respondents would be classified as "holding their own." Individuals who "hold their own" are respected on the street although they will eventually face challenges to their ability to do "what it takes" in heated situations and in all likelihood faced numerous challenges on the way up to that status (Strauss, 1996: 90). A person who has an identity as someone who holds his own, gives off the impression that he has the capability to use extreme violence but does so only when necessary. This person will face a challenge directly and is respected for that position. This identity allows an individual to be considered an "insider" with the street world, however, this status can be unstable and may require acts of violence when faced with public attacks on identity. Several respondents describe their social identities as holding his own:

Respondent (ENYN20): [Someone] who can just handle their own, who's not no trouble maker, but who finishes trouble when it comes.

Respondent (G-09): ...It's a lot a popularity, you know. Your image that you hold is your reputation. You need that on the streets cause without that then anybody... and everybody can do what they want to you. If...if you let them. But the rep. that

you have shall keep... you know if it's a good rep, it will keep these people away from you, keep 'em on your good side. I mean most people who know of you and know how you get down for yours, they know you don't play, that they won't mess with you, because they don't wanna get hurt, because of the reputation that you had. Maybe they don't wanna start because they know you cool, whatever.

Respondent (ENYN05): Yeah, you will go through people trying to get to know you. This of course is a problem because it starts when you younger by getting that reputation you know you not trying to be a killer or a thug, but you just want people to know yo who you is don't fuck with me I won't fuck with you. So you got to break up a few heads you got to do what ever to get that reputation.

Respondent (ENYN16): I was always one holding my own. I always had people's behind me. I was always a fighter.

Respondent (ENYN13): Somebody who doesn't fight over B.S.

Interviewer (DT): Yeah.

(ENYN13): Somebody who think, you know, who wants to shoot a fair one, it will be just a fight and he could hold his ground, hold his own. But it gotta be over somethin' important. It gotta be either somethin' personal between that nigga -- you know, everybody ain't gonna get along, but if you have a fight you might as well fight and get it over with. One lost -- one lost, you know. They don't always go down like that. That's why I hate that, too.

As illustrated by the above examples, an individual who 'holds his own' has used violence as a resource for obtaining that status. These young men face the same type of testing process as the punk or herb however it is expected that this class of men will handle their conflicts with violence and it will be effective. If violence was not effective, someone who is known to "hold his own" will be granted respect for putting up a good fight or taking a bullet "like a man." If this character is situationally "punked" or "herbed" by someone with a lower status, his identity could face a downward slide.

c. A stigmatized identity: Being a punk or a "herb"

At the bottom of the status hierarchy of the street is the punk or herb. Like, the school-based "nerd" or "dweeb" the "punk" or "herb" identity is assigned to those who do not fit into the deemed high status or tough identities (see Kinney, 1993). In the inner-city, those who cannot fight or prove of their toughness may be instead stigmatized either temporarily or permanently.

Other guys in the neighborhood will act upon that stigma. The process of punking or herbing someone, as respondents called it, closely resembled the process of 'fool-making' described by Klapp (cited in Strauss, 1996). Strauss states:

Orrin Klapp has suggested the different conditions that determine how a person can become a fool and remain one: 'Because fool-making is a collective imputation it is not necessary, however, that a person actually have the traits or perform the role of the fool. A person is a fool when he is socially defined. ..What makes a fool role stick? Among the factors responsible for permanent characterization as a fool we may particularly note (1) repeated performances or obvious personal traits which continually suggest the role of a fool; (2) a striking, conclusive, or colorful single exhibition which convinces the public that the person is irremediably a fool; (3) a story or epithet so 'good' that it is continually repeated and remembered, making up an imperishable legend; and (4) failure to contradict a fool role by roles or stories of a different category.' (Klapp, 1949, 159-160, cited in Strauss, 1996: 80-81)

If someone has the punk or herb identity he is considered "fair game" for attacks and robberies. The attacks are motivated both by the need to restate the dominance hierarchy and as a sort of punishment for not living up to group norms. If a young man does not have a tough identity or at least have close associates or relatives who can protect him either by association or literally, he is a punk. Others in the setting degrade, dominate, and victimize those individuals who have punk or herb characteristics. The degradation typically involves a direct or implicit emasculation of the "weaker" males. Punks and herbs are also called "soft" "suckers" "wimps" "pussy" "bitch" "ass" and "chumps." Given the intensified acceptance of hegemonic masculinity in the inner city context, these messages would have a strong negative impact on a punk or herb's self-image. Most young men assume that "outsiders" in the neighborhood (and relevant social network) are punks or herbs and the presumed punk or herb must prove otherwise. Several respondents offered definitions of the punk or herb identity:

Respondent (SBN49): The definition for a punk or a herb, well around my hood, [it] is like somebody that don't want to fight and shit. Like somebody would go up to them and push them or whatever and they won't fight back. So you know everybody call him a punk. And the definition for a herb is like say somebody who is being nice, or somebody who is scared of somebody, and they tell him 'yo go do that or go do this.' And you know he is just, he listens to whatever they say. [The guys] is just sunning him, he's herbing um.

Respondent (ENYN36): Psss. That's easy yo. A punk or a herb is somebody who, it's somebody ...who let ...some next person ...make the nigga do things or ...Make him do shit, make him feel like a sucker. Like if somebody walk up on you... and start talking and start mushing you in your face or putting his fingers in your face ...and you ain't constantly doing nothing about it or he's constantly mother fucking disrespecting you on the real that's a herb. When you let that nigga get away with it you [are] a herb.

Respondent (ENYN24): A person who can't defend himself or scared to defend himself.

Respondent (ENYN56): Punk or a herb, getting played and not doing nothing about it, you know.

Respondent (ENYN20): A herb is a bad ass nigga, someone who's bad and who snitches. You know, [he] gets into a altercation and they loose or something and [then] snitch...

Interviewer (RM): Can you remember a time when you felt like a punk or a herb?

Respondent (ENYN17): Yeah, when I was little.

(RM): Was it?

(ENYN17): I was in a public school.

(RM): What happened?

(ENYN17): (laughter) There was these guys that I used to hang with.

(RM): Yeah.

(ENYN17): But they was doing a lot, they was starting fights and everything and, but I wasn't with that, but I still wanted to be with these dudes.

(RM): Yeah.

(ENYN17): So they calling me a herb and punk and you know what I'm saying?

(RM): Cause, cause you ain't wanted to get with that?

(ENYN17): Cause I ain't want to get with them, I wanted to be with them, but I couldn't do what they was doing, you know what I'm saying?

(RM): How old was you?

(ENYN17): I was like nine.

(RM): So what, what happened after that, did you like stop hanging with them or?

(ENYN17): Well they dropped out of school and I kept it moving.

Punks and herbs take all sort of abuse in our inner-city neighborhoods. They get used by more powerful street guys to test their nerve. A young male who "holds his own" may face threats from punks who are attempting to transcend into a high social identity. A gun is useful in transcending identity:

Interviewer (WW): Have you ever felt you needed to do something violent to amp up your own reputation?

(ENYN16): When I was young, yeah, I thought, you know. Being that I lived in a private house and the projects was right across the street. You know, project kids automatically assume that shit was sweet on a private house, so, you know...

(WW): So what did you do?

(ENYN16): So I like, one incidents, my man, I got chased from the park. If I'm young, you know, I always had a little joint or my pops always a ghat so, you know, kids just came over with no problem because they figured that many niggers on the block and obviously if we living in the private houses we must be rich. But being that I had a burner, you know, as soon as they came with the shit, they came with bats and sticks, I already had a gun so I squeezed it off at them. Actually, I didn't really squeeze it off at them. I just pulled it out to let them know, you know, that I wasn't afraid. You know, I pull it out to let them know that, you know, ain't nothing sweet over here, you know. And I wanted to squeeze after but, you know, back there and I still had some of my little teachings in me, so I didn't really do it. But I wanted to, just to let niggers know, you know, ain't nothing sweet over here. But they got the message by just seeing me pull out. They had sticks and bats and I had a gun.

(WW): So did that help?

(ENYN16): Yeah, that helped. You know, no one really saw me as no punk or herb after that situation. You know, they'll bring the bullshit to everybody else except me and my brother...

The dynamics of violent events reflect several interesting processes: (1) achieving a highly valued social identity occurs through extreme displays of violence, (2) achieving a “safe” social identity may also require the use of extreme forms of violence, (3) the ready availability of guns clearly increases the stakes of how one achieves status, (4) much behavior is motivated by avoiding being a punk or herb (sucker or weakling), (5) identities can change from being a punk or herb into a more positive status such as “hold your own,” (6) guns equalize the odds for some smaller young men through the process of “showing nerve” and (7) one can feel like a punk for a specific situation but not take on a punk identity. If the street orientation is dominant in public spaces and personal safety is attributed to adherence to the code as Anderson suggests, then those who do not conform will be victimized.

Impression management, reputation, and image are necessary to maintain an identity that assures daily survival (see Anderson, 1994; Canada, 1995; Sheley and Wright, 1995). Here, we describe different types of social identities that our respondents reported, how those identities are won and lost, and how young men compete for desirable identities. These are complex processes that unfold over time and have specific developmental stages.² The social identities described include: being tough (frequent fighter/shooter), “holding your own” (functional fighter/shooter), and being a punk or herb (frequent victim). There appears to be “ritualistic passages” into different social identities that includes public displays of violent behavior as a rite of passage. “Impression management” also seems to be an important aspect of negotiating the street world. The data presented below illustrate how this process unfolds. The data also suggest that guns play a significant role in forming and sustaining “positive” social identities within the neighborhoods.

