



WHY GIRLS FIGHT

**FEMALE
YOUTH
VIOLENCE
IN THE
INNER CITY**

CINDY D. NESS

Why Gi

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Why Girls

Female Youth Violence

Cindy L.

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

New York and London

Girls Fight

Violence in the Inner City

D. Ness


UNIVERSITY PRESS
and London

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
New York
www.ny

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication

Ness, Circe.
Why girls fight : female youth violence /

Patricia A. Ness.
Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-13: 978-0-8147-5091-5

ISBN-10: 0-8147-5091-5

ISBN-13: 978-0-8147-5092-2

ISBN-10: 0-8147-5092-2

- [I. Female juvenile delinquents—United States—Psychology.
1. Female juvenile delinquents—United States—Psychology.
2. Teenage girls—Psychology.
4. Minorities—United States—Psychology.]

HV6791.N53

303.60835'20973—dc22

New York University Press books
and their binding materials are chosen for
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Manufactured in the United States of America

c 10 9 8

p 10 9 8

UNIVERSITY PRESS

and London

rupress.org

York University

ts reserved

ataloging-in-Publication Data

dy D., 1959—

ence in the inner city / Cindy D. Ness.

. cm.

ical references and index.

7-5840-3 (cl : alk. paper)

5840-1 (cl : alk. paper)

-5841-0 (pb : alk. paper)

841-x (pb : alk. paper)

etc.]

inquents—United States.

3. Inner cities—United States.

ates—Psychology. I. Title.

N38 2010

dc22 2009053831

ooks are printed on acid-free paper,

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United States of America

7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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To Alden, who make

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The actual time it takes to write a book is often less than the time it takes to become a writer. What follows is the result of a long process that has come to its natural resting point.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, I worked in New York City teaching hospitals and in urban areas. It took long for me to grow disenchanted with the field. I meant to explain why minority youth in inner-city urban neighborhoods so readily engaged in violence. I long to grow extremely skeptical of the theories and programs they offered them. It became clear in talking day after day with “these” kids that something was driving the curiously consistent patterns of violence. Treatment programs, diagnostic facilities, and social services. It also became clear to me that violence was not simply a dysfunctional compensatory adaptation to poverty or unbridled sociopathy, as it mostly was thought of. A sensible way to think dynamically about the psychological development of children in inner-city neighborhoods, rather than as separate “bounded” entities of inquiry, was made them out to be, led me to travel in different directions.

In the mid 1990s I found my way to the Center for the Study of Survival at CUNY’s John Jay College. I subsequently spent nearly a decade working with Dr. Robert Merton or in close proximity to his work. The study of mass violence offered me my entry point into the study of violence, cultural influences, and social structures. I would ultimately focus on the practice

face

a book, though lengthy, is far shorter
the person who writes that book.
g period of intellectual meandering

90s, as a newly minted social worker
and mental health agencies, it did not
ted with the disciplinary paradigms
uths in economically impoverished
aged in violence, nor did it take me
he institutions charged with “fixing”
after day and, eventually, year after
ng larger than their personal foibles
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ities, and the juvenile justice system.
ace by inner-city youths was not sim-
aptation to frustration or, worse yet,
was portrayed to be. Searching for a
out social organization, culture, and
children and adolescents in American
an continuing to consider them the
y that the social sciences of the time
vel for a while (literally) in different

o the Center on Violence and Human
e of Criminal Justice, where I subse-
ng either directly with Robert Jay Lif-
k. Lifton’s way of delving into issues
ry point to think about the intersec-
and individual psychology, though I
ce and structure of violence in urban

settings myself. Our conversations are extremely valuable to the development and cultural phenomenon becomes a

In 1997, while maintaining a clinic in New York City and serving as Lifton's resident writer on the Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyo at Harvard University with Carol Gilligan's annual Wellfleet seminar the year before, I was in Gilligan's qualitative approach to psychological theory. In Gilligan's method, to open a window into the associations of an ordinarily the territory of a clinical interviewer, the listener considers the larger influence of the culture. As identity arises out of messages from the social quarters, I wanted to find a way to understand the logic of a given individual and the larger culture together.

While at Harvard, I also spent hours with anthropologist Robert LeVine concerning the work of the student of Franz Boas, who was a pioneer in the personality movement of the 1920s. Sapir was a thinker par excellence. Sapir was believed that in the cultural order were individual. Sapir drew attention to the fact that a credit culture with the ability to modify its "private symbolisms": rather than a public or overruling culture. Sapir argued that any given culture was sufficient to contain the most subtle ones. It was the social pressures and pulls that influence behavior, not just components or simply sort them into categories.

In 2000, given what I, too, came to understand about culture and personality, I set off to pursue my anthropology, at the University of Pennsylvania. A discussion with sociologist Elijah Anderson was an essential piece of the intellectual framework. Anderson had written extensively about life in American inner cities and of the

about large-scale violent events were
ent of my ideas about how a social
a psychological one.

ical psychotherapy practice in New
search assistant for the book he was
Shinrikyo, I began doctoral study
Gilligan, whom I had met at Lifton's
before. I was particularly interested
o narrative based on relational psy-
od, the act of listening is structured
ve logic of a person's inner world—
nterview—at the same time that the
nces of context in a person's narra-
ges about the “self” received from all
take into account those emanating
ially, to listen to how the emotional
ogic of a given cultural setting come

urs in conversation with anthropolo-
work of Edward Sapir—a first-gener-
as a leading voice in the culture and
and 1930s and an interdisciplinary
nt on making sense of how patterns
ly adapted by people and made their
ct that psychiatry did not typically
ify “the actual persisting personality”
personality was viewed as overriding
that the variation that existed within
override all cultural forces, even the
scientist's task to make sense of the
vior, not subdivide them into discrete
o countable categories.

o perceive to be the inextricability of
ursue a second doctorate, in anthro-
lvania. There I engaged in ongoing
aderson, which provided yet another
amework that I would bring to my
vely on the use of violence by males
e informal “code of the street” that

placed a premium on respect. My interest in the use of physical violence by females, in consideration of the girls' emotional and social disciplines, I felt I was almost ready to ask: why do girls in inner cities fight?

As I got deeper into the research, I became acutely aware of the increase in violence around the globe, whether in ethnic violence or to come to make up 30% to 40% of convicted violent perpetrators of violent criminal offenses. I thought about what it meant. The curiosity let loose a long and winding detour, though the timing was not what I had hoped. From CUNY, I continued on staff at the Center on the directorship of Chuck Strozier, with many years at the Center on Violence and Gender, where I did my guest editing an issue of the journal *Violence and Victims* focused on women; editing a book on *Gender, Violence, and Militancy: Agency, Organization, and Culture*; and writing an article in *Daedalus*, titled "The Rise of Violence: A Note on the Issue." It was quite clear that wherever the use of violence, no matter how widely disparate the cultures, there was a careful analysis of the interplay of social and cultural forces to fully explain it.

Appreciating that norms regarding violence had undergone a marked shift (not only that the right to defend one's life or rights is acute but that the right to violence) has been important to the writing of this book in realized ways. Interestingly, around the same time, rates for female youths began to increase. In the 1970s, females came to be lauded in America as both worthy allies in a philosophy of non-violence and opponents in their own right. Our mothers told us daily that violence had ceased to be the province of boys and men. They also suggested that violence was no longer the province of disenfranchised people. It was hard. No doubt, this democratic idealism took our cultural imagination about violence and physical aggression beyond the conventional. What effect?

interest was to adapt Anderson's work on male youths in inner cities, including their lives. Armed with the canon of three books, I tried to answer the question: Why do

things that led to this book, however, I found the participation of women in violence in separatist struggles where they had fought as combatants, as suicide bombers, or as assassins, and I found myself wondering how my interest in me resulted in somewhat of a wholly whimsical. After Lifton retired from the Center on Terrorism under the leadership of whom I had also worked closely for years at the Center for Peace and Human Survival. It resulted in the journal *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, on the subject, titled *Female Terrorism, and Utility*; and publishing an article titled "The Role of Women in the Study of Female Violence." What became of violence by women was found, no matter what cultural realities were that surrounded it, a balance of macro and micro forces was needed

to explain the use of violence by females had increased in conflict zones where the need to fight was also in Western mainstream culture. The writing of this book, though in not fully the same time that violent arrest rates increased in the United States, violent crime in American media not as gender anomalous as physical confrontation and formidable movies and television programs came to be perceived to reside wholly in the hands of men. That female-perpetrated violence was concentrated in ghettoized neighborhoods where the glorification of violence on the screen had been the capacity of females to embrace violence in the same way it once was held, but to

While not pretending to understand it, I would argue that, perhaps, in some ways, the violence of the researchers in the social sciences to gender more freely and, therefore, to believe it made the violence I witnessed in North Philadelphia seem less of an anomaly than it was both in its most negative and in its most positive prime-time TV. Certainly, residents of North Philadelphia have known for a long time that not all violence, but they can also mete out violence in ways that have lived violence not as the gendered violence made out to be but in ways that make sense in their circumstances. In essence, then, the existing literature on girls' violence is a depiction of violence with.

Around 2000, when I first began to study violence, there were few if any ethnographies on violence in North Philadelphia, much as I complete this book, though the violence did fall of valuable attention compared to other forms. In an effort to begin to address the knowledge gap on "ordinary" violence or street fighting, I studied how health, and police personnel deal on the ground, and how the institutional infrastructures of violence exist in two Philadelphia neighborhoods. In general, I tried to understand how violence is related to violence—its norms, values, and how it is collectively appropriated. Although there is no exact formula for predicting individual violence, this book aims to explore the unique agency, this book aims to explore the and mutual influence of the three levels of violence: institutional structures on the use of violence.

This said, it is not lost on me that the complexity of human emotion and behavior, the way that institutions accurately as they meld together, and—in all honesty—perhaps an impossible task to have written this book if I did not believe in the power to capture something of it. To this point, I am the father of Head Start in this country, and it has given me comfort, though I suspect

and the larger meaning of this trend, in a small way, it gave us permission as well as a way to conceive of violence with respect to girls. It is, ultimately, more scientifically grounded than the way it is used at the hands of girls in West and West, which is an “unnatural” phenomenon, in that it does not “glamorize” extremes the stuff of popular culture. In the neighborhoods I spoke with, it is not only females the victims of violence for a range of reasons. They are also the perpetrators. The phenomenon it has often been called “girl-on-girl” violence makes sense in the context of their life. This book is an attempt to add to the conversation about a reality they are well familiar with.

When I was first thinking about girls’ fighting, there was a gap in the subject. That has not changed much, though the subject has received a windfall of attention with what it had previously known. There is a knowledge gap surrounding the use of violence by girls (with which school, mental health, and social work on a daily basis), in this book I address the ways that race, culture, and socioeconomic realities loosely mediate girls’ fighting. I view the ethos of the neighborhoods as a set of values, and practices—was individually and collectively. Though such a schema does not map into individual behavior, as individuals always do, I want to highlight the interdependence of the levels of psychology, culture, and institutional influence by girls.