3. Identity Attacks: Dissing and Other Transgressions

Social interaction is regulated through a strict adherence to a proscribed dominance hierarchy where there are only a limited number of desirable identities to attain. Information and impression management are the most critical tools young men use to negotiate the street. There is a competition for respect in the inner city, and the quantity of respect seems to establish one’s place on a dominance hierarchy as well as one’s social status. Knowledge of the “players” in the

neighborhood is needed to determine what type of action is appropriate in a face-to-face encounter and how respect is to be apportioned. Displays of respect are expected by those who have higher levels of status on the street. Respect in this context may include stepping down from violence out of deference to the other person's status (almost respecting a loss before the battle). Displays of disrespect are also expected in situations where identity posturing is called for, e.g. when confronted with someone who is being fake or fronting. However, shows of disrespect or "dissing" is often an intended or unintended attack on someone else's identity and must according to the "code of the street" be addressed aggressively. This negotiation or testing process is not very well understood. One respondent described how "testing" occurs:

Interviewer (DT): So what usually happens when nigger gets like this with you in your face or somethin'?

(ENYN13): Oh, man, that's like testing your manhood. That's like anything you ever been taught since you was younger, what's gonna come out now.

(DT): Yeah.

(ENYN13): Should you wait now, do it now, or handle it? Do you try to talk? Usually that don't even work, cause nobody's talking to you, they either -- the more and more you try to talk, the more and more they gonna disrespect you. That's how I feel.

(DT): So, what happens if somebody, I mean disrespect somebody, what -- what happens? (ENYN13): They fight. I mean, they fight or they -- or they threaten. They make threats to your mom, your -- to mom, all types of threats, and you like -- you can't let this dude come after your moms, you know, --

(DT): Yeah.

(ENYN13): — and they say, black-on-black crimes, this-on-this crime, but it really don't have nothin to do with it, it's between the individuals, because a lot of blacks will... don't even be fightin each other, they be teamed up, you know, they be tryin hype it up. There may be one — just two, three people and they — just buck wild over there. It didn't even be like that. And the more and more they hype it up, the more and more people read, damn, it's like? So, now they feels — that's how they see somebody doin that shit — he ain't fuckin with me. And it just keeps growin, keeps growin, almost nonsense...

(DT): Yeah.

(ENYN13): ...hate and that.

As shown above, violence is a central tool in gaining or losing respect. Thus an individual's reputation can both prevent violence from coming (he won't get picked on) and promote additional violence (other young men will attempt to knock him off his elevated status).

Interviewer (DT): Can you describe to me the importance of a reputation?

(ENYN13): A reputation is important in a way, because a lotta times it keeps you from gettin into a real problem.

(DT): Yeah.

(ENYN13): Somebody don't know you or know who you are, what you about, they all gonna test you, all are gonna try to see what you about. It goes both ways, too. Maybe somebody think you cool and wanna know who you are. They wanna know if you blood or a bad guy, want to know if you good.

(DT): Yeah.

(ENYN13): Some people like drug people, you know.

As another respondent explained, having a strong reputation can protect young men from attacks or robberies by others.

(G-44): Yeah. You make money, if you make money it's just gonna come.

Interviewer (RM): If you make, then you get your props?

(G-44): You'll get your respect then everybody gonna want to be down with you instead of robbing you ... instead of robbing you everybody think "yo why should I rob him ... he show, if he could show me something, he could show me how to make mine...

(RM): True.

(G-44): They, while they robbing him they going home getting a certain amount of money, but he making more, he making the money that he lost. And everybody want that, everybody want to make the money that they lost and not stress. I'm saying " he stole like five Gs from us already. Don't stress it I'm making more money, I'm make it again next week.

(RM): True. That's true.

Within the context of status and identity posturing, ordinary conflicts that occur over personal slights, looks, insults, or playful threats may turn to murder in a matter of minutes. One respondent describes such a scene below. He explained:

Interviewer (RM): Did you ever shoot anyone?

(G-61): Yeah.

(RM): When? Before you got shot or after?

(G-61): After, after I got shot. I shot somebody, we had this conflict, this kid, I don't know him but we was just sitting next, and he exchanged words with my friend, so he told, he came to the kid, the kid came to my friend and my friend told him to move ...; so my man was like "move, what you mean move, man, the word is excuse me," he was like "no move" ...; some rude boy. So he was like, I heard them, so I turned around and said "yo what the fuck is going on, yo," the kid talking about "what you gonna do," so I said "what you mean what I'm gonna do," so I shot 'em ...;

(RM): Where you shoot 'em?

(G-61): I don't know where I shot 'em at, I shot 'em up in the face.

(RM): What you just shot 'em and left. So umm, you left?

(G-61): Yeah.

(RM): So what happened you ain't hear what happened?

(G-61): I heard he was dead.

(RM): Oh, you heard he was dead?

(G-61): Mm-hum.

(RM): Oh, so umm, how that made you feel?

(G-61): Fine. But then again it made me feel like, after that I felt like I was still on my mission, I was like fuck that. He ain't mean nothing to me ...; he wasn't nobody to me so, he ain't mean nothing to me ...;

(RM): Did you feel like your life was threatened like?

(G-61): I ask myself that question all the time, I be saying to myself 'damn, did I make the right decision? Was that the right decision or not ...; And I haven't come up with an answer yet.

Interviewer (RM): So what usually happens like when a guy insult you to your face, like what happens to that person?

(ENYN15): Beef is next. (laughter). Beef is next, straight up, beef is next. If it ain't beef, it's going to take like at least two days or threes days maybe, or if he thinking like yeah, he's going to call me pussy, that's the only thing he have on his mind is he is going to call me pussy, he think I'm a fagot, he going to feel like you got plague if you don't nothing, so he going to learn to do something regardless, that's how shit is now a days.

(RM): That true.

(ENYN15): Nigger being about play, like if I go over to somebody's face and be like you fag ass nigger and just walk away, he know that I bust my gun, he won't think twice, he going to be like, alright, I'm going to get this mother fucker, he trying to play me, you know what I'm saying? Cause if he don't do right, every time he smoke weed or whatever he do, he always going to have that on his mind, well why is he trying to play me, you're going to feel like you're a pussy, you're just going to keep thinking, so he going to learn to do something and make you, kick your chest.

Here a respondent describes the importance of getting dissed (disrespected). He explained:

Respondent (G-61): Getting dissed?

Interviewer (RM): Is that deep or what?

(G-61): That's deep, according to the street that's really deep, 'cause if a nigga diss you, he feel you dissed everything, he just ran over you like a mop, just just walked over you like a mat. If somebody disrespect you everybody will, that's why there be a lot of killing in the neighborhoods today, niggas ain't trying to get disrespected.

(RM): But why do words have to end in death?

(G-61): Just, it's not like it used to be, most of the time some people just talk it out, or fight it out.

(RM): Yeah.

(G-61): But now since there are so much guns, people ask "why should I scuffle my knuckles out or bruise up my face when I can use some that will take care of the problem in less than five minutes?" most people just say fuck fighting.

(RM): That's taking a life, man.

(G-61): Most people don't look at it like that, they be like "that's one less problem in life I got to worry about."

Respondents often talked about verbal attacks on one's mother and how that type of attack could not be tolerated. The consequences of this seemingly harmless insulting may turn deadly as one respondent described:

Interviewer (MP): Why you fired, what was the situation?

Respondent (G-56): What was the situation?

(MP): Yeah.

(G-56): Well somebody played themselves in trying, try to disrespect my moms, so I had to handle my business. May he rest in peace black.

C. Guns and the Ecology of Danger

The crisis of youth gun violence reflects broader trends in youth violence, but also significant changes in the material conditions and social controls in the communities where gun violence is most common. Understanding youth gun violence requires that we also understand the dynamic contextualism of these neighborhoods, the influence of these social processes on socialization, social control, and behavior, and the role of guns in shaping norms and behaviors. Youth gun violence is central to the ecological background of many neighborhoods, and also to the developmental landscape that shapes behavioral expectancies and scripts.

1. Guns as Cues of Danger

The development of an ecology of danger reflects the confluence and interaction of

several sources of contagion. First is the contagion of fear. Weapons serve as an environmental cue that in turn may increase aggressiveness (Slaby and Roedell, 1982). Adolescents presume that their counterparts are armed, and if not, could easily become armed. They also assume that other adolescents are willing to use guns, often at a low threshold of provocation.

Second is the contagion of gun behaviors themselves. The use of guns has instrumental value that is communicated through urban "myths," but also through the incorporation of gun violence into the social discourse of everyday life among pre-adolescents and adolescents. Guns are widely available and frequently displayed. They are salient symbols of power and status, and strategic means of gaining status, domination, or material goods.