At the project of rendering a snapshot of the flow of culture, and the effects of that flow to produce behavior is a tall order, and a nearly impossible one, although I could not help but believe there was some merit in trying. In the end, some words of Edward Zigler, a psychologist, have stuck in my head and have influenced me. I have appropriated them in a way

he did not intend. Zigler gave a talk on child development and effective education many years ago. This man, who has dedicated his life to a research-based approach to formulating sound public policy for an audience that, while we do not know exactly who it is, is providing children with an adequate education. In that respect, we do know enough to do far more than we do. It is not perfect knowledge that we need, but the life chances of children in poor environments are a distinction that makes the conduct of a public policy a heroic endeavor, to my mind. Zigler was instrumental in finding the political will to put into practice what he knew in the end.

Ultimately, I think most folks do not understand that the crafting of sensible public policy to address root causes, along with local, state, and federal law, is fundamental to realizing a better life for all of America's children. Research is the hand the political gauntlet that well-meaning people must traverse and how such research informs policy decisions. I would strongly argue that research should be made a bigger part of social science education. I have much respect for the arduous work involved in welfare reform, though I am only just beginning to grasp the complexities of what that entails.

In sum, the ten-year journey that led to this book was at times a lonely one and a long one, though I am not sure I could have done what may be my only act of economic justice without the people who needed to be thanked along the way. I would like to here offer special thanks to my wife, who has no doubt made this possible. This is a woman who possesses the wisdom and wise counsel that has no doubt made this book possible, which I am grateful.

My hope is that this book will bring the same compassionate visibility to female youth and their families. To my eyes, the girls in the public schools are being harsh in their words and actions.

at a conference pertaining to child programs, which I attended some 15 years ago. He dedicated his life to developing an evidence-based child-development policy, told his colleagues that we need to know about the science of child development as a foundation to maximize their potential, and that we are doing more than what we are doing. Hence, we must have at our disposal to improve the lives of children, but extensive knowledge—a “doing social science” a more relevant way to forcefully argue that it is not just what we do know that is crucial

to doing research on vulnerable youths and to developing public policies and legislation that turns them into state-of-the-art “good-enough” early playing conditions. Recently, I have come to witness first-hand that even the best social science research still does not often factor into policy. Addressing this disconnect needs to be a top priority for the field’s mission to keep itself relevant. I hope that the work of those who advocate for child development is beginning to appreciate the com-

plexities that accompanied the writing of this book. At some points, an unnecessarily long book could have undertaken it differently. In any case, I have genuinely thanked the people who helped me along the way. Yet while I have thanked them, my publication deadline came and went, thanks to my editor, Jennifer Hammer, for her virtue of patience. Her unwavering support makes this book a better one in the end, for

it brings a more-dimensional and more-compassionate view of youth who engage in violence and their families. The pages that follow, while often exceedingly long, are very much children.

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Introd

If I seem like I'm scared to fight, you can mess with me all the time. If I'm not scared, she's gonna try me at school. She just better not go crying to the principal. I hate it when someone

Fighting is about image. It's about how you know I don't rule the world, but you think I do. Fighting is independent of how you feel like it.

You kidding me, girls be fighting about emotional things. They'll fight over anything over no he-said, she-said. They'll fight about something serious like money or drugs. They're fighting about most of the time.

On any given day in the West and the South, it is not uncommon to hear about a street fight between girls. In certain instances, the fight takes place outdoors, after the school day ends at a gymnasium. The fight breaks out spontaneously on a street and involves another past the point where it should be a violation or otherwise be labeled a “punk” fight.

uction

*at, some girl is gonna think she
e. I mean, even if I don't seem
ome point till she knows how I
g to anyone that I beat her the
e is a sore loser.*

—Tamika, a 15-year-old girl

*out showing you're no punk. I
at I can feel like I do, make you
idence. I beat someone up if I*

—Allie, a 14-year-old girl

*ng more than boys do. They so
anything. Boys won't get into it
y only gonna fight over some-
rugs. That's not what a girl is*

—Kia, a 15-year-old girl

and Northeast Philadelphia neighbor-
e Park and Lee, respectively, it is not
fight that has “gone down” between
takes place in a school hallway; in oth-
given time and place. Or perhaps it
t corner or a park after one girl pro-
she either must “step up” to a situa-
.” Far less common, though certainly

not unheard of, is a scenario in which a girl challenges a male youth to a fight or is likewise challenged. In such cases, whether she wins or loses, it is a victory more than anything else that earns a girl respect. While much has been written about the importance of respect and respect as it applies to male youth, the literature is virtually silent along

Why do female adolescent youths in inner-city neighborhoods so readily engage in street fighting? The answer is far more complex than the simple tale of girls who are “good” and who avoid that the use of physical aggression by girls. Indeed, rather than being characteristic of female youths with social and emotional problems, delinquency, street fighting is an important feature of such neighborhoods. In such neighborhoods, street fighting is an acceptable and normative, albeit regrettable, activity. Sometimes even for the mothers of girls if a fight is brought to the home.

The vignette that follows describes a typical day in Melrose Park over a period of several hours. It shows how female peers, and female relatives, and the subtlest body movements and verbal cues can lead a ready one is to cross the line into physical aggression. All know each other, are “experienced” in the sense that with respect to what constitutes a challenge, they are as opposed to one that must be met with force. The fight first characterized by verbal attack and threats. The girls have no intention of actually fighting. The verbal exchange is just a first step in the building of tension that transpires days later. The issue is not resolved enough to bring family members into the scene if necessary.

Marcea comes walking down the block with her boyfriend Rashid sitting between two friends on the stoop. Marcea is clearly incensed over something Rashid demands that Rashid come over to her. Rashid is in laughter. Marcea is making a scene. Rashid is shouting out approaching. It is Candace who

ch a female youth challenges a male
ged to one. However, in any of these
s standing up to the challenge more
a sense of respect among her peers.
t the relationship between violence
uths in low-income neighborhoods,
these lines concerning girls.¹

s in impoverished urban neighbor-
hts and other forms of physical vio-
licated than the dichotomous moral-
girls who are “bad,” the explanation
y girls has historically been accorded.
stic of only a relatively small subset
notional problems who are prone to
ortant part of girlhood in high-crime
ods, physical aggression becomes an
rettable, response for girls and some-
f their daughters are outnumbered in
household doorstep.

es an actual fight that took place in
l days in which two girls, their moth-
s all got involved. As with most fights,
rbal barbs send a message about how
ysical violence. The participants, who
ed observers” in the neighborhood,
allenge that can be walked away from
t head on. While the encounter is at
and posturing, and it seems like the
ghting, the demeanor and displays of
p to an actual and larger altercation
at hand is perceived to be important
o the fray, as well as neighbors if nec-

lock with her girlfriends and sees her
o girls, Lakeesha and Candace, on a
r Rashid’s proximity to Candace. She
er, and Lakeesha and Candace erupt
e in the middle of the street but with-
is first to goad her to say something

directly. In return, Marcea's friends is cursing in Candace's face. Candace each other to fight. Though verbal in with the other girls holding shoes and at critical moments, it is truly amazing actually touch. In the midst of the good five minutes of posturing, each two groups disperse. But it is clear the question is when and where it will er

About an hour later, Marcea's mother to Candace's sister's house, where Candace is hanging out on Candace's block stand with her mother. Marcea's mother is needed. Marcea's mother and Candace at one point Marcea's mother yells, "just get the [garb] on, don't think I can't get ignored." Rashid is like her son and that Candace is Candace's sister, however, no longer confronts Marcea's mother about her behavior. Both women clearly lay out which side they seem to be enough to end the matter.

Two days later, Lakeesha beats up Marcea's mother, so I punched her in her face. Lakeesha's face, hence all the showmanship, Lakeesha's proclivity toward fighting, although Marcea is about something else, she took care of her mother. ever, the situation was more complicated. Lakeesha had the opportunity to let off some steam. Lakeesha was talking about Candace in public and threatened to punch her in the time. There was an understanding between Lakeesha and either needed help in managing a physical confrontation. Lakeesha step in. As such, Lakeesha perceived Marcea's behavior as a show of disrespect to her, as well. Lakeesha no longer would be a blemish on the reputation of the girl with "heart" and not one who is afraid.

Although they all live in the same neighborhood, each other, Lakeesha and Candace, Marcea's mother and guardian each have a different relationship with Marcea for which can be found in the details of the story. Each is aware of the set of shared norms and values that

egg her on, and within seconds she stands up, and the girls challenge insults and pointed fingers are flying, and handbags and pulling the two apart saying that Marcea and Candace do not know what they are doing. In the chaos, Rashid has disappeared. After a while, one girl labels the other a punk and the situation is not resolved. The scene ends abruptly next.

Marcea and seven or eight females come to Candace's home. The older women hang back, within striking distance should they be needed. Marcea's sister exchange words, and at one point says, "I have my keefah [religious headwrap] on because I have my keefah [religious headwrap] on with you." She makes it clear that Candace needs to stay away from him. Marcea wants to discuss this incident. She is bringing the situation to her doorstep. Her boundaries cannot be crossed. This is the end of the evening.

Marcea beats up Marcea because "she said stupid things." While Candace will fight to save Lakeesha has historically had more of a reputation, much less so recently. Already angry about the situation for Candace. However, more than Lakeesha happening on an incident, Marcea had continued to talk badly about her. She wanted to beat Candace up at some later date. Between Candace and Lakeesha that if there was a physical confrontation, the other would be the one to blame. The bad-mouthing of Candace to be Marcea. To let the situation go on for much longer would mean she had made for herself as a patsy.

The community within two blocks from Marcea's mother, and Candace's sister relationship to violence, the explanation of their personal stories. While the meanings or "understandings," social

rules, and relationship terms that sustain violence by girls in their neighborhood, and understandings differently. At the same time, I explain the fighting sequence described in the text, and influence that larger macro factors and social structures on the identity, perceptions, and values of the girls in Park and Lee.

Historically, however, the social and individual-level factors as separate and distinct, that both levels are inextricably linked and influence. While the trend toward connecting social and individual sciences has become increasingly common, the study of girls' violence along these lines still remains a gap, in this book I explore the social and individual female youth violence in inner-city neighborhoods, as well as the individual-level responses to violence. I engage in an analysis and synthesis of the social and individual components that inhere in a violent act—that is, the social and individual components.

It is essential to begin any discussion of violence by observing that the term “violent girls” is problematic.² The assumptions that underlie the term, for all intents and purposes, conform to the norms of middle-class communities. In white, middle-class communities, girls are normatively conceptualized either as victims or as perpetrators of verbal aggression that uses relationships to harm others. No conceptual framework exists with which to think about physically harming or devaluing them. Any girl who engages in violence is considered anomalous in terms of gender and neighborhood, such a girl is typically unattractive, and is viewed by adults as being

The term “violent girls” applied to girls reflects assumptions about proper behavior and gender that are at odds to the lived social realities of these girls. In a study over a period of nearly two years: for example, the study found that females are not violent, and that females are not violent. The term “violent girls” does not

around the resort to physical aggression each has come to appropriate these same time, it would be impossible to proceed above without also crediting the individual and organizational structures have on the lives of girls and women living in Melrose

sciences have dealt with macro-level issues rather than matters of inquiry, despite the fact that they are embedded in their effects on human experience. Bridging different levels of analysis in the social sciences has become common in recent years, scholarship on violence against women remains relatively scant. To address the social and cultural organization of neighborhoods on a collective level, researchers must turn to those structuring conditions. In addition to the macro and micro elements of violence, its social, cultural, and psychological

examination of female youth violence by first and foremost "girls" is in and of itself highly problematic. The contemporary use of the term, "girlhood," is in tension with the sociocultural ideals of white, middle-class communities, females are often seen either as victims or, more recently, as perpetrators of "relational violence": a subtle form of violence that occurs in relationships to manipulate and psychologically harm. A theoretical framework exists in such communities that views violent girls without marginalizing them. The ways in which girls engage in physical violence can only be understood in relation to gender identity. In middle-class neighborhoods, it is not popular, except with others like her, to be labeled "troubled."

The socialization of girls in inner cities imposes a set of expectations and roles, which do not correspond to the traditional roles of girls, like the ones that I followed over time. For example, that males are protectors, that violence is a male domain, that males who fight are not considered delinquents. This does not convey that gender socializa-

tion in Melrose Park and Lee emphasize her ability to defend herself. For the most part, the literature centers on girls being out of control, rather than the consideration that girls in inner cities are often forced but to respond aggressively and that their actions are what they believe themselves to be gaining. The literature is not, unfortunately, the contribution of context has been largely missing in explaining why girls turn to violence.³

Importantly, distinctions in race and class are often found in profoundly different relationships that are often not intended to be implied when the subject of violence in the media or the academic literature on the subject is developed in a way that meaningfully shows the difference. The takeaway message in the media is that violence is a minority phenomenon limited to inner cities, and that studies have systematically considered the role of race in explaining violence has for girls or the role of class in supporting it in low-income minority neighborhoods.

Research in the social sciences, particularly in the discipline that has taken the greatest interest in youth violence, exclusively concentrated on the most serious forms of youth violence and on female youth violence, such as with illegal activities—for example, drug dealing, homicide,⁶ are involved in drug-related violence, such as as a strategy to stave off domestic violence. There are instances in which girls in inner cities are involved in a typical display of violence by girls in inner cities, such as a fight, which often flies below the radar of the police (and is not reported to the police and does not result in a police visit). Though most of the violence by girls in inner cities do not reach the level of danger to which male youth violence possesses a sophisticated understanding of that is rooted in the social fabric of inner cities and the structures of belief.¹⁰ If we are to adequately understand girls in inner cities to commit physical violence, we need a narrow view of the subject and come up with a more fully than we have yet done. In this book, I explore the

I spent almost two years “hanging out” with the girls in Lee, two impoverished urban neighbor-

emphasizes the importance of a girl being part, the discourse on girls' violence and dangerous. It does not take into account how commonly feel they have no choice but, by doing so, among other things, to gain a modicum of security. Unfortunately received short shrift when consid-

ered race and class, which influence the probability a girl can have to physical violence, and how girls' violence is addressed in the literature on the subject but are not typically developed in the literature. This interdependency is explored in this book. The usual discourse is that female youth violence is mostly committed by delinquent or sociopathic girls. Few studies have explored the instrumental value that engage girls in a normative social symbolic code that is common in inner city neighborhoods.⁴

While there is particular interest within criminology, the interest in girls' violence, has almost exclusively focused on "extreme" manifestations of female violence committed in connection with gangs, girls who belong to gangs,⁵ committed violence,⁷ or embrace violence against themselves—victimization⁸—not the majority of girls who physically aggress.⁹ Indeed, the discourse on inner cities is the everyday street violence that is a screen of accountability (i.e., is not likely to result in arrest or emergency room admission) in which females engage does not take into account how female youth violence rises, female youth violence organization and discourse of its own nature in a neighborhood, its "codes," and its norms. To adequately investigate what it means for girls to physically aggress, we must take a less-abstract and contextualize their aggression far more than we do. In this book, I attempt to do just that.

In this book, I "hang out" with girls in Melrose Park and other inner city neighborhoods, observing and interviewing

them about the meanings they ascribed to the behavior. I was interested in knowing more about how girls thought about fighting. Indeed, I wanted to know how they felt about it. I hoped to get underneath the sensationalism of the increased media coverage over the years, to go back to the mid 1970s, and see what I could find out. I wanted a level of detail that rarely reaches us about the lives of girls who are more likely to physically aggress than most. I interviewed 16 female adolescent youths who had been involved in the accounts of their friends, family members, teachers, school administrators, criminal justice officials, mental health personnel with whom I sought to understand the girls' behavior—here I attempt to explore the complex reasons that contemporary girls resort to street fighting or other forms of aggression. This volume could not possibly represent the lives of all girls who have committed or will commit acts of violence. It is the gate to more accounts expressed in a way that I hope will serve to bring added dimension to the

The Wide

In the mid 1980s, the juvenile violence epidemic began a steep ascent, which lasted nearly a decade. The spike, largely a phenomenon of inner-city areas, was more startling because it came at a time when crime rates were expected to continue to decline as the population aged out of its most crime-prone years. At the same time, a clash of the cultures was taking place from the moral decay of the nation in the 1970s (Friedland, 1996) to the institutional decay of its social services in the 1980s. It was in identifying the crack epidemic of the 1980s, and the influx of handguns that were a major proximal cause (Blumstein and Wallman, 1986), that the violence was exacerbated by a dramatic increase in

One of the inadvertent consequences of the war on drugs and subsequently the war on crime was the attention it brought to female juveniles.

ed to their own violence. I was inter-
girls, themselves, thought about fight-
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r Context

olent crime rate in the United States
arly a decade before peaking in 1994.
nner-city neighborhoods, was all the
ime when crime rates had been fall-
to fall as the country's baby-boomer
e-prone years. Experts from a variety
eories to account for the surge, rang-
on's youth (in particular, DiIulio 1995,
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c that was well under way by the mid
at accompanied it, as the "epidemic's"
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n the access to guns by juveniles.¹¹
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e violence. Zero-tolerance policies of

the 1990s largely put an end to the pattern toward female criminals and resulted in a disproportionate focus on the disproportionately poor minorities, but the media, seizing on accounts of minor girls victimizing other youths, provided the fuel that aroused fear.¹³ The phrase “girls go bad” led adolescents to represent their own aggression in their lives—though with vastly different meanings—the essence of the phenomenon for many.

In academia, debate took shape over the actual quantity of girls’ violence had increased or the appearance that it had was an artifact of media sensationalism. Whichever the case, the right to be taken seriously for adolescents for the first time was granted. Though alarm bells had been sounded in the past of American history, warning of female delinquency, for the most part the public outcries were so-called sexual offenses, disorderly conduct, shoplifting, forgery, and other crimes involving violence.¹⁴

Though these earlier infractions were common, they did not cast female juveniles as a new threat. In the mid 1990s, however, the percentage of girls in the justice system stood out in high relief against the prevailing theories, most of which portrayed girls as inflicting harm, could no longer even be considered sound and begged for observers to re-examine the issue in a more-complex way and essentially to re-evaluate the field.

Although arrest rates for both males and females markedly declined after the mid 1990s, the rate of violence subsumed within this larger category remained high. For example, longitudinal data revealed that juvenile violence had increased annually in the crime index since 1987; said another way, while it had decreased for all groups, the proportion of girls in relation to boys actually continued to rise. The Bureau of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency reported that the rate for girls in 2001 (112 per 100,000) was higher than the 100,000 rate for girls in 2001 (112 per 100,000), while the 2001 rate for boys was 100,000.

paternalism of the criminal justice system resulted in many more women and girls, being arrested and prosecuted.¹² The priority female adolescents gratuitously on the issue with a disturbing public face “gone wild,” used both by female adolescents for aggressive behavior and by the authorities for different connotations—came to signify many.

Whether the quality and proportion of violence actually changed or whether the effect of sentencing practices and media coverage, the use of violence by female adolescents had categorical significance in its own right, the issue resounded intermittently over the course of the century. Female youths engaging in increasing levels of delinquency, the behaviors precipitating those delinquencies, and the moral improprieties or offenses such as sexual harassment, and larceny, not person crimes

raised anxiety about moral slippage, and the rise of female juvenile violence as an imminent threat to society.¹⁵ By the late 1980s, the rise of female juvenile violence was a major part of the national statistics on record for girls. Existing stereotypes of girls as being averse by nature to violence were being kept up the appearance of being challenged. The issue reconsidered girls in relation to violence and the rise of female juvenile violence anew.¹⁶

While the incidence of male and female juvenile violent crime rates both declined in the 1990s, the far smaller decrease in female juvenile violent crime was a trend especially needed explanation. It was noted that the incidence of female juvenile violent crime as a percentage of the total violent crime rate was on the rise. In other words, though the violent crime rate was declining, the proportion of violent crime by females was increasing. According to the Office of Justice Programs (OJJDP), the total arrest rate in 1995 was 59% above its 1980 rate (70 per 100,000) and the violent crime rate (471 per 100,000) was 20% below

its 1980 rate; girls accounted for 23% of simple assault nationwide, 32% of simple assault on the crime index in 2001.¹⁷ Stated from another angle, the number of simple assaults in 2003 was more than triple that of the arrest rate for simple assaults in 1980 (Zahn et al., 2008). While these figures come into its own “statistically,” the numbers embedded in these trend lines were not what it was that the incidence of physical assault had challenged the notion that girls were not violent kind. The numbers could no longer be seen as a few girls who had lost their way.