Third is the contagion of violent identities, and the eclipsing or devaluation of other identities in increasingly socially isolated neighborhoods. These identities reinforce the dominance hierarchy built on "toughness" and violence, and its salience devalues other identities. Those unwilling to adopt at least some dimensions of this identity are vulnerable to physical attack. Accordingly, violent identities are not simply affective styles and social choices, but strategic necessities to navigate through everyday dangers. The complexities of developing positive social and personal identities among inner-city minority males is both structurally and situationally determined. Our data and previous research suggests that for inner-city males prestige is granted to those who are tough, who have gained respect by proving their toughness, and who reenact their appropriate role in public. Majors and Billson (1992), explain the structural difficulties young African American males encounter in identity development. They state:

Masculine attainment refers to the persistent quest for gender identity among all American males. Being a male means to be responsible and a good provider for self and family. For black males, this is not a straightforward achievement. Outlets for achieving masculine pride and identity, especially in political, economic, and educational systems, are more fully available to white males than to black males. ...The black male's path toward manhood is lined with pitfalls of racism and discrimination, negative self-image, guilt, shame, and fear. (1992: 31)

One important development is a breakdown in the age grading of behaviors, where traditional segmentation of younger adolescents from older ones, and behavioral transitions from

one developmental stage to the next, are short-circuited by the strategic presence of weapons.

The street environment provides the “classroom” for violent “schooling” and learning about manhood. Elsewhere we present a conceptual model for understanding the relationship between age and violence in this context (see Wilkinson, 1997). Mixed age interactions play an important role in this process. Older adolescents and young adults provide modeling influences as well as more direct effects. We found that they exert downward pressure on others their own age and younger through identity challenges which, in part, shape the social identities for both parties. At younger ages, boys are pushing upward for status by challenging boys a few years older.

The social meanings of violent events reach a broader audience than those immediately present in a situation. Each violent event or potentially violent interaction provides a lesson for the participants, first-hand observers, vicarious observers, and others influenced by the communication of stories about the situation which may follow. Children learn from both personal experience and observing others use violence to “make” their social identity or “break” someone else’s identity on the street. In addition, we have attempted to illustrate what happens when an identity challenge occurs for both primary actors in the situation. We describe three different types of performance that may be given in a violent event: poor, successful, and extraordinary performance. Again, guns define what constitutes each class of violent performance uniquely compared to a non-gun performance (see Wilkinson, 1997).

Gun use may involve “crossing a line” or giving what I call an extraordinary performance that shifts one’s view of oneself from a “punk” or even “cool/holding your own” to “crazy” or “wild.” Guns were used by many as a resource for improving performance. We hypothesize that the abundance of guns in these neighborhoods have increased the severity for violent performances. For the majority of our sample, guns became relevant for conflict resolution around the age of fourteen.

2. Effects on Adolescent Identity Development

The maintenance and reinforcement of violent identities is made possible by an effective socio-cultural dynamic that sets forth a code that includes both behaviors and the means of resolving violations of the code. The illustrations in this chapter show the strong influence of

street code, similar to the codes identified by Anderson (1999) over the behaviors of young children, adolescents, and young adults. Children growing up in this environment learn these codes, or behavioral-affective systems, by navigating their way through interpersonal situations which oftentimes involve violence encounters.

Delinquency research in earlier eras showed how conventional and deviant behaviors often lived side by side within groups, and also within individuals (Cohen, 1955; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960). One effect of “danger” as a dominant ecological marker is the difficulty that adolescents have in maintaining that duality of behavior and of orientation. The street code has a functional purpose for attaining status and avoiding danger, even for adolescents who harbor conventional attitudes and goals. Negotiating safety within this context is extremely difficult especially when much of the social activity available to young men who have left school and are “hanging out” on the inner-city street corner involves expressing dominance over others. But the opportunities for dual identities are narrow. The social isolation of areas of concentrated poverty has given rise to oppositional cultures that devalue conventional success, and even interpret conventional success as a sign of weakness. For adolescents who may want to have one foot in the conventional world and the other on the street, this balancing act has become not only difficult, but dangerous. The effects are a hardening of street codes, and an eclipsing of other avenues for social status and respect.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the course of the recent, tragic epidemic of youth gun violence, we had a limited, narrow view of the contexts of and motivations for gun violence among adolescent males. Our research suggests that there was an increase in the prevalence of situations and contexts where conflicts arose that may escalate to lethal violence. The use of guns may reflect both an apparent lowering of the thresholds for using weapons to resolve conflicts, and increasing motivations arising from "angry aggression" (Bernard, 1990; Anderson, 1994).

The infusion of guns and the diffusion to teenagers has had broad impacts on fear of victimization, motivating gun acquisition as a form of self-defense. This was observed both in this research as well as in numerous surveys of adolescents in schools and in the courts (Wilkinson and Fagan, 2000). While traditional themes of toughness and identity continued to shape adolescent development in inner cities, these processes were also skewed by the diffusion of guns into the hands of adolescents who reached their teenage years in communities that increasingly were socially and economically isolated. The ways in which guns altered the processes of achieving masculine identities, in economic contexts with attenuated routes to adult roles, coupled with the perception of fear and hostile intent among their peers, contributed to a significant shift in the rules of fighting and the processual dynamics among adolescents (see Fagan and Wilkinson, 1998b; Wilkinson, 1998).

For a generation of adolescents, gun violence had instrumental value that was integrated into the social discourse of everyday life among pre-adolescents and adolescents. Guns were widely available and frequently displayed. They were, and remain, salient symbols of power and status, and strategic means of gaining status, domination, or material goods. The current cohort of young men in their late adolescent years grew up during a time of alarmingly high rates of violence (again mostly gun) in their neighborhoods. Self-protection and personal safety became increasingly dependent on firearm possession and often use.

In this final chapter, we review the implications of this epidemic, and suggest a framework for integrating legal and informal social controls to contain the spread of future epidemics.

A. Understanding the Epidemic of Adolescent Gun Violence

While youth violence has always been with us, the modern version of it seems distinctly different: the epidemic of adolescent violence is more lethal, in large part due to the rise of gun violence by adolescents. In this research, we provide perspective and data on the role of guns in shaping the current epidemic of youth violence. At the descriptive level, the answer is clear: Adolescents in cities are possessing and carrying guns on a large scale, guns often are at the scene of youth violence, and guns often are being used. This is historically unique in the U.S., with significant impacts on an entire generation of adolescents. The impacts are most seriously felt among African American youths in the nation's inner cities.

It is logical and important to ask whether an exogenous increase in gun availability fueled the increase in youth violence. If this were true, then, regardless of its initial role in causing the epidemic, reducing the availability of guns to kids would in turn reduce the levels and seriousness of youth violence. However, we know little about changes in gun availability to adolescents; estimating supply-side effects is difficult. Ethnographic reports show a steadily increasing possession of guns by youths, but little insight on how guns were obtained.

Instead, we consider competing hypotheses that see a less central (but not insignificant) role of guns in initiating, sustaining, or elevating the epidemic of youth violence. These include the idea that the demand for guns among youth was driven up by the development of an "ecology of danger," with behavioral norms that reinforce if not call for violence, and where popular styles of gun possession and carrying fuel beliefs that violence will be lethal. These shifts in demand, occurring in the context of widespread availability of weapons, that led to increased possession, carrying, and use. Concurrently, guns became symbols of respect, power, and manhood in an emerging youth culture that sustained a continuing demand and supply side of weapons, reciprocally increasing the overall level of gun possession and the desire to use them.

Beyond their direct contributions to adolescent mortality, guns, then, have an indirect influence on adolescent violence through their effects on socialization and development. For many adolescents in urban areas, violence has had a pervasive influence on their social and cognitive development (Richters and Martinez, 1993). Coupled with high adolescent mortality and firearm injury rates, the prevalence of violence in their immediate social contexts objectifies and symbolizes their perceptions of risk and danger in the most common activities of everyday

life. The absence or weakness of ordinary social controls means that there are no buffers between their internalized sense of danger and the situations they deal with daily. Even when violence and danger are not immediately present, the constant emphasis on them in popular culture and urban “legends” enhances the perception of personal risk. Rituals of mourning and burial, whether real or mythologized, have become cultural touchstones that are reinforced and internalized in normative beliefs and attitudes about the inevitability of violence.

Violence has become an important part of the discourse of social interactions, with both functional (status and identity), material, and symbolic meaning (power and control), as well as strategic importance in everyday social dangers. The development of violence “scripts” and violent identities reflects processes of anticipatory socialization based on the perceived likelihood of victimization from violence and the perceived necessity to deter violent attacks by projecting an aura of toughness and danger. The result is a developmental “ecology of violence,” where beliefs about violence and the dangers of everyday life are internalized in early childhood and shape the cognitive frameworks for interpreting events and actions during adolescence. In turn, this context of danger creates, shapes, and highly values scripts skewed toward violence and underscores the central, instrumental role of violence in achieving the goals of aggressive actions or defensive violence in specific social contexts.

B. Specialization versus Specificity of Theory

We began this research with the hypothesis that violent events reflect the convergence of motivation, social and situational context, and symbolic interactions between two parties. To specify a theory for adolescents, we included perspectives from developmental psychology that influence both motivation and decision making. Does the integration of these perspectives result in a specialized theory of violent events? And, is a special theory of violence necessary?

We think not. None of the theories or processes in this conceptual framework are unique to violence. Nor is their integration unique to violence. This suggests that violent events are a specific case within a generalized pattern of social interactions. We also can locate the motivations for violent events within a general framework of functionality and goal-orientation of adolescent deviance: competition for status, development of social identity, accrual of material goods, establishment of autonomy, affirmation of gender roles (Fagan and Wilkinson, 1998a).

The social control components of violence also require no special explanation; crime as social control includes several types of action, from physical violence to aggression-motivated property crimes to relational violence through shaming and social disclosure. And adherence to a behavioral code — whether antisocial or simply fashion — is normative for adolescents.

Yet the escalation of disputes into violence requires a specific explanation within this generalized framework of situated transactions. It is theoretical specificity, not theoretical specialization, that is needed to explain the escalation of social interactions into violence. There are two elements of theory that provides that level of specificity for violent events by adolescents. First, the social cognition and social judgemental capacities of adolescents are limited (Steinberg and Cauffman, 1996; Steinberg and Avenevoli, in press). Accordingly, responses to provocation, threat and arousal are less likely to be modulated among adolescents, whose behavioral repertoires and scripts are more limited than those of adults. Instead, social reaction to threat is more likely to turn from “cold” to “hot” cognitions, in turn escalating arousal and motivating a more extreme reaction such as violence. Thus, social cognition and social judgement provide one violence-specific domain to explain adolescent violence.

Second, we suggest that a normative street code of violence provides a framework that influences decisions by adolescents in inner cities. Such normative codes are not new, however. For example, subcultural explanations of delinquency have been a recurrent theme in delinquency research, and these theories partially address this domain (see, for example, Cohen, 1955; Wolfgang and Ferracuti, 1967). More generally, toughness has always been a valued behavioral affect among teenagers, and notions of masculinity have always valued fighting as a means of demonstrating manhood (Messerschmidt, 1993). But the emergence of a code that embraces *lethal* violence (Wilkinson, 1998) reflects the persistence of extreme violence in neighborhoods and its institutionalization in the developmental landscape of adolescence. The prevalence in inner city neighborhoods of social toxins such as guns, and the recurring episodes of lethal violence throughout childhood and adolescent socialization, have altered scripts from toughness and fighting to lethal violence (Fagan and Wilkinson, 1998b). In conjunction with spatial and social isolation, there have been basic shifts in the for perceptions of threat, for escalating disputes into violence, and for the use of severe forms of violence.

The choice to be violent in specific situations may not be a morally good decision, but it

is a rational decision based on a calculus of the consequences of other behavioral choices. For adolescents in dangerous, potentially lethal contexts, threat trumps morality in a context where there is a reasonable expectation of lethal attack. The developmental context of (violent) inner cities shapes a decision making heuristic among adolescents based on their best and immediate interests, rather than an abstract code of norms that exist only outside the immediate context. When this context involves both safety and social status, two developmental needs often unavailable in these contexts of danger, legal compliance has doubtful value and low payoff for adolescents. The rule of law takes a backseat to the code of the streets.

C. Epistemology

Understanding youth gun violence requires that we also understand the dynamic contextualism of these neighborhoods, the influence of these social processes on socialization, social control, and behavior, and the role of guns in shaping norms and behaviors (Anderson, 1999; Sampson and Wilson, 1995; Tienda, 1991; Massey and Denton, 1993). The crisis of youth gun violence reflects broader trends in youth violence, but also significant changes in the material conditions and social controls in the communities where gun violence is most common. Youth gun violence is central to the ecological context of the neighborhoods we studied, and also to the developmental landscape that shapes behavioral expectancies and social identities of adolescents in these neighborhoods. By examining the extreme end of the spectrum we get a fuller understanding of the complex social processes that create and sustain environments where violence is deemed necessary.

The analysis of violence in an event framework explicitly recognizes the dynamic interactions of individuals with one another, with other persons in their social networks or situational contexts, and with neighborhood contexts that bear on the course of violent events. This type of dynamic contextualism (Sampson, 1993) calls for research methods that simultaneously address the person in context influences on violence. In addition to the study of communities and groups, this approach also requires an analysis of events themselves. Discerning the functions of violence requires an analysis of violent events, but events are the products of ongoing dynamics within communities: the influence of contexts combines with individual characteristics to shape events that accumulate toward developmental outcomes.

These dynamics in turn are situated in a set of normative influences — codes, for example — that reflect the sum of these interactions.

Accordingly, researchers face not only sampling challenges but also the challenges of measurement of processual dynamics and feedback processes. Understanding the developmental functions of violence requires the assessment over time of multiply determined, complex ecological dynamics. Addressing these challenges portends a paradigm shift that many will welcome.

D. Guns as Social Toxin

We have seen the complex interactions between gun availability, gun ownership, gun carrying, and gun use among those youth most likely to be at risk of involvement in gun violence and victims of gun violence in this paper. The epidemic pattern we observed in the first chapter is sustained by the spread of both fear and social identities, skewed by the presence of guns. The spread of discourse, fear and identity occurs through a process of social interactions not unlike social contagion (Burt, 1987). In the contagious dynamics of violence, the social meaning of violence is constructed through the interrelationship of its action and its context. Weapons serve as an environmental cue that in turn may increase aggressiveness (Slaby and Roedell, 1982). Adolescents presume that their counterparts are armed, and if not, could easily become armed. They also assume that other adolescents are willing to use guns, often at a low threshold of provocation. Many of the respondents in this study described their neighborhoods as "war zones," where violence, especially gun violence, is very likely to erupt. The social meaning involves actions (violence) that have both returns (identity, status, avoidance of attack) and expectations that, within tightly packed networks, are unquestioned or normative. Conduct impregnated with social meaning has influence on the behaviors of others in immediate proximity. The social meaning of violence influences the adaptation of behavioral norms, expected responses (scripts), and even beliefs about systems of behavior. Social norms are the product of repeated events that demonstrate the meaning and utility of specific forms of conduct.

Social influence thus has a dynamic and reciprocal effect on social norms. In poor neighborhoods, social interactions are dominated by street codes, or local systems of justice, that reward displays of physical domination and offer social approval for antisocial behavior. The

setting or context of contagion reflects the susceptibility of populations to the transmission of a socially meaningful behavior, and its exposure to the behavior that has acquired meaning. This can be as true for fashion and art as for problematic social behaviors such as drug use, teenage pregnancy, and gun violence.

E. Policy: Controlling Gun Violence

The consistent decline in non-gun homicide in New York City starting in 1992 is further evidence of the epidemic nature of this phenomenon (Fagan et al., 1998). The more difficult question for this research is whether the expansion in police resources and changes in the way these were used were major causes of the decline in gun homicide in New York City. The social distance of respondents and gun events from police presence suggests a narrow range of impacts, and little in the way of deterring or preventing gun violence. Even when present in the aftermath of an event, their reactions have little impact on the likelihood or outcome of subsequent events.

One implication is that this decline is a secular trend, produced as much by natural processes as by policy initiatives. The decline simply starts too early and continues too evenly throughout the period under study to have any plausible linkage to changes that come into the city two or three years later into the 1990s. Indeed, the evenness of the decline across a decade suggests the influence of an accretive process rather than any sudden step-function change in the environment of New York city homicide was responsible for cutting the non-firearms homicide rate by half.

Nevertheless, aggregate rates suggest that the temporal fit between policing changes and gun homicide declines is a good one. The decline began well before the onset of changes in policing, but accelerated following the implementation of "gun oriented policing" in 1994. Gun homicides begin to decline in 1991 or 1992, depending on the data source, but the declines were not large prior to 1994. Because of the steep increase in the gun homicide rate through the late 1980s, some regression would be expected from peak rates in 1990. So the initial declines in gun killings could be put aside as probable regression leaving the 85% of the drop that happens after 1993 as gun homicide declines that could have been produced by changing patterns of policing in the city. But we must also recall that police strength, though not tactics, began a measurable

climb at the same time that firearm homicides began their decline (Fagan et al., 1998). These colliding forces produced a decline of unprecedented proportions that continued through 1996 and beyond. The most prudent view is to regard the convergence of cyclical variation, social trends in risk and exposure, and law enforcement changes as jointly responsible for a 60% decline in gun deaths among adolescents in five years.

If enforcement cannot make claims of primacy in the reduction of gun violence among New York City adolescents, alternative paradigms can be considered. The dynamics of social contagion suggest an endogenous process, where the spread of social norms occurs through the everyday interactions of individuals within networks that are structurally equivalent and closely packed. Here, the ill grows and spreads from the inside, often long after the origins have subsided. This is analogous to influenza contagion, or to the spread of cultural or political thought.

This may be the leverage point for interventions to alter the course of epidemics through changes in social norms within affected networks. A literal translation of contagion would emphasize guns as a recurring source of violence, and as an agent in the transmission of violence norms. Because the recent epidemic cycle of violence was in reality a gun homicide epidemic, the case for gun-oriented policing strategies is much stronger than practices based the more diffuse and unsupported theory of disorder control and order-maintenance strategies. While disorder embraces orderliness, cleanliness, and sobriety (Kelling and Coles, 1996; Harcourt, 1998), violence appears to travel on vectors quite unrelated to that particular set of social norms (Berrien and Winship, 1999).

Theories of legal cynicism and social control suggest that policing can have only limited effects in reducing adolescent gun violence if the activities of the police are not seen as legitimate by adolescents within the affected communities. Certainly, the reactions of respondents in East New York and the South Bronx do not confer legitimacy on the efforts of police to control youth crime. Police work, particularly when it comes to dealing with youth violence, is inherently problematic. Communities want both safe streets and their youth out of jail (Meares, 1998). In this environment, it is difficult to establish legitimacy for police actions, no matter what those actions are (Harcourt, 1998).