I do not seek here to join the debate over the number of girls arrested for violent offenses, or a genuine shift in the psyche of female offenders, or the fact of stricter sentencing laws;¹⁹ history tells us that who engage in crime has gotten bogged down in occupation. Rather, I set out to explore the meanings of income Philadelphia neighborhoods and the meanings they assign to doing violence, the mental and symbolic value that physical fighting, has for girls in inner cities, to be seen in various literatures pertaining to masculinity (Gilligan, 1996) but, as touched on above, to be examined in relation to females. I am interested in establishing a “reputation” through violent fighting—offers girls in inner cities respectability but also an avenue for attaining self-esteem in a social setting where legal consequences and other psychic rewards are not otherwise available. Girls who engage in violence are simply labeled as delinquents; their firming functions go unnoticed. I consider the “telltale” sign of individual emotion in the urban enclaves is something that girls are expected to be good at; indeed, in these contexts, it is a sign of coming out girlhood. In essence, in this context, the act of doing and serious violence committed by girls is seen as a move away from the feminine to the masculine. To say that when girls commit violence

% of juvenile arrests for aggravated assaults, and 18% of the total violent crime. From another angle, the arrest rate for simple assault is triple the amount (483.3 per 100,000) by girls in 1980 (129.7 per 100,000). These figures suggest that girls' violence had become a collective sociocultural process that is poorly understood.¹⁸ What was clear was that aggression captured in these figures had become anathema to committing violence in public. It can be seen as characterizing a relatively new cultural attitude over whether the increased numbers of arrests in America today represents a new cultural youth toward violence or is the artifact of a new era. Historically, the consideration of females in the context of violence is pegged down in just this kind of preoccupation with how female adolescents in two low-income urban areas experience inflicting physical harm on others and being so. I seek to consider the instrumental use of physical aggression, particularly street fighting, as a topic that has mostly been explored in the context of males (Anderson, 1999; Devine, 1996; Johnson, 1995). Above, have not yet systematically been explored. I attempt to make the case that establishing a sense of mastery, status, and self-worth through street fighting is not only a measure of physical security but also a sense of mastery, status, and self-worth. In the absence of other opportunities for achievement and status, street fighting is often the only option available. When girls who are labeled "delinquent," these identity-conscious girls contend that, rather than simply being a result of mental pathology, street fighting in poor urban areas is expected to show themselves as tough. In this context, street fighting is part of carrying out a sense of self. In volume I represent the street fighting by girls on its own terms rather than as a deviation toward the masculine. This is not to suggest that their motivations and behavior bear

no likeness to those of boys who come to violence has a sociocultural organization of its own. Moreover, I present the girls involved in the criminal justice system. In doing, I hope to extend the reach of research to ensure these girls have received up to now.

In this book, I specifically investigate the ways by which poor and working-class urban girls experience their neighborhoods afford females. The more-frequent resort to violence challenges the myth that all girls are innately prone to it. This opens up a wider analytical space for understanding why city girls so readily engage in violence, while others readily reject it. Clearly, a girl does not come out of whole cloth but, rather, in relation to her neighborhood, though individual experiences stand differentially.

Conversely, it is not sufficient to look at the city or in terms of social organization, as is often done in youth violence in inner cities. Rather, the phenomenon exists on a continuum of frequency across individual life circumstances. Thus, the book offers a psychological framework and also a sociological one that collective social and cultural forces shape individual violence. A dual lens of analysis affords a look at how individual girls in inner cities negotiate the cultural order their own. It is the intersection of development, culture, and institutional structures that I attempt to look or unrecognized—that I attempt to understand that I believe offers the most promising way to understand and underwrite violence.

Ultimately, I contend that differences in the social conditions associated with race and class, and the ways in which psychology, structure the relationship between the individual and the social. While an adolescent girl's concern for her safety relative to other girls is in no way limited by the intersection of these concerns in physical aggression.

commit violence; indeed, girls' resort to physical aggression is a product of social organization and symbolic framework. This book explores the motivations and experiences of girls who resort to violence directly in their own words. In so doing, it goes far beyond their words much beyond the exposé.

I investigate the use of physical aggression by girls because of the greater prerogative granted to boys with respect to physical aggression. The prevalence of violence by girls in inner cities challenges the traditional view of girls as passive and nurturing and, in effect, demands a new inquiry, not only about why inner-city girls resort to violence but also why middle-class girls do not. I develop her theory of aggression as a response to the world around her.²⁰ She and other strategies of resistance have been explored. My personal experience translates this under-

standing to simply locate patterns in culture because there is no "one" story of female aggression. Rather, the inclination for girls in low-income areas (to engage in physical aggression) varies by race and intensity and is mitigated by social context. This study is conceptualized within a framework that sets out to account for the role that social forces play in institutionalizing girls' aggression. It affords the possibility of considering how girls go about making larger patterns in their lives at the interface between human development and social structures—an interface often overlooked. I attempt to spell out in this volume and to explore the possibilities for revealing the dynamics that

shape girls' lives. I argue that cultural standards and social realities, not simply biology and individual differences, determine that females have to physical aggression. In inner cities, the manifestation of aggression to a large extent is. I argue

that the incentive/disincentive structure in middle-class girls does not operate for girls in inner cities; with few prospects for a girl's future for running a business, the incentive to abstain from doing so, is less than in middle-class neighborhoods. This behavior will become manifest, among other things, related to how prepared one's immediate environment is to its expression. For instance, from a young age, girls are reinforced for demonstrating passivity and to stand up to anyone who disrespects them. However, unlike their middle-class counterparts, girls who engage in violence are not viewed as deviant, as constructed by mainstream culture. This culture, for low-income urban girls, is selectively applied and does not closely fit their lives.

It is noteworthy that while these are long-time well-accepted theories in the field of child development and aggression (Freud, 1905; Whiting and Edwards, 1973; Maccoby, 1992), to a varying extent, more recent theories have emerged of inner-city communities that females are shaped by the exigencies of poverty and racial inequality. Girls, in particular, have historically attributed to being strong and self-reliant—with respect both to their physical and necessary, standing up for themselves.

African American mothers are aware that their daughters will need to “stand their ground” on a number of fronts: against the racial inequality that mainstream society entertains, against the structural problems that create havoc in their lives. Individuals to use force to resolve disputes. This “assertive” plus “self-reliant” need may be reached that end point if judged necessary. It is this that girls gravitate to violence in order to survive. Inequality does not typically resonate with them. More to the point for mothers is that their daughters display physical force themselves because they have to do so.²³

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Thinking through the implications for girls must include a thorough consideration integrated into their psychological. In the decade, the discipline of psychology has seen the use of social or relational aggression (e.g., 1996; Jack, 1999; Simmons, 2002; Utter et al., 2007; Irwin, 2007), it has considered physical aggression. Although studies in sociology and anthropology of physical force by female youths mention the psychological component of a violent act in this way. To help bridge the gap, in this chapter I look at recent girls who commit physical violence and its links onto how psychological and social factors produce violence. I look primarily at the ways to pursue this inquiry.

Unlike other methods of inquiry, ethnography immerses himself or herself in another culture. It affords an extraordinary opportunity to understand collective and an individual level. The use of ethnography as a method can accommodate a range of reactions and complex meanings. It allows him or her to promulgate the existing meanings, inferred meanings and emotions, or to challenge intuition (Ness, 2004). Although ethnographers propose theories about the relationship between culture and violence, they do not capture the texture of everyday life and how it shapes violent behavior.²⁵

It is noteworthy, however, that, despite the fact that collective meanings are held and individual meanings are used this way. Most inquiries do not capture the idiosyncrasies of the individual. Those groups.²⁶ By using an ethnographic approach to render a more-complex view of the relationship between culture and violence has for girls, show those meanings in flux, and, ultimately, form a less-constructed and cultural forces in a single social context. Combining both levels of analysis—the individual and the collective—we are able to achieve deeper insight

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Studying Girls

In briefly discussing how girls' violence is not to systematically characterize, I do not intend to selectively underscore some of the more well-known problems that have plagued the field, particularly with regard to the data. There are significant holes in our understanding of the practice of violence by female adolescents in inner cities both in terms of how to interpret and differentiate the practice of violence. Again, there have been a number of studies that have been undertaken to shed light on this component of the statistics noted above. However, it is not until the late 1980s, and the 1990s, that girls are treated as subjects until the late 1980s, and a number of studies are devoted to them.

Of particular concern to this study is how violence is made socially meaningful in inner cities. The process by which it achieves meaning is through the highly prescribed roles, norms, and expectations that typically structure female behavior in inner city neighborhoods (Simmons, 2002; Williams, 2002). The cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) of a female adolescent paradoxically increases in blighted urban areas. These places place great premium on women being "strong" in the social conditions of most inner cities. This "strong" is "forming" violence in everyday life (Johnson, 2004).

Historically, explanations in the literature for the increase in physical violence have historically focused on the characterization of normal female behavior as the relinquishing of active instinctual aggression. Freud (1925, 1931, 1933) cast female delinquency as most of the 20th century as a move from passive to active. This formula, which served as the primary theoretical concern concerning normative and pathological behavior (Freud, 1966, 1976; Vedder and Somerville, 1992, 1992), emphasized inner psychic structure and cultural processes in shaping behavior (Freud, see Ness, 2004). With certain exceptions, the study of aggression through to the 1980s could be characterized as females normatively internalize aggression.

Girls' Violence

Violence has been studied to date, my chronicle what has come before but to many conceptual problems that have respect to inner cities. As noted, there is a lack of understanding of the specific ways in which girls negotiate individually and collectively negotiation, while seemingly countless studies exist on various aspects of the male combat, relatively few studies incorporated girls, and even fewer have been exclusively

focused on how female adolescent violence is manifested in impoverished urban neighborhoods and the erosion of moral legitimacy (Ness, 2004). Whereas the social and expectations against aggression and social relations in middle-class neighborhoods (Wiseman, 2002), the social and cultural norms of female with a reputation for violence in urban neighborhoods where necessity often requires being "strong." Alternatively stated, the cultural norms reinforce the utility of girls "personas" (Ness, 2004).

The literature concerning girls who engage in violence is centered on maladjustment. Freud's theory of psychological development as the transition from passivity to activity and the acceptance of passive aggression and the use of violence for self-defense from the feminine to the masculine. This premise for many subsequent theories of psychological gender development (Konopka, 1973; Campbell, 1987; Armistead et al., 1997) structure and conflicts rather than social behavior (for an expanded discussion, see Konopka, 1973). In sum, the normative view of female aggression should be reduced to a single proposition: girls internalize aggression, while males externalize it

(Feshbach, 1969; Whiting and Edwards, 1973; Hall, 1978).

Even though females who committed violence were characterized in terms of being sexually abused, and female juveniles continued to be viewed as either a reflection of the belief that violence was inflicted on them and were socialized to be violent (Bell, 1984, 1993; Steffensmeier and Arel, 1996) or in small number only in imitation of males (Bell, 1979; Figueria-McDonough, 1992; Rhee, 1996), there was a corrective in bringing needed attention to social and economic circumstances associated with violence (Chilton and Datesman, 1987; Chesney-Lind, 1989; Belknap, 1996; Daly and Maher, 1999). Each of these accounts presented a view of violence that moved into their potential as active agents. The research suggested that female resort to violence was not a self-defense behavior or a manifestation of self-defense or aggression in their violence. It was one of the contributions of feminist authors, in both psychology and sociology, to show how social forces and cultural factors influence and order differences associated with violence. This scholarship played a major role in the development of the discourse on girls' violence and led to a new area of inquiry.