New and imaginative institutions, such as the Ten-Point Coalition in Boston, have

partially ameliorated this situation by supporting police activity that the Coalition believes is beneficial to the community and being critical of activities that are not (Berrien and Winship, 1999). This has created an "umbrella of legitimacy" for police to work under. This in turn has allowed the police to effectively deal with youth violence by pursuing a focused strategy of dealing with truly problematic youth while reinforcing informal social control by institutions apart from the law. In New York, the pursuit of guns from adolescents proceeded independently from the efforts of local communities, and often in a manner which eroded legitimacy by youths most inclined toward gun violence.

To accelerate and institutionalize natural and secular declines in youth gun violence, police need to identify effective extra-legal partners to work with while also pursuing appropriate enforcement strategies. As Berrien and Winship point out,

"These partnerships involve both a cooperative effort to deal with youth violence and a delineation of what constitutes legitimate police behavior. Police strategies can only acquire true legitimacy within inner city communities, if the community partner is willing to both to support police tactics when they are appropriate and provide harsh, public criticism of activities that are not."

The future of gun violence in New York requires careful balancing of these perspectives.

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APPENDIX A.

ISSUES, LIMITATIONS, AND COMMENTS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

As with most exploratory research into previously unstudied topics a number of issues and problems must be faced. While this research contributes to our understanding of the social and symbolic construction of violent events among inner city violent males, it has limitations. It is intended to generate hypothesis and develop a new way of examining violent interactions among adolescents. Taken on whole, I believe the study has accomplished its primary mission. Some of the study's limitations include: using a targeted but convenient sample of "help seekers," breakdowns in sampling/screening procedures, the developmental nature of measurement protocols, interviewer introduced biases, interviewer-researcher interaction biases, and the apparent changes in skill and ability of interviewers over time. Each issues is discussed briefly below.

A. The Sample

As described above, the initial sample consists of 51 young men who were released from Rikers Island Academy and who upon release sought the assistance of Friends. The neighborhood sample (N=74) which was after the majority of the criminal justice sample was collected is identified using chain referral sampling techniques. The main criteria for eligibility for the study is the dependent variable --involvement in gun use activities. The match between the criminal justice sample and the neighborhood sample is complicated by the fact that the criminal justice participants are "help-seekers" while most neighborhood respondents are not. In the analysis, I examine the similarities and differences in attitudes and behavior between the two subgroup and report these findings accordingly.

Some respondents had to be excluded from the sample because they clearly should not have been allowed to participate based on the specified study criterion. For example, over twenty of the initial criminal justice sample did not live in or where not raised in either of the two study neighborhoods. In addition, a small number of respondents report no apparent involvement in gun use or refused to speak in detail about those events. Obviously, the procedures for screening were not fully understood by the field staff and the researchers were not able to detect the problem before it became a problem. After careful consideration I decided to exclude those cases from the final sample. Again, the nature of this research does not necessitate strict adherence to a formal structure however we were able to learn from our mistakes. As the study progressed, the procedures became more formalized in an effort to maximum interview quality while retaining the peer interviewer strategy. The choice to make the interviews more structured was a difficult but necessary step for the study.

B. The Evolving Process

The measurement protocol for this study changed and expanded in several ways during the data collection period. The interview guide went through three major and four minor revisions. As with most qualitative studies, the early interviews are used to shape and develop subsequent questions and topics of inquiry. This process is extremely helpful for refining and testing out different questions and procedures. The initial data provide a pilot for a much larger and more systematic study therefore our goal was not uniformity. Needless-to-say, the quality of the interviews varied greatly over time and each interviewer's interview also varied in quality over time. Certain topics are covered with ease while others took more time to refine and develop. Level of detail is always the biggest problem with the inexperienced interviewers and new topics. While I realize the importance of these issues I do not believe that any of the interviews (with appropriate respondents) are completely unusable. Obviously, these experiences highlight the importance of conducting pilot studies. Also interviewer training and experience is important for collecting high quality data.

C. Interviewer Biases

Ten youth leaders were employed as interviewers and locators during the course of this study. Five individuals conducted the interviews over a twenty month period. Specifically, Rich McClain conducted 25 interviews, Davon Battee completed 36 interviews, David Tufino conducted 20 interviews, Jason Mercado conducted 32 interviews, and Whetsel Wade collected 12 interviews. Clinton Lacey, Wilson Cruz, Michael Perez, Carlos Aristy, Alex Figueroa, and Vince Davis each contributed to the study in different capacities. Approximately 12 additional young men were involved in advising and recruiting roles on the project. Employee turn over and instability was a problem although I was able to maintain a solid core group of interviewers throughout the project.

Each of the field crew members had a unique experience with learning the "ropes" of interviewing. Some were very skilled and seemed to be naturally talented at interviewing while others were uncomfortable and unsure of themselves as interviewers. All of the interviewers experienced difficulties with the interview process at first. A common problem for the interviewers was their inability to listen to the subject. Oftentimes, they were quick to jump into (and sometimes dominant) the conversation by adding stories of their own past criminal behavior. All of the interviewers had to learn how to be patient and wait for the subject to finish speaking before asking the next question and to be cautious about revealing too much to the respondents. In the early interviews, subjects were frequently cut-off in the middle of their stories which resulted in a loss of data. Fortunately, we were able to allow the interviewers to learn from their mistakes by carefully scrutinizing every interview and providing detailed feedback.

Several members of the interview crew, welcomed this feedback and worked hard to develop and improve their interviewing skills. In the group meetings, the young men as well as the researchers tutored each other on interviewing techniques and how to handle difficult

situations. Reflections on the early interviewing process for one of our most productive interviewers is provided below.

Rich McClain is a 23 (25 in 2/98) year old ex-offender who has conducted over 40 interviews for this study. He is perhaps the greatest asset of the project. He is a strong leader, has great communication skills, and is very motivated to make change. His knowledge and personal history of life in East New York, Brooklyn allows us to get a window on the social world of violent offenders that is often difficult to capture. He is someone who has truly "been there" and seen it all. We were struck by his street savvy and leadership ability. We knew instantly that he could make a great member of the research team. He is the president of the G.I.I.F.T. Pack and commands a certain level of respect from other young men who come to *Friends* for assistance. He has been employed part-time by Friends for less than one year and in that capacity he regularly speaks to incarcerated young men about changing their lives.

The skills that made Mr. McClain well suited to be a peer interviewer also created unexpected obstacles for the research. Unfortunately, we noticed several problems with his interviews during the early stages. He had a tendency to try to do G.I.I.F.T. Pack related outreach during the interviews. In addition, he had strong convictions about "how stupid" the killings on the street were and sometimes spoke about it during the interview. We found that it was difficult for him to make the transition from the role of youth counselor to interviewer. The portions of the interview where he asked the questions and allowed the subject to answer were excellent. It was obvious that Rich was able to gain the trust of the subjects and develop a great rapport. He was able to get subjects to talk openly about a wide range of criminal behaviors and other negative outcomes. His style of interviewing was very relaxed and conversational which seemed to enhance his data collection efforts.

Although I offered almost constant feedback after each interview, it took additional effort to get him to understand the implications of his approach for the research process. We found that playing back portions of the interview where he stepped outside the interview guide and started to preach to the subjects was helpful in redirecting his focus for future interviews. I continued to monitor the quality of his interviews very closely and offered suggestions throughout the process. The interviews changed dramatically over time. They became more standardized, free flowing, focused, and detailed. Occasionally, he fell back into giving speeches and doing outreach during the interviews but overall this problem dissipated. Because of his success, we decided to get him more involved in the research process by hiring him as a research assistant at the University. In addition, we allowed him to make any kinds of "preachy" or judgmental statements after the interview was over. These strategies have helped tremendously and we continue to work together as a team to improve the data collection process. We have learned a great deal from this experience and used this knowledge in our continual training of new interview crew members.

Our experiences in this study have enabled us to trust in the peer interviewers as contributing members of the field research team. Although we have encountered many difficulties in this project none have been "insurmountable." Understanding the violent social

worlds of young minority males may be best accomplished using creative methods like those described here whatever the limits. The risks may be high but the benefits of this type of research should outweigh the risks tenfold.

D. Interviewer-Researcher Bias

Using peer interviewers was undoubtedly the biggest challenge for the study. The strategy always seemed like a trade-off, we traded control for depth and rapport. Working closely together with the interview crew required incredible energy, devotion, and patience. Trust came slowly although believe in the "good of the project" came rather quickly. What I was asking from my interview crew was very difficult especially when most had never worked in a "real" work environment prior to their employment as interviewers. As a researcher, I had certain aims we needed to accomplish in this project and most of those were dependent on our ability to work closely with our developing field interview crew. Because I was not conducting the interviews myself the feedback to each interviewer was extremely important. Unfortunately, feedback was after the fact and we did not design the study to include more than one opportunity for gathering data with the same subject. The interview protocol was one vehicle with which I attempted to build a solid relationship by working out problems with wording and content relying heavily on the ideas and suggestions of the crew members. The process of "learning" the interview protocol and research procedures as stated elsewhere developed gradually over time for each individual interviewer.

APPENDIX B.

A DICTIONARY OF SLANG TERMS IN VIOLENCE RESEARCH

Developed by:

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Rich McClain

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Lori Davie

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Word or Phrase	Meaning
Amp / Amped	hype / instigate
Ass out	flip the script / do the opposite of what is normal
Assed out	beaten severely / dead / going hay-wire
Back in the days	a while ago
Beat me in the head	don't lie to me / or don't play me for a fool.
Bee, son, kid	a term of kindness like a buddy
Beef	conflict, fight, shootout
Bid	jail sentence
Big Willy	big time / tough guy / getting money
Blasted / barking / busting /bucking / spraying / wetting / letting off	shot or shooting
Blazzay-blazzay	so on, so forth / etc. / whatever
Blunts	a cigarette of marijuana
Boated / jetted /	run or running your fastest /fleeing
Bodega	corner store
Boom	a conjunction equivalent to: so, therefore, and or then.
Boosting	shoplifting
Bounce	leave the scene, motivate
Break it down	explain something to a person, talking
Buck /bust at /let off	shoot at
Bugged out	confused / going crazy
Busted	caught / ugly
Cat	a guy / referring to a person

Word or Phrase	Meaning
Catch rec.	To beat some people or someone up for fun.
Check yourself	stop and analyze yourself before going any further
Cheese / cream / loot / Benjamins /cash / cheddar / beans /dough /greenbacks	money
Chicken head	girl / bitch / low class female or male
Chill / chilling	cool down / hold your head / maintain / basically to stop / relaxing with the guys
C-Low	dice game
Clique / crew / posse / homeboys	a group of guys that hang out together
Clocking me / ice grill / icing / screwing you	looking hard at a person / Hard stare/ poker face
Cock-block	cut throat
Coke / yey-yo	cocaine
Coming off	got through, a success
Connect	connection / networking /meet up
Crib	your house or place of residence
Cut-throat	kick dirt / destroy one's name or rep.
Desert / Q-Borough	Queens
D- L	down low / secretive
Diss / Dissed / Disrespected	disrespected / treated badly / dishonored
Doffing dopes	to get rid of a person
Dolo	solo or alone
Dope	smack / boy /heroin
Duce Duce	twenty-two gun
Drama / beef / trauma	conflict / fight / shooting

Word or Phrase	Meaning
Fams	friends or family
Fell off / falling off	someone who lost everything or is about to lose everything.
Flake	fake person
4 Pound /	45 Magnum gun
Fronting / faking moves or jacks	faking / pretending / simply just starting a fight / acting as if you are going to do or did something that one wouldn't even do.
Get down	do things
Ghat / pistol /burner / steel / cronze / toolie / toast / heat / joint	gun
Ghost / Muerto / Elvis	dead
Gi'mme Feet	give someone room or space
Glock	type of gun / popular brand of 9mm
G.P.	general purpose
Grills	keep looking at you hard.
A Head / Zombie	crackhead
Herb / Herbus Cannibus / Punk	weak / soft / push over / sucker /victim
Homes or homie / homeboy	friend
Hood / N'hood / 'Round my way	neighborhood or block
Hoopty	an older model car / beat up / something that might get you to A or B.
House	a building in jail or prison
It's all good?	It's alright or okay / rationalization
Jects / PJs	the projects

Word or Phrase	Meaning
Joint	jail / years / guns / a cigarette of marijuana
Jump off / Set off	make happen / happen suddenly / or develop suddenly
Keep it real	no playing games / being honest / truthful
Kicking or kick it	talking or flirting / politicing
Lace	put together or finesse with ease
Legit	legitimate
Lingo	conversation
Mad	crazy / a lot of something / a great deal
Madina / Bucktown / Crooklyn / Brooknam	Brooklyn
Make a def.	definite
Mecca / City	Manhattan
Money / scrams	referring to a person
The Monster	AIDS
No doubt / no diggity	agreeing with a statement (emphasizers)
Off the hook	Bugging out, out of hand
Off point	completely unaware of any situation at hand.
On point	aware at all times / prepared
Parlay	relaxing / steady in the situation
Paranoid / p'noid	scared / shook / nervous / fearful
Peeps / boys / "Ace Boone Coon"	very close friends / people in your crew or clique / immediate friends
Pelong / Boogie down / BX	Bronx

Word or Phrase	Meaning
Perpetrator	phony / fake person
Pet. / pettro	short for petrified
Phat	nice/ expensive / good / excellent
Pistol whip / gun butt	getting hit with a gun
Playing someone	treat you like a sucker
Po Po / 5-0 / Po-9 / c-cipher / Teddy /Bonton	Police
Posse	friend
Props	getting attention / rewards / reinforcement / proper treatment / esteem / credit / points
Rah rah	talking trash or riffing
Ranking	jokes on each other / out joking
Rap	talk
Rep	reputation
Re-up	re-supplying drugs for a drug spot
Scandal	ditry information about a person
Scrams boogie	referring to a person /girl
Sell me no dreams	making up stories or fantasies / lying
Shook	scared / nervous / scaredy cat / pussy
Shotty	type of gun
Sling / pitching / clocking dough	sell drugs / making money
Smoked	shot at, killed or smoked / hit hard
Snitch / pigeon / herb	one who tells on another that doesn't last long at all / considered weak.
Snuffed	hitting a person unexceptedly "a cheap shot"

Word or Phrase	Meaning
Spilly	the "spot"
Squashed / deaded	settled or stopped conflict
Stomping grounds	grounds that have already been pioneered / one's place of dwelling or business spot.
Stunting	showing off / fronting
Suspect	victim / fishy person
Sweeting someone	hounding someone, constantly annoying
"The game"	selling drugs
Trees /weed / scammas / smoke	marijuana
Trick	a person who spends money for sex
True that	when agreeing with a statement
Weeded / blunted / charged / blazed	high on marijuana
Weedgate	weed spot
Word up?/ Word?	really?
Wife or wifey	steady girlfriend
Wilding	bugging, doing something stupid, going all out
X	unknown or dead person
Zombie	crack head

APPENDIX C.
FINAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Developed by
Deanna L. Wilkinson and Jeffrey Fagan
with assistance from:
Guys Insight on Imprisonment For Teens, (G.I.I.F.T. Pack)

I would like to start by having you tell me a little about yourself and your neighborhood.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Tell me about a little bit about yourself.

How old are you? When is your birthday?

What is your ethnic or racial background? Probe: Are you black, white, Hispanic, Asian, mixed?

What N'hood do you live in? (Specific name, more than just "the Bronx") Is that where you were raised?

What have you been **doing during the past six months?** (PROBE: Locked up? In school? Working -legit? Hustling? Chillin?)

FAMILY

Tell me about your family.

Do you have a BIG /large family? How many people lived in your house?

Are your parents married? If yes, are they still together? If no, when did they split up? Did you have any step parents or mother's boyfriends/ pop's girlfriends around?

Tell me a little something about your mother. Was your moms around much when you was growing up?

Did your mother work when you were growing up? If yes, What was your mother's occupation when you were growing up? If no, What did she mainly do for money?

Do you think she was a good influence on you when you coming up? Why or why not?

Do you have a good relationship with her now? Why or why not?

Tell me a little bit about your father? Was your pops around much when you was growing up? Did your father work when you were growing up? If yes, What was your father's occupation when you were growing up? If no, What did he mainly do for money?

Do you think he was a good influence on you when you coming up? Why or why not?

Do you have a good relationship with him now? Why or why not?

How many brothers and/or sisters do you have? Ages? Older/Younger? How well do you get along? (For each one)

What does he/she do? What is his/her occupation (or in school)? (\$\$\$\$) Is he/she a good or bad influence on you? Why? How?

Who was primarily responsible for taking care of you when you were younger?

Who do you live with now? Does anyone in your family support you financially? Who are you closest to in YOUR FAMILY? Why?

Has anyone in your family ever been incarcerated that you know of? Who? What was he/she locked up for? When did this happen? Do you ever go visit?

Was anyone in your home a heavy drug user or a heavy drinker when you were growing up? Who? What toll did their problem have on the family?

SCHOOL

Tell me about your school experiences.

Are you in school now? IF YES, What grade?

IF NOT IN SCHOOL, How far did you go in school? What was the last grade you completed in school?

Do you (did you) like school much? PROBE: What do (did) you like about it?
What don't (didn't) you like about it?

What is (was) important to you in school?

Looking back, is there anything that could have made the school experience better for you when you were younger? What should be done to improve schools in your neighborhood?

Do you plan to continue your education within the next couple of years? How?

EMPLOYMENT

Tell me about your work experiences.

Do you currently have a job? (PROBE for legal and illegal work)

(If he has a job) Was it easy for you to find this job? How did you get it?

What do you mainly do for money?

Are you aware of any other job opportunities available to you?

Are you currently looking for work? How long have you been looking? What have you done to try to find a job?

What type of work are you looking for? What kind of job do you feel qualified to do?

Do most guys in your N'hood work? What kinds of jobs do they have? (PROBE: legit and illegit?)

PEERS

Tell me about your friends and associates.

Tell me a little something about your friends. Think about the people you are closest to when you answer these questions.

Do you have someone that you would consider your best friend? IF YES, What makes that person important or a good friend to you? PROBE: qualities, values, similarities, time together, etc.

Do you have more than one close friend? How Many?

Is it like a group of you all that hang together? How many in your little crew or clique? Are you pretty tight with your friends? Why? (PROBE: Talk about problems, help each other out, just have fun together, etc.)

Do most of your friends (associates) live in your N'hood? on your block?

Are most of these guys your same age or close to your age? IF NO, ask how much older or younger they are.

How long have you been friends with these guys? Any new friends in last few years?

How often do you and friends get together? What kinds of things do you all do together? (give examples)

Do you think your close friends are a good influence on you? Why or why not?

Do you think that drinking and/or smoking weed or using other drugs is a big part of what you and your friends do together? Why or Why not?