While some research—mostly on violence by adolescent boys—consider what function violence serves (e.g., Chesney-Lind, 1989; Miller, 1996; Miller, 2001)—such work has not amounted to a corpus large enough to be significant or central to the subject. Indeed, female adolescents are still rarely depicted as rational actors. The violence by adolescent boys is typically characterized as a way of increasing value in the literature—that is, violence by adolescent girls is more typically characterized as a way of decreasing emotional tension or as a way of responding to insults or trivial arguments. Few if any studies have examined in which issues of race and class are

ards, 1973; Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974;

tted violence were no longer charac-
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mental value and symbolic meaning (see Johnson 2004).²⁸ Indeed, aggressive behavior is an impulsive act, stripping it of its symbolic value used by girls in self-defense is consistent with this. Clearly, without understanding the violence in inner cities, our theories about why girls fight lack solid ground.

In addition to these subject-specific tendencies, a temporary tendency in the social sciences to separate into psychological, social, and cultural spheres hindered the study of girls' violence. The boundaries not easily crossed have made inquiry into the formal social structure, the culture production, and the psychological processes. This had not always been the case in the past. The current state of affairs represents a fundamental change in the mid 1700s. While the central concerns that occupied the social sciences, for example, what it had in common with psychology for pursuing it, differences in understanding, and, most basically, what constituted the subject of agreement about its proper subject: the social and material world, as well as the human mind, built into its structure to separate in terms of their environment, as is now. The social sciences were not partitioned into discrete categories of nature and culture.³⁰ Rather, the natural and the social were a priori: human and society were taken together as the explanation. Epistemologically, human and society were an irreducible category that could not be broken into parts without disassembling its essence. The social was conceived of as existing in a social state.

It is only with the professionalization of the social sciences in the 1800s that sociology, anthropology, psychology, and the ownership of a particular level of analysis became separate. Biological, cultural, psychological, and social can be considered separately, as if they were independent. This time forward, even when an attempt is made to bring ideas that had been staked out by d

g that violence has for girls (Ness, by girls tends to be constructed as sociocultural context; only violence consistently explained in rational terms. value that violence holds for girls in they turn to violence cannot claim

specific conceptual problems, the sciences to partition modern humans, and cultural beings has seriously. Disciplinary traditions separated have long discouraged a simultaneous of institutions, the dynamics of biological development of individuals. in the social sciences; in fact, the current fundamental shift from social science's there was much debate surrounding the "new science" at its inception—for a natural science proper, the method—understanding reason and experience, and human nature—there was general the individual in interaction with a with other minds.²⁹ No divisions were individual agents from the social pattern the case. Emotional and social life categories and isolated from history and moral worlds were linked together taken as a unified field of action and an nature itself was considered to be not be broken down into constitutive nce. The human being could only be ate.³¹

tion of the social sciences in the late and psychology each claimed sole analytical understanding and when the and sociostructural spheres began to were each independent entities. From attempt was made to bring together different domains, the cores of these

separate disciplines remained distinct, which to build a bridge across disciplines, the structural determinants that mediate the social processes that engender a specific event. The vast majority of studies. Thinking about these disciplinary levels, while a theoretical perspective the reality that various levels of analysis are involved in a violent event.

With respect to violence, social and cultural forces that produce violence and underwrite individual behavior, with developmental and sociocultural context. In the early 1960s, the idea that social factors are more important than individual factors in causing delinquency was a traditional wisdom (Thrasher, 1927; Shaw and McKay, 1942; Ohlin, 1960). As crime rates began to rise in the 1970s, the pendulum began to swing in the other direction, and psychological explanations came to dominate (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985). But just as the focus shifted from violent behavior to completely economic factors, the attempt to reduce its complexity to a single factor. Over the years some theories of violence have evolved—for instance, racial oppression (Dollard, 1939; Hawkins, 1983) and social structure (Gang and Ferracuti, 1967)—even though it is clear that social and cultural forces act in concert with individual factors. It does not adequately explain the variable nature of violence across structural arrangements.

To avoid the pitfall of underscoring the role of social structure, the design of this study had built into it a way to account for both the variation with social structure and individual factors (i.e., taking into account a specific individual's family history, and, where applicable, her physical trauma), as well as the role of social and cultural values that are reinforced within the individual. The underlying thesis of this book is that the intersection of the geography of the individual psyche and the social structure offers the greatest possibility for the understanding of female urban violence.

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The Work of E

Although the theoretical and methodological approaches to considering human experience from a sociological and psychological³² has not been a major focus of research over the 20th century or in the 21st, it is time to recognize that neither have such a long history. There have always been scholars who have argued that being studied separately constituted a

Edward Sapir, an anthropologist who focused on the personality and culture movements of the early 1920s, is one such thinker. Sapir's concept of culture with a processual and dynamic approach to capturing the actions of the individual and the ideas are especially relevant to the current study. Sapir offer a way to wrestle with collective violence, while simultaneously opening up a space for individuals in the neighborhood react differently. Sapir's work to synthesize these two important approaches to violence work is particularly useful to my aims.

Briefly stated, Sapir believed that culture was a socially regulatory—that is, that each human being is shaped on the other—and therefore it would be more accurate to study culture as if the individual's psychology as if it existed in a social context. Unlike anthropologists of his day, Sapir did not believe in a single social frame of reference, was not interested in a community of a community; he rejected the idea that culture was imprinted onto people as if by a stamp. Sapir, according to Sapir, was a culture's symbols, and through which people were shaped. Sapir's work with mediating between the individual and the community tating group cohesion. Thus, people's actions and symbols and cultural patterns were shaped by psychological identification. These patterns are key in attempting to make sense of why some communities fight more regularly than others.

Edward Sapir

Methodological difficulties inherent in a perspective at once sociocultural and anthropological. A major preoccupation of the social sciences in the early 21st century, it is important to note that these concerns have been totally alien from it. Sapir retained the vision that what was different were aspects of the same reality.³³

Sapir made an important contribution to a movement that first began to take shape in the 1920s. Sapir attempted to imbue the concept of culture with a dynamic character capable of more accurately describing individual living in a social world.³⁴ His consideration of why girls fight, as they do in their own or neighborhood patterns related to the concept of fighting up a space to consider how individuals differ. It is in its ambitious attempt to analyze the levels of inquiry that Sapir's work is in this book.

Sapir's view of culture and personality were mutually influential. It had a shaping and limiting influence on the individual. It would be a fallacy to study an individual in isolation, just as it would be fallacious to study an individual had no relevance.³⁵ Unlike other anthropologists, Sapir did not think that culture, despite its diversity, was uniformly shared by all members of a community. He believed that one single version of culture was not a rubber stamp. What was shared, he believed, was the organization, which rested on symbols that were able to communicate and align individuals toward shared purposes.³⁶ He credited symbols with the power to unite individuals and society, as well as with facilitating the process by which individuals who habitually selected the same symbols were more apt to experience a sense of community. Particular ideas of Sapir's are useful in understanding why certain girls in the same community fight; both frequent fighters and less-

frequent fighters identify with their violence is not exactly the same.

Though Sapir was committed to it was instantiated in personality, at the cultural considerations alone could not to day; they were inadequate for product of an individual. Rather, Sapir believed represented that society's values on the dynamic process of selective they were culturally scripted, he vicinized to adjust to interpersonal situations said, played a part in constructing culture by it.

Sapir believed that culture had an isolating the individual, but the individual it was the vagaries of individual history. Thus, while the contribution of culture Sapir's mind, it was the individual's individual that he held to be the site of interdisciplinary. I similarly approach the understanding and cultural context differentially perceived.

Sapir never lost sight of the fact and psychology represented different the same phenomena. He argued that to a more accurate rendering of the human that it was only through interdisciplinary made between the realm of cultural psychology and the individual appropriation of the interaction between psychiatry and social in the middle and walking in both directions.

In short, Sapir challenged the idea of individual "or" social, and he thought it absurd contributions to behavior since a person all behavior operated from an individual tuating different functions. How behavior of a collective pattern or as an individual poses of the observer. At bottom, however the same types of mental functioning, it was simultaneously social and personal.

community, yet their relationship to identifying the ways in which culture the same time he did not believe that ever explain what happened from day dicting or interpreting any particular believed that individuals in every soci- differentially and that culture rested e valuation. Said another way, while ewed individual acts as being orga- ations. Sapir's individual, it could be ulture rather than simply being bound

important role with respect to regu- lual selectively appropriated culture; ory that drove intrasocietal variation. ure to behavior was never in doubt in nterpretation of the collective pattern ciplinary investigation. In this book, ng of how girls within a shared social rform violence.

that the disciplines of anthropology nt analytical stances with respect to at bringing them together would lead human condition. Indeed, he believed nary engagement that a link could be products (shared symbols and values) nem.³⁷ As Sapir cleverly stated, “coop- al science best proceeded by starting rections” (Darnell, 1990: 302).

a that behavior was “either” individ- urd to separate individual from social sson mediated both. He believed that ual base, at different moments accen- avior was interpreted—as an aspect dual reaction—depended on the pur- owever, all human behavior involved g—conscious and unconscious—and ssonal. And as such, he argued, both

the psychological understanding of the influence of psychological behavior could

Here I seek to achieve the same intent well over 50 years ago, specifically with the study of female youth violence in poor urban neighborhoods (the institutional infrastructure of a community, the police force, and criminal justice system and the local economy) the neighborhood culture that has been created and the limited resources funneled into it by the state. I explore the emotional “logic” that resides in the neighborhood and the possibilities that the sociocultural context provides that speak of a collective ethos that mitigates and mediates the production and reproduction of violence in the neighborhood. These three analytic lenses provide a way to understand the relationships among a neighborhood, the state, and the individual; their interaction cannot produce an individual behavior, as individual agency is always shaped; the very least attempts to show the interplay between the state and their mutual influence on one another.

Research Site and Method

As the research for this book, I spent time in a neighborhood ranging in age from 13 to 17 in a variety of settings: an alternative high school for youth, a residential facility, a criminal justice system where juveniles are held, a residential program with a deadly weapon, a residential program, a transitional alternative high school where juveniles are held before they can return to a school in their neighborhood, and on the different levels of violence in the neighborhood. In effect the juvenile justice system has been used as a research site. It was necessary to observe girls in relation to the institutional infrastructure meant to deal with the girls. I spent 80 to 100 girls with whom I had contact. I spent time with two of them several days a week in the neighborhood to better familiarize myself with the neighborhood. 75% of the girls with whom I spoke over the course of the study were African American, 20% were of Hispanic/Latino

social behavior and the social influence be found in the individual mind. Intellectual integration that Sapir sought with regard to the contemporary issue in settings. Indeed, I contend that the community (its schools, housing, police) and the configuration of its commercial life that is significantly shaped by the limits of the larger dominant economy, and the individual living under the confines of that environment imposes (a category defined by individual qualities)—loosely the prediction of violent events in a given neighborhood—each inform critical aspects of the lives of its inhabitants. Although studying violence is not an exact map or formula for predicting violence, the key is exactly that—individual—it is the interdependence of these three planes that matters most to the other.