What about the drug business? Are you or your friends involved in that? Do any of your friends sell drugs? or hustle on the street? How long have they been doing that? Are guns part of that scene? How? Why?

Do any of your friends have guns? What is the main reason for them to have guns? Do they usually carry guns when they're on the street? What kind of guns do they have? How often do they carry guns?

Do any of your friends use guns to commit crimes? Yeah, what types of things do they do with guns?

Have any of your friends ever shot someone over a dispute that you can remember? What happened?

Have any of your friends ever been arrested for a weapon-related offense? What was it? Did he get locked up? How long?

Do you have any friends or associates that don't carry guns? If yes, Why don't they carry or use guns? What do you think of him for not messing with guns?

NEIGHBORHOOD EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE

Tell me about your neighborhood.

Generally, do you think your neighborhood was a good place to grow up? Why or why not? PROBE: What do you like the most about your Neighborhood? What was the worst thing about your Neighborhood?

What do you think is the biggest problem in your Neighborhood? PROBE: drugs, violence, guns, fear, poverty, no jobs, overcrowding, noise, disorder, teenagers, police.

How would you describe your Neighborhood in terms of violence? What about safety? PROBE: Is it safe compared to other areas in New York City? Why would you say that?

What about guns, are there a lot of gun in your Neighborhood? Is it easy to buy guns in your Neighborhood? How long would it take you?

Are there certain places in your neighborhood where violence is very likely to occur? WHERE? (PROBE: certain corners, streets, inside buildings, drug spots, in or near schools, in the park, on the border of a different neighborhood, turfs, at parties?) Can you come up with any reasons why these places attract so much action? For What reasons?

Have you seen a lot of fights (or shootouts) in your Neighborhood?

PROBE: Who's fighting? Guys your age, or younger guys?

PROBE: What kinds of beefs are they, usually? Or What causes most beef?

At what age, do you think guys start fighting or using violence to solve their problems or beef? PROBE: Does it change as you get older? When do guns get in it?

Do you think it's a good idea that guys your age have and carry guns in your neighborhood? Why or why not?

STREET CODES

Tell me about what goes on in the street life.

What is the best or easiest way to earn respect in the hood? PROBE: For violent and non-violent ways. Explore --\$\$, power, guns, girls, being a good provider, etc.

Describe the importance of image and reputation on the street. Is it important? Why?

What makes someone tough or "a big man" in your neighborhood? PROBE: What does it mean to have a tough reputation in the hood? How do you get to be tough?

What makes someone a punk or herb? PROBE: What does it mean to have a reputation as a punk or herb in the hood?

Can your reputation go from being a herb into something better, or is it once a herb, always, a herb? How?

Define disrespect or being "dissed" [PROBE: What is it? Why is it important?]

What are some of the different types of disrespect?

How do guys generally handle a situation when a guy disrespect him?

Have you ever felt like you needed to do something violent to amp up your own reputation? What did you do? Did it help?

Do you ever feel like you make decisions so that you can fit in with other guys in your neighborhood? Have you ever used violence so that you can fit in? What was the situation?

VIOLENT EVENTS

In this section, we are going to talk about particular violent events that you may have experienced in the past two years. Think back to any drama you have experienced since 1993, 1994, or 1995 (depending on date of interview).

(INTERVIEWER USE THE 2 YEAR TIMELINE TO HELP HIM REMEMBER!)

Event TOTAL. During the past two years (SINCE 1995) About **HOW MANY**
(ESTIMATE HOW MANY)

ARGUMENTS (verbal): _____

BEEFS (physical): _____

FIGHTS (no weapons): _____

KNIFE FIGHTS: _____

GUN SITUATIONS: _____

SHOOTOUTS: _____

OTHER WEAPONS: _____

Okay, NOW let's go a little deeper into like three or four of those situations.

Interviewer: Ask the respondent to pick which events he can remember most clearly. Try to get:

a gun event, (GET AT LEAST 1)
a knife event,
a fair one, and
argument with no violence.

I would like for you to start out by telling me who was there at the scene and who your opponent was.

THE OPPONENT

EVNT01. Okay, **who was the guy** you was disputing with that time? Had you **heard something about him** beforehand?

EVNT02. How did you know YOUR OPPONENT?

- Long time ENEMY.
- Competing DRUG DEALER.
- Competing LADIES MAN.
- One of your friends, family,
- Someone from the neighborhood
but not a friend.
- A total stranger.

EVNT03. How would you **describe your opponent as far as size?** Was he bigger, smaller, or about the same size as you? What about **strength**, was he stronger, weaker, or

about the strength as you?

EVNTO4. Was your **opponent about the same age** as you?

EVNTO5. What was **his ethnic or racial background**. Was he black, Hispanic, Asian, or white?

EVNTO6. Was your **opponent from your neighborhood**? Where was he from?

EVNTO7. Were you **concerned about whether or not he had a gun** or one of his friends would give him a gun in the situation?

EVNTO8. Were you **concerned about whether or not he had a knife** or one of his friends would give him a knife in the situation?

EVNTO9. Did the opponent have a weapon on him? What kind of weapon was it?

THIRD PARTIES

WHO WAS THERE:

EVNTTP1. Besides you and the other guy, were there any other people present during the altercation? Who else was around?

EVNTTP2. There were NUMBER OF PEOPLE around during the incident.

PROBE: TP2B. NUMBER OF YOUR BOYS

EVNTTP2C. NUMBER OF HIS BOYS

EVNTTP2D. NUMBER OF INNOCENT

BYSTANDERS OR

THIRD PARTIES that were around during the incident.

EVNTTP3. Did their presence effect **you / [your opponent]** in the conflict situation? In what way? PROBE: Amping, squashing, no effect.

EVNT1. **When** and **where** did the incident happened:

--MONTH/YEAR

--TIME OF DAY (Morning, lunchtime, evening, late night)

--PHYSICAL LOCATION (school, jail, corner, building, train, etc.)

--SOCIAL LOCATION (Party, drug spot, etc.)

EVNT2. What started it? WHAT CAUSED THE BEEF. What did it first start over?

PROBE:

--He/YOU bumped up against you/HIM.

--He/YOU looked at you/HIM wrong.

--He/YOU threatened you/HIM.

--He/YOU insulted you/HIM.

--He/YOU threatened someone else.

- He/YOU insulted someone else.
- It was over a dis.
- It was over a girl.
- It was part of a robbery situation.
- It was for fun.
- It was over drug money.
- It was over territory.
- It was over cheating/stealing.
- It was over _____ what?

EVNT3. WHAT WERE YOU FEELING AT THE TIME?

- pissed off or angry
- frustrated
- threatened
- challenged or tested
- scared
- out of it
- happy
- Other _____

CONTEXT

EVNT4. What was happening with you that day? Can you remember anything unique about that day or situation? (PROBE: were you WORKING, HANGING OUT, having a good day, etc.?)

EVNT5. **What were you doing** when you first met your opponent that day? What were you doing when things started to heat up?

EVNT6. Did **you plan** to have a conflict with him that day? If yes, when did you start planning? If yes, What was your plan?

EVNT7. Did you think it was going to be a SHOOTOUT when it started to heat up? How did you know?

EVNT8. **IF WEAPON**, Why did you **decide to take a weapon with you** that day? Was this unusual for you? Why? How?

INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTIONS: After he selects the first event and tells you who was there... READ THIS.

Okay, now I'm ready to hear about what went down step by step.

I want to get the **exact order** of things just as they happened that day.

What happened first? Second? Third? Etc.

Tell me **what you were thinking** as this stuff was going down.

Tell me **what you was saying, what you was doing**.

Tell me **what he said, what he did**.

Tell me **what any other people** around the situations were doing or saying.

I'll try to guide you with a few questions so that I can really understand what was happening in the beef. Okay?

STEPS OF EVENT

EVNT9. What happened? Describe the situation. How did it happen?

EVNT10. WHO made the first move toward violence.

EVNT11. WHAT was the first move.

EVNT12. Okay, after you knew that it was "on", **what happened next?** What did you do? What did he do?

EVNT13. **What happened next after that?**

WHO DID WHAT:

EVNTTP4. *IF YOUR BOYS WERE THERE*, **What were YOUR BOYS doing or saying** during the incident. PROBE:

- had your back.
- amped up the situation.
- told you to chill.
- physically pulled you out of the situation.
- jumped in.
- gave you a weapon.
- retaliated at a later time.
- other. _____

EVNTTP5. What were **HIS BOYS doing or saying** during the incident?

- had his back.
- amped up the situation.
- told him to chill.
- physically pulled him out of the situation.
- jumped in.
- gave him a weapon.
- retaliated at a later time. -
- other _____

EVNTTP6. What were **INNOCENT BYSTANDERS OR THIRD PARTIES** doing or saying during the incident?

- had YOUR/his back.
- amped up the situation.
- told YOU/him to chill.
- physically pulled YOU/him out of the situation.
- jumped in.
- gave YOU/him a weapon.
- retaliated at a later time.
- other. _____

EVNTTP7. **How did you feel about what** these other people were **doing/saying?**
(PROBE: Were you glad? Were you afraid?) How did your opponent react to them?

EVNT14. About **how long did this dispute go on between you two?** how long do you think did the actual fight took? How did you know how much time had past?

<u>WEAPONS</u>

Can you explain how weapons were involved, if they were?

EVNTW1. What type of WEAPON did you have? IF NO, SKIP TO EVNTW6.

EVNTW2. **Why** did you have it on you that day? Do you **usually carry a weapon** when you are in the N'hood?

EVNTW3. IF YES, What did you **do with the weapon** in the violent situation? (show it, threaten with it, use it, etc.)

EVNTW4. IF FIRED, How **many times did you fire your weapon?**

EVNTW5. IF JUST THREATENED. How did it make you feel to threaten THE OTHER GUY with the gun?

EVNTW6. What were you hoping he would do next in that situation? [PROBE: run, mouth off more, apologize, back down, show fear, set it off, other]

EVNTW7. IF OPPONENT HAD WEAPON, What did YOUR OPPONENT do with his weapon during this dispute?

EVNTW8. IF OPPONENT FIRED, How many times did he fire his weapon?

EVNTW9. When you realized that **he had a gun too what were you thinking** at the time? Were you afraid for your life?

EVNTW10. Did you ever think that a WEAPON might be needed in this situation?

EVNTW11. IF NO GUN, Do you think you would have **handled this beef differently if you had had a GUN** that day?

EVNTW12. IF SQUASHED, **Who decided to squash it? Did you decide** not to use violence in this situation, **FIRST? Or did YOUR OPPONENT decide** not to use violence first? **Or did a THIRD PARTY** push you into deciding not to hurt anyone?

EVNTW13. **IF SQUASHED, What** was it that **made you decide not** to hurt your opponent in this situation?

ALCOHOL AND/OR DRUGS

I'm also interested in any involvement you might have had with drugs/alcohol on the day of the dispute.

EVNTAD1. Did you use any **TYPE OF DRUGS OR ALCOHOL on the day** of the GUN confrontation?

EVNTAD2. Did you **feel you were high** (drug name) and or **drunk** on the day of the incident? What about your opponent, do you think he was high or drunk at the time?

EVNTAD3. What was you smoking or drinking? [PROBE: Alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, crack, heroin, PCP --angel dust, LSD, acid, any other drugs?] Anything else besides just _____ (drug named)?

EVNTAD4. Do you remember about **what time you started using that day?** (drug name)

EVNTAD5. **How much** of (drug name) would you say you used from that time on up until the incident occurred?

EVNTAD6. Do you think the situation was related in any way to your using alcohol or drugs? Why or why not? How about your opponent?

EVNTAD7. Do you think the **violent incident was in any way related to the drug business**? Explain. How so? Were you selling drugs at the time it started?

EVNTAD8. IF THIRD PARTIES, Do you know if **any of the OTHER people were under the influence of drugs or alcohol** at the time of the violent incident? If YES, who /how many /what types of drugs/alcohol did they use?

INJURIES:

INJURY1. Did anyone get seriously hurt? Who? Was **anyone injured** in this incident? **Who** was injured?

INJURY2. IF YES, How serious was the wound?
[**PROBE: very serious injury, shot in the (part of the body), seriously cut, cut in the (part of the body), seriously beat up, minor injury, bruises and scratches**]

INJURY3. Did **anyone need to go to the hospital** to get medical attention because of the incident? **Who** went the hospital?

INJURY4. Do you know **how long** you (OR OTHER INJURED PEOPLE) were in the hospital?

OUTCOMES OF EVENT

EVNTOUT1. **How did the situation end? What was the outcome? WHAT HAPPENED? (HOW?)**

EVNTOUT2. Was the conflict settled THAT DAY? Why or why not?

EVNTOUT3. DID you gain or lose status from this incident? What did you **gain**? What did you **lose**?

EVNTOUT4. Was Your REPUTATION improved by this event? How?

EVNTOUT5. Was His REPUTATION improved by this event? How?

EVNTOUT6. After the fight did you **change anything about where you "hangout"** or who you associate with?

EVNTOUT7. After the fight, did you do **anything extra to protect yourself**? WHAT?

EVNTOUT8. *IF CHANGE*, Why was it necessary to do that?

EVNTOUT9. *IF NO CHANGE*, Why wasn't it necessary to do anything extra?

EVNTOUT10. Was there any need to **retaliate or get back at** your opponent after this event? Did **anyone retaliate** after the event was over? Who retaliated and what did they do?

EVNTOUT11. What sort of **relationship** did you and THE GUY have **after the fight**?

EVNTOUT12. *IF TALK*, Other than THE GUY, did **anyone start treating you differently** because of the fight?

EVNTOUT13. *IF TALK*, Was there **any talk** during the days or weeks **after the fight**? What were people in the street (or at school) saying about the fight?

EVNTOUT14. How did you feel about what **was being said in the street or at school**?

EVNTOUT15. How **long did all of this gossip go on**? When and how did it stop?

EVNTOUT16. Do you think you will have drama with this guy again in the future? Why or why not?

EVNTOUT17. Did you **drink or use drugs** after the incident?

EVNTOUT16. Did **anyone get arrested** or taken in by the police for this incident? Who? What happened?

POLICE

EVNTPOL1. Did the **police come** to the scene of the incident? [IF NO, SKIP TO EVNTPOL5.]

EVNTPOL2. What did the **police say/do**? [PROBE: Did they investigate? Did the police find any weapons?]

EVNTPOL3. Did anyone **get arrested or taken in** by the police for this incident? Who? What happened?

EVNTPOL4. *IF POLICE*, What happened **after the police left**? Did the conflict **heat up again**?

EVNTPOL5. *IF POLICE*, Do you think **this approach is effective**? Why or why not?

EVNTPOL6. Do you think the **police could have done something** to make the situation better if they had shown up? What should they have done?

WHY

EVNTWHY1. Thinking back, **why do you think you did what you did?**

EVNTWHY2. **What** was it about this situation that **made it necessary** for you to take of this beef the way you did?

EVNTWHY3. Was there a specific **point when you realized that you were going to have to (get violent) resort to violence** in this situation?

EVNTWHY4. **What** were you **trying to accomplish** when you shot or threatened him with the gun?

EVNTWHY5. Have you **handled similar BEEFS in the same way** before? Explain.

EVNTWHY6. Looking back, do you think that **you handled the situation in the right way?**

EVNTElse1. Is there anything else that you forgot to tell me ABOUT this event?

[USE EVENT REVIEW SHEETS --END OF GUN EVENT GO TO OTHER WEAPON EVENT]

[INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTIONS: Take a few seconds to think about everything the subject just told you about this event. If you don't understand any part of what he said or feel like his story is confused ask him to go back to that part and make it more clear to you. Go over the major points in the dispute step by step with the respondent. This strategy will be helpful in clarifying and verifying the facts about each violent event. Go over each event. After he tells you most of the story ask for more details by retelling the story back to him. As you retell it ask him "Is that right? Did I miss anything?" or say "okay, I understand that part now what happened next?" The subject will correct you and give you more information that will give you a better picture of what happened.]
USE THE REVIEW SHEET AS A GUIDE.

EVENT REVIEW SHEET

(1) The incident happened: WHEN, WHERE.

--MONTH/YEAR

--TIME OF DAY

--PHYSICAL LOCATION & SOCIAL LOCATION

WHAT HAPPENED:

(2) It first started over: WHAT CAUSED THE BEEF.

- (3) You were feeling: WHAT AT THE TIME.
- (4) WHO made the first move toward violence.
- (5) WHAT was the first move.
- (6) WHAT was the second move.
- (7) In the incident YOU HAD A GUN. It was a TYPE.
- (8) In the incident YOUR OPPONENT HAD A GUN. It was a TYPE.

WHO HAD THE BEEF:

- (9) WHO was involved in the beef.

WHO WAS THERE:

- (10) There were NUMBER OF PEOPLE around during the incident.
- (11) NUMBER OF YOUR BOYS that were around during the incident.
- (12) NUMBER OF HIS BOYS that were around during the incident.
- (13) NUMBER OF INNOCENT BYSTANDERS OR THIRD PARTIES that were around during the incident.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OPPONENT:

- (14) Your opponent was: HOW DID HE KNOW HIM.

WHO DID WHAT:

- (15) YOUR BOYS did what during the incident.
- (16) HIS BOYS did what during the incident.
- (17) INNOCENT BYSTANDERS OR THIRD PARTIES did WHAT during the incident.

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS:

- (18) At the time, YOU had a little alcohol or drugs in you.
- (19) At the time, HE had a little alcohol or drugs in him.
- (20) At the time, YOU were DRUNK OR HIGH.

(21) At the time, HE was DRUNK OR HIGH.

(22) After the event, YOU got DRUNK OR HIGH.

(23) After the event, HE got DRUNK OR HIGH.

OUTCOME:

(24) The beef ended WHEN WHAT HAPPENED (HOW).

(25) The beef was settled THAT DAY.

(26) You **shot** YOUR OPPONENT and he **shot** YOUR MAN.

(27) No POLICE showed up on the scene while you were there.

(28) Someone was INJURED. Who.

(29) You needed MORE PROTECTION after this event.

(30) Your REPUTATION was improved by this event.

(31) His REPUTATION was improved by this event.

(32) After the event, there was a need to **retaliate or get back at** against your opponent because...?

(33) That sums it up, is there anything you left out about this event that you just remember after going over the details? What did you leave out?

(34) Okay, the part when you mentioned _____ is a little confusing to me. Could you go over that again for me?

GOOD, let's go on to another event that happened to you during the past two years. OR Let's go on to criminal activity you may have been involved in the past.

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