Field Methodology

I spent almost two years talking to girls in a variety of settings: a public high school, a juvenile detention center, a residential facility with behavioral problems, the adult criminal justice system, and the courts. All files are directly filed for any assault charges, placement in a residential center, boot camp, and a placement center where girls leaving placement are sent back to their community. To gain a window into the lives of these girls, and to see which girls participate, as well as what happens on their course, I determined that it was important to see as much of the institutional context of their violent behavior as possible. Of the 16 girls I followed closely, I spent time with them in their West Philadelphia neighborhoods and their social world. Approximately 85% of the girls over the course of the year were African American, 10% were Latino, and 5% were Caucasian.

I also spent numerous evenings in Northeast Philadelphia in order to observe and act. What this entailed was riding for hours at a time. Doing so allowed me to witness situations involving girls and their families, some violent, some nonviolent, but all significant. It also allowed me to see police and other law enforcement personnel as they carried out their duties.

In addition to participant observation and analysis of my field notes to identify themes inductively, I relied on relational theory (Brown and Gilligan, 1992) for conducting the study. This theory has as its central premise that the self develops through the mechanism of relationships that are shaped and reshaped by the social world. As Brown and Gilligan (1992) state, "we can best understand internal mental processes by examining the interrelationships between the self and their environment. The theory is based on the psychodynamic state of a girl who compares her current psychosocial processes that are maturing with what she has previously, and successfully, been able to manage" (Gilligan, 1996), with special emphasis on the role of culture and character.

The Listening Guide Method, a qualitative method based on relational psychological theory, seeks to explore multiple levels of "knowing" within a person's narrative by following lines of data along specific lines. The act of listening to an interviewee's story opens a window into the "associative territory of a clinical interview—in the world of the speaker."³⁹

The first reading serves as a kind of overview, providing an overview of the narrative and the speaker's inner world. The second reading observes two basic rules. The first rule is that all statements beginning with "I" are to be considered as statements about the self in which they occur. The reading reveals that the statements within the narrative are not random but are organized. The second rule is preserved to maintain the integrity

doing “ride-alongs” in patrol cars in observe police and female youths interact with an officer for approximately four to witness for myself the wide range of families that garnered police attention—most of the time quite contentious. female youths interact “in situ,” and perspective and attitudes of law enforcement duties with respect to girls.

ation and the systematic review and identify themes, patterns, and variations story and the Listening Guide Method conducting narrative analysis.³⁸ Relational that psychological development professions, which are constantly being world. The theory suggests that one representations and human behavior between persons and between them is well suited to connecting the psychology of violence to the influence of the material to her story. Relational theory has been used to study male violence (Gilligan) placed on the relationship between

qualitative approach to narrative based systematically attends to the multiple by requiring four separate readings of listening is carefully structured to “logic” of the psyche—ordinarily the the context of the social and cultural

d of reconnaissance mission aimed narrative’s plot and a basic map of the reading, known as “listening for self,” the idea is that all statements in an excerpt are read as a body and taken in the order they appear on the premise that the patterns are not meaningful but have meaning; thus, their order of the flow of conscious and uncon-

scious material. The second rule is the first-person “I,” sometimes accompanied by insight into how the psychological state of the speaker at the time of utterance with regard to various

The last two readings are meant to provide a sense of the overall narrative—what Brown and Gilligan have done with the purpose of bringing into focus the various states that are simultaneously at play. As identity arises out of messages and experiences, as well as from personal introspection, I have employed the data to identify a host of themes associated with the social world they were tied to, with the hope of discerning how these themes came together within an individual. The third reading was specifically geared toward how the pattern of violence fits within a cultural context and then how the emotional life of the girls fits this cultural pattern in the context of their individual lives. I take up a theme of particular importance

While the method is not specific to this study, the raw data commonly controlled for in the analysis of the narrative as described here is the interpretation along these lines. The narrative, the cultural information, as well as an emic interpretation and the emic interpretations are constructed, the narrative is the stage researchers to consider the effects of the cultural take this into account in interpreting

Roadmap

In chapter 2, I provide a brief description of the city, beginning in the 1960s. I broaden the scope to economic, and cultural effects wrought by the city, with a particular emphasis placed on the effects of the city. I briefly consider changes to the juve

at, by closely observing the use of the
nied by only a verb, one can derive
tate of the speaker shifts from utter-
ous themes.

o identify specific themes within the
n refer to as “contrapuntal voices”—
us several of the many psychological
y within a speaker at any given time.
bout the self received from all quar-
ection, the third reading was specifi-
themes within the social and cultural
om I spent time perceived and expe-
t is geared to identifying important
world that the participants’ lives are
how psychology, culture, and social
dividual. For instance, in some cases,
red to listening for how an individual
tural configuration of the neighbor-
ogic of a given girl made meaning of
of her personal life history and man-
actions. The fourth reading usually
tance to a person’s individual story.
ally geared to collecting the kind of
n sociological analyses, the interpre-
above indirectly provided informa-
carefully read, provided such infor-
ation of its meaning. Inasmuch as all
method is also structured to encour-
cts of the interview situation and to
the data.

of the Book

cription of Philadelphia’s troubles as
dly trace the deleterious social, eco-
t by a sharp decline in manufactur-
ed on the problem of youth violence.
nile justice system in response to the

rise in violent crime with which Philadelphia began in the mid 1980s. I discuss Philadelphia neighborhoods of Melrose Park and Lee, which I studied and conducted, as well as providing an overview of the book.

Chapters 3 and 4 are in large part about the experience of girls. How do girls in Melrose Park and Lee use violence and what meanings do they assign to it? What are some of the external factors that impinge on their lives? What are the many factors that go into inducing a girl to use violence? How do they construct and negotiate elements of their identity and practice of violence and also what instrumental value does violence have for them. Additionally, through their experience I illustrate how fighting also solidifies their identity and provides them with an avenue for the expression of their anger. Moreover, I consider how street fighting serves as a way for girls to build up a sense of invulnerability and self-protection. In essence, I attempt to provide a sense of the experience of girls from the street.”

In chapter 4, I take up the reasons why girls in Melrose Park and Lee cite for fighting, as well as what they learn from it. I address the “emotional logic” that girls use to justify their fighting about the resort to violence and the social context and issues surrounding race, poverty, and the instrumental value of alliances into which they enter to protect themselves against being phoned in by a larger group of girls, a topic that is further discussed in chapter 5.

Chapter 5 is primarily devoted to the role of family and peers in Melrose Park and Lee. How do girls use violence and supporting her image and identity. The relationship that exists between mothers and daughters and violence. Nearly every one of the mothers I interviewed had heard about in my travels had a history of using violence and about one-third of them had yet to do so. The importance that girls place on peers, female friends, and the way they come to their aid if outnumbered is an important aspect of the culture of violence (Ness, 2004). The double-gendered culture where a daughter fight side by side, an important aspect of the culture of Melrose Park and Lee, is unique to girls and their mothers and is parallel to boys and their fathers. In

Philadelphia, like most large cities, was discussed in detail the West and Northeast Melrose Park and Lee where the study was conducted. An overview of the study's participants.

I am devoted to answering the questions, What is the experience causing physical harm, and what are they doing so, including what they see to be the consequences on them? In chapter 3, I outline the process of a girl to fight, considering how girls negotiate their identity and status through the practical and instrumental value that engaging in violence provides. Through a range of excerpts, in chapter 3 I explore girls' peer relations for girls and provides a sense of youthful exuberance. Moreover, it serves as a kind of proving ground for demonstrating bravery and fearlessness (Ness, 2004). I also discuss the sense of what girls' violence "looks like"

and the reasons that girls in Melrose Park and Lee actually happen when girls fight. I also explore the underlies and organizes girls' thinking and how it dovetails with shared experiences of social inequality. I also consider the ways in which girls enter with other girls to fight, and how they physically assaulted or "rolled on" by a boy, as described in chapter 5.

In answering the question, What role do Melrose Park and Lee play in socializing a girl to fight as a fighter? I address the special relationships between mothers and daughters with regard to fighting, and mothers with whom I spoke directly or indirectly about the history of fighting when she was younger, and the reasons to stop fighting altogether. The relationships between mothers and daughters are an integral part of the anatomy of girls' lives, and a generation dynamic where mother and daughter are an important feature of fighting in Melrose Park and Lee. Their mothers with no corresponding relationships. In addition to providing a descriptive

overview of that phenomenon, in chapter 5, I discuss how this alliance serves in cultural and social terms.

Why fighting by girls is so common and how it can serve as the focus of this book can only be understood in both larger social realities and local contexts. Exploring how structural and cultural forces shape violent behavior and how they are involved in it is the focus of chapter 6. I take up the issue of social norms and norms regarding performing violence in the community. I consider how key institutions in the community—schools, the justice system, and law enforcement—“construct” norms, as well as look at how issues of race, class, and gender help structure the social organization of violence. In turn, affect why, how, and when girls fight. I argue that many common assumptions about violence do not stand up to close scrutiny.

In chapter 7, I offer a concluding chapter on structural factors in these two impoverished communities that produce a proclivity for violent behavior, particularly taken up by girls. I make the case for why culture, society, and psychology analysis is insufficiently broken apart the study of social violence. That, given the intensive focus that is required, ethnography is particularly suitable, not only for its meanings but also to portraying individuals and their recommendations for improving policies to reduce youth violence.

In sum, in this book I explore both the lives of violent girls and develop a structural analysis of two. For if there is a dialectical relationship between one's world and the “emotional logic” of action, then understanding that interrelationship is an understanding of what meaning culture has. It is equally important to situate the culture in which she lives within the institutional context.

Chapter 5 I attempt to explain the functional and social terms.

nonplace in the neighborhoods that may be explained by taking into account cultural norms—that is, by explaining how these are involved in shaping individual behavior and in shaping feelings (Ness, 2004). In this chapter I deal with socialization and child development within the context of a neighborhood. I consider how the community—school, the criminal justice system, and the police—“construct” and respond to violent girls, and how this process of socialization, alienation, and wider systemic forces shape the behavior of the neighborhood and which, in turn, leads some girls to resort to violence. Here I contend that the experiences of both male and female violent youths

are a statement about how social and cultural forces shape Philadelphia neighborhoods proper and how these factors are different from those in other cities. I argue that, in disaggregating the levels of analysis, the social sciences have articulated a number of conceptual problems. Moreover, I underscore how participant observation makes possible a more nuanced approach to accounting for shared social behavior and individual inner states. I then offer recommendations and practices with regard to female

violence in the psychological and social worlds. I conclude with a new mode of explanation that bridges the relationship between the social reality and the individual, a “pragmatic” that one resorts to when taking action and where interaction is essential. Hence, to reach a deeper understanding of what engaging in violence has for a girl, it is necessary to consider the cultural landscape of the neighborhood and the theoretical framework that has shaped it.

The City of Philadelphia Female Youth

Like most major urban centers, Philadelphia is a city of stark contrasts between wealth and poverty. Much of the city is ravaged by socioeconomic neglect and decay, miles from its thriving business districts and their high-end real estate. Whereas the downtown of the city are lined with gourmet-food restaurants that cater to middle-class and upper-middle-class patrons, the main thoroughfares are distinguished by fast-food restaurants and check-cashing places where the windows are bulletproof. Beyond what these differences have for the provision of services, the layout and use of urban space tells a larger story about economic activity in both types of neighborhoods. The vibrant commercial activity and wide variety of services in the other suggests severe environmental degradation and a lack of community institutions. The neighborhood where the study reported here is set, possibly in the heart of the city, has the look and the feel of the latter.

The gulf between the rich and poor is particularly obvious to an observer because of the stark contrast. Most inhabitants of Philadelphia's southeast side, sometimes referred to as its "inner city," live in an area of urban poverty in the United States that is disproportionately inhabited exclusively by African Americans. The area is currently home to approximately 1.5 million people. The term "inner city" implies a set of particular economic and cultural trends that have had a profound impact in such areas, trends that are centered on the

Philadelphia and Youth Violence

Philadelphia is a city of sharp contrasts. Most of its struggling neighborhoods, and illegal drug markets, lie only minutes from well-heeled enclaves known for their shopping areas in the affluent parts of the city. Upscale food eateries and specialty shops that cater to middle-class tastes and budgets, the same as those found in their run-down take-out restaurants. The employees greet customers though the same practical implications these differences have for the residents, the configuration of the city tells a story about the state of public life and the state of the neighborhoods: the one case suggests widespread economic investment, while the other suggests mental stresses and the erosion of community. The case studies of Melrose Park and Lee, where the case studies address the structural problems and the

poor in Philadelphia is also immediate. The poverty is heavily drawn along racial lines. The most severely impoverished neighborhoods, “the poorest cities,” are African American. Though the city has never been, nor is it now, limited to the inner city (even though, indeed, inner cities are home to 75% of poor blacks in America), the particularly recalcitrant socioeconomic conditions have a devastating impact on the residents. This is central to understanding girls’ violence.

West Philadelphia, where the neighborhood accounts for nearly 14% of the city's residents are African American. The neighborhood, is racially and to some extent ethnically homogeneous.¹

It is noteworthy that it is only in "inner city" crept into the literature as part of a network used to describe certain neighborhoods. Cultural studies scholar Charles Acland's *Spectacle: The Cultural Politics of "Y"* stated as such, the phrase "inner city" as, "nonwhite"; over time, the euphemism. Needless to say, the socioeconomic levels underwrite the failure of these neighborhoods. Understanding the unique structure and dynamics is necessary to start by underscoring the stark living between rich and poor and which has always been as stark as it is today.

From its beginnings, the Philadelphia, New Jersey, was a magnet for manufacturing and its proximity to the shipping ports of the first industrial centers in the United States. A variety of industries. In its halcyon days, such as Schmidt's Beer Company, Pullman Locomotive, and Campbell Soup Company were major industries. Of all of its industries, the most (Wikipedia, "History of Philadelphia") along the Delaware River alone, there were an estimated upward of 90,000 people at the mill (2002). Indeed, knitting and a range of other industries were once the primary employers in the region. The area along central railroad corridors between the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers rendered the area a business.²

Railroad lines running through the area moved manufactured goods from the factories, generating steady work for its local residents. The area grew up around sprawling factories, and the area became a hub.³ The factories were typically un-

neighborhood of Melrose Park is located, total population, and 72% of its residents. The neighborhood of Lee, in North Philadelphia, is economically somewhat more hetero-

the early 1980s that the term “inner city” became part of an easily recognizable semantic framework for inner city neighborhoods in the United States. As I discuss in my book and comments in *Youth, Murder and Youth in Crisis*” (1995), though never explicitly defined, the term was meant to signify, and to be read as a critique of the economic and cultural trends that on many inner city neighborhoods are central to understanding the social dynamics of girls’ violence. Thus, it is not surprising that the difference in the standard of living between white and black in Philadelphia had not

Philadelphia metropolitan area, including Camden, New Jersey, manufacturing, given its navigable rivers and access to the ports of the east coast. It was one of the largest cities in the United States that could boast a variety of large employers after World War II, large employers such as the DuPont, Providence Dye Works, RCA, Baldwin Locomotive Works, and the company were focal points of the city’s economic activity. Textiles, perhaps textiles were the largest industry in Philadelphia”). On the Philadelphia side of the Delaware River, over 700 textile mills that employed thousands of workers. A midpoint of the 20th century (Levins, 1995) of small- to medium-size textile mills were located in this area. Philadelphia’s prime location on the Delaware River and between the banks of the Delaware River made it a highly opportune place to do

the city’s working-class neighborhoods were part of the conveyor belt to the marketplace, providing employment for a large population. Entire neighborhoods were built up which employed thousands of people, creating economic strongholds where job security

and wages were held steady. Row houses for factory and railroad workers, stretching the eye could see.⁴ Often erected quickly and cheaply, these small, single-story brick houses made it possible for the American dream of home ownership to become a reality for working-class parents to own their own homes. In Philadelphia, blacks had a higher rate of home ownership in the first half of the 20th century than in most other cities. This was an outgrowth of the economic opportunities that the manufacturing sector afforded them.

By and large, the grandmothers of the book speak of “better times” when they were growing up in the hood. While some grandmothers view their childhood as “hard” or “rough,” the idea of fighting a picture of a less-dangerous world was not a commonplace. For many, the experience of fighting was not a commonplace. They had fought themselves and had fought for their children to fight “in her day.” Most saw fighting as a necessary evil that was avoidable if the right means were used. Fighting was correlated with the feeling of respect and dignity. Clearly, the symbolic meaning of fighting was important, as did the organization of interpersonal relationships.

For the most part, through to the 1950s, so after that, there was a definable pattern in Philadelphia to move into blue-collar neighborhoods. Parents, around the harsh imperatives of their jobs, often working with heavy machinery or working on an assembly line, physically demanding and sometimes dangerous. If parents were economically able to send their children to the public schools, they could be counted on to provide the young with the education that children could advance into the middle class, within reason and within reach; parents wanted to send the message that almost anything was possible. However, there was a camaraderie that existed within the hood, with it an extended family network that provided support. Stated another way, on a number of levels, a living wage was the foundation for a

houses, which housed the majority of the neighborhood block after block for as far as the eye could see. The houses were built to provide employees with modestly priced, single-family, two-story, nearly identical, row houses for working-class families to buy into home ownership.⁵ It was not at all uncommon for these houses to be sold as a means of home ownership in the second half of the century. In fact, the rate of home ownership in the second half of the century was higher than in most other cities in the United States, a testament to the opportunities that the region's profitable

industrial sector provided for the female youths portrayed in this book. When asked where they were growing up in the neighborhood, they answered the neighborhoods they grew up in. When asked if they were unanimous in present-day Philadelphia, one in which violence, while not always a part of daily life. Many of the grandmothers shared firsthand knowledge of what led a girl to become pregnant by girls "back then" as something that was not as tightly controlled as it is today.⁶ The social environment had changed in important ways, and the level of violence in their neighborhoods. In the 1950s and even for another decade or two, the neighborhood was a pathway for semiskilled black adults in the industrial sector. While workers' lives were built around their job—working long hours operating on an assembly line, jobs that were physically demanding—when all was said and done, they were able to support their families. Most workers had access to the school system of the day, which could be accessed with a decent education. The idea of a middle class was believed to be both attainable and possible, by example, gave their children the same as possible through hard work. More opportunities emerged out of factory culture and the idea that could be leaned on in hard times. In the 1950s and 1960s, the abundance of jobs that paid well and provided a safe and stable community. Indeed,

about 35% of the nonagricultural workforce in the 1940s and 1950s. These relatively high-paying jobs provided income but were a source of respect and status for the family. While no doubt the effects of economic change and family to family, employment in manufacturing created a common set of identifications, values, and shared experiences among neighbors to generally “communicate” and share.

Philadelphia’s troubles as a city began in the mid-20th century, what would later be known as American deindustrialization. A scale shift from an industrial economy to a service economy (McKee, 2004). The city witnessed the loss of its manufacturing jobs over the course of the 20th century (1991). Essentially, automated and computerized production on the assembly line and severely diminished the need for workers. As in many other American cities, rather than the loss of jobs in the manufacturing sector, the loss of jobs in the manufacturing sector after company closed up shop and left behind a ghost town in a less-populated suburb with a few remaining buildings but at other times disappearing altogether. In Philadelphia, what this amounted to in Philadelphia was the loss of working-class families, in particular the loss of many a parent of the female youths who were growing up with both of their parents being laid off from their jobs. Many grew out of the hard times that ensued and found a familiarity with a grandparent falling in line with the increased violence on the heels of a loss of family. The times followed by more hard times. The loss of family or of painful memories.

To truly understand the scope and impact of the deindustrialization Philadelphia was subject to, Philadelphia’s economic decline should be considered in the context of its working-class history and distribution. It would be fair to say that Philadelphia operated on a grander scale than most cities given its prime geography (on the eastern seaboard) and the advantages of its natural endowment, including its location, and the diversity of its manufacturing base. Philadelphia’s manufacturing base was one of the largest in the country and not large manufacturing plants. Philadelphia was the largest producer of textiles in the country.

ork population was unionized in the high-paying jobs not only provided for the breadwinner and his or her respect differ from person to person in general provided social status and values, and commitments that allowed "e" and understand one another.

egan in the mid 1950s as a result of can "deindustrialization"—the large-ny to a service and information econ-ssed the loss of more than 250,000 ource of three decades (Adams et al., mputerized processes came to replace ished the role of piece-workers, too. ther than being a temporary setback, ng sector was permanent; company eft town, sometimes to reopen their h a fraction of its original workforce gether. As in other large urban cen- adelphia was the wholesale disloca- articular, its minority communities. s that I followed could recall one or om their jobs and the difficulties that ed. Most accounts included firsthand g into a downward spiral, bouts of layoff, or just a sense of general hard There was no shortage of such stories

l degree of urban collapse that Phila- narrative of deindustrialization must orld-class reputation for manufactur- r to say that manufacturing in Phila- than in most other industrial cities, st coast close to New York City), the t, its enormous industrial infrastruc- cturing base. Historically, the core of was built around small-scale indus- lants—for example, while it was the ountry, most of Philadelphia's textile

products were produced in small shops. As it produced, Philadelphia was commended as the “Workshop of America,” referring to the English name of a suburb in Northwest Philadelphia, “the workshop of the world” in the early 1820s. This applied to mills and factories in connection with the construction of dams on the Schuylkill River.

At the same time, Philadelphia was a major center during both World Wars I and II, Philadelphia's largest related industry. The Philadelphia Naval Shipyard employed 100,000 people and figured in the construction of many ships and others at its heyday. After World War II, the shipyard finally dropped to around 12,000. By the 1980s, the shipyard was contracted out to private companies. In 1995, the shipyard (Wikipedia, “Philadelphia Naval Shipyard”) was reactivated as a U.S. naval facility, the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, with only 7,000 people, almost six times the number of family members who were laid off from the shipyard of jobs.

The drying up of “good” jobs in an area led to the drying out of Philadelphia's local economy. As a result, whole neighborhoods gradually degenerated into urban blight. Every time a company closed, the local economy in that neighborhood was strained just a little more. The cumulative weight of these closings and the rapid pace at which they accompanied them, the city entered a period of economic collapse. Barricaded storefronts were a common sight on any block where there used to be manufacturing jobs that disappeared. As a result, and money was in short supply, many businesses could no longer generate enough profits to stay open. Residents experienced a severe reduction in the number of shops, nearly 40 years after the onset and intensification of the recession, on any given block in Melrose. In fact, there were more shops closed than open. On one block, for example, down almost every day, there was a total of 10 abandoned stores, which, on the other hand, there was a bodega. The bodega clearly offered a service that some not. The boarded-up storefronts were a common sight.

ops.⁷ Given the variety of goods that are commonly referred to as “the Manchester town of the same name. Manayunk, was first bequeathed the label “work- town” because of the waterpower it supplied in conjunction with its proximity to canals and

Philadelphia is home to large-scale industry. During World War II, Philadelphia was a major center of war production. The Philadelphia Naval Shipyard alone employed 40,000 workers in the production of 53 ships and the repair of 574 ships. By the end of World War I, however, the workforce gradually declined. In the 1960s, the building of new ships shifted to other locations (rather than being built on site at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard”). When it was officially closed in 1996, the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard employed fewer workers than during the war. A much larger area was affected by such a severe cutback

in the area around Philadelphia cut the heart of the city. Largely abandoned by business, the area degenerated into zones of severe urban blight. Closed its doors, the surrounding factory buildings fell a little bit further. Under the cumulative effect of a rapidly changing social environment that led to a downward spiral of social and economic decline, storefronts covered with graffiti were a common sight. Retail shops once stood. It was not just the factories that closed. As household incomes decreased, many long-standing local merchants closed their doors to keep their doors open. Residents experienced a loss of local services. Even today, the immediate impact of deindustrialization is still felt. In Park or Lee, it is not unusual to see a closed storefront on the street in Melrose Park that I walked past. A take-out restaurant connected to five other buildings on the other side, were abutted by a thriving neighborhood offering a range of services, some legal and some illegal, in between the take-out restau-

rant and the bodega included an ATM, a check-cashing place, each of which were still open. The remaining two storefronts were empty. Earlier tenants could not be deciphered; the only sign were graffiti and rust.

Philadelphia's aging industrial stock, some 200 years, was a glaring sign of the city's decline. Unoccupied and left virtually unsecured, the buildings were commonly scavenged for scrap metal that could be sold. Broken windows, exposed pipes, and patches of crumbling asphalt outside were too common sight. A reflection of the city's decline, the old factories were abandoned or were used as drug dens. For example, a factory located in the industry-heavy Kensington neighborhood closed its doors in the 1980s. When the factory closed, many people (Bleyer, 2000). Once abandoned, the factory became a place where less people, some of whom reported that they had fallen on hard times after losing their jobs. The factory was run by the Industrial Union, which ran what they dubbed the "Industrial Union" in the stricken neighborhood to educate people about their rights. Bleyer notes that for years, passers-by could see the factory. Schmidt's factory to dry, especially in the winter. Many of the people who appear in this book remembered the factory as a place where drugs were sold. They recalled how police would raid the factory one night when exchanges got especially bad. Bleyer notes that, to, gunshots were not an uncommon sight. Bleyer had no difficulty recalling the kind of "shootings" that took place "down" on Second and Girard, either in the factory or in the neighborhood. Bleyer knew individuals who had either been involved in the factory site. The factory was eventually razed, and the site was replaced by a number of the decaying structures that were left behind in parts of the Philadelphia landscape. In the past few days, though, similar to a number of other parts of the city, of redevelopment have appeared in parts of the city.

The decline and decay of Philadelphia is a clear sign of the city's deepening troubles. In the most troubled neighborhoods, almost every block was c

orney's office, a "99 cents" store, and
had very likely known better times.
in such disarray that the identity of
ered. Left in place of the establish-
ck, which had served it well for nearly
city's infrastructure breaking down.
cured, abandoned factory buildings
p metal and any other material that
posed foundations, and streets with
e the factories were reportedly an all
the social turmoil that engulfed the
re frequently inhabited by indigents
mple, the Schmidt's Brewing Factory
Kensington area of Philadelphia shut its
y closed, 1,400 people lost their jobs
e factory became a refuge for home-
dly had worked at the company and
obs. The Kensington Welfare Rights
a "reality tour" through the poverty-
people about the "other" Philadelphia,
d see laundry hanging inside the old
n the mornings. Several of the girls
ed the old factory on Second Street
re people went to both do and buy
ld frequent the building several times
y rowdy. According to many I talked
n occurrence. Parents I spoke with
of trouble and mayhem that "went
. Nearly one-half of them personally
ught or sold drugs at the old factory
, to the relief of many, as were a large
at had become a familiar site across
Many such lots remain vacant to this
other areas throughout the city, signs
ockets of Lee.

Philadelphia row houses was also a glaring
. In Philadelphia's hardest hit neigh-
dotted with rubble-filled lots where

houses once stood; it took a surprising amount of time for thriving neighborhoods to take on a new life. The deterioration of housing stock in Philadelphia communities was, at least in part, a function of the loss of many properties. When a row house is abandoned, the basement often becomes filled with a large amount of debris. The walls of the basement are not designed to hold up, and tend to bulge out, and eventually they collapse. This is a house (Ask MetaFilter, 1999–2008).

Walking through the streets of Merioneth, it is common to see two or three houses in a row, with only one house standing alone that is still occupied. It is uncommon to see two-family houses, and even more uncommon to see other occupied. According to Tamika, a woman I know well and who appears frequently in the film, attached to hers is a place where “crack was cold.” In the warmer weather, the crackles spill onto the sidewalk in front of her house. She has called to the police by her mother previously, but the results to speak of. Recent estimates from the city of Philadelphia at 40,000 vacant lots throughout the city at 2008. In the neighborhoods, the number of houses in disrepair is high. In Merioneth and Melrose Park, the numbers are high. In Merioneth they were five years ago.

With manufacturing companies shutting down or closing their doors altogether, the middle-class and working-class residents who had flocked to the suburbs in large numbers in the 1950s and 1960s, the drugs and crime that came with the suburbs became a primary destination for whites, the suburbs became a black families who had benefited economically from the paid a livable wage. As a trickle of low-income families introduced to suburban neighborhoods, they were able to relocate. Although the accommodations in the better-off neighborhoods were far more comfortable than their more well-off counterparts, residents were forced to flee the central areas of urban

ngly short amount of time for once-bombed-out look. The massive deterioration of Philadelphia's economically battered condition of the contiguous construction of collapses or is demolished, its base-ge amount of dirt and debris. As the ned to bear this kind of weight, they y bring down the walls of an adjacent

elrose Park and Lee, it wasn't uncommon state of total or partial collapse and had managed to survive. Nor was it s with one floor boarded up and the a, one of the adolescent girls I got to y in this book, the boarded-up house ack-heads got high when the weather he business of the house would also door. According to Tamika, frequent oduced no meaningful or permanent place the number of houses boarded 0,000 and the estimated number of 5,000. Although in some neighbor-repair dramatically decreased, in Lee not significantly different from what

significantly scaling back operations e ability of many working-class fami-gal economy simply collapsed. Mid-s who were able to leave Philadelphia nbers, with the hope of outrunning w widespread unemployment.⁸ Once a suburbs became an answer for many onomically from years of work that ow-income and welfare housing was oods, some poorer blacks were also mmodations open to them in these ore limited than the ones in reach of idents of this poorer sector still man- n blight.

Generally speaking, the families economically vulnerable ones and wage the heightened economic and working-class communities came up as the service jobs that did not offer the opportunity (see W. Wilson, 1987). The working-class families below the poverty line experienced disorganization; as noted earlier, factoring in the decline of living but was also an important factor in the loss of community and social identity. The story that followed unfolded across many towns and cities through the 1980s as markets began to fill in the vacuum with the failure to address this economic trend. In the wake of an outbreak of an illness, the national attention turned the problem to the cities themselves. Rather than strengthen the infrastructures of such communities, they turned into drug enforcement on both the federal and state levels, the failure of government to come to the aid of the neighborhood led into decline as malign neglect, the result of impersonal market forces that were not understood in their characterization, economic instability, and the loss of working-class neighborhoods where the national attention had put down roots and lived. The national attention that confronted these neighborhoods slowly erode the vitality of local communities, and, in time, the neighborhood's vitality was lost.

The term "underclass" was coined in the 1980s and entered the popular vernacular to describe a group of the poor that was ascribed with a sense of moral depravity. Rather than unpack the social conditions which seemed to make certain residents of poverty—those with a significant difficulty in the ability to compete effectively in a free market economy—structural forces that were inherent to the situation, an easy explanation for the existence of the underclass presumed defects in mentality or behavior. The social conditions that were made to justify taking harsh measures to maintain order and security and in the name of civil

that stayed behind were the more
ere therefore even less able to man-
social pressures that Philadelphia's
nder. The "good" jobs that the facto-
ntly and were replaced over time by
portunity for class mobility (on this
reduction in income plunged many
erty line and caused extensive family
tory work not only made for a good
rce in the construction of individual
lowed was one heard again and again
hroughout the United States. Illegal drug
here legal markets once were. Rather
as it would inflation or a wide-scale
government basically relegated the
rather than investing in new ways to
ch neighborhoods, monies were put
ederal and local levels. Some framed
o the aid of neighborhoods that spi-
while others framed it as the action
ere wrongly left unfettered. In either
ty effectively destabilized the work-
majority of Philadelphia's black popu-
d for decades.⁹ The social problems
ds were allowed to compound and
mmunity institutions and businesses
l social safety net.

d in the late 1970s by commentators
in the late 1980s to identify a sub-
d a collective image of danger and
king the complex levels of causation,
ents incapable of escaping the cycle
character failing that left them unable
ket—the term served to obscure the
o creating such a cycle and provided
of social problems.¹⁰ In this way, the
behavior associated with the individ-
sh measures to ensure public order
life. Doing so resulted in the largest

expansion of the prison system and both juveniles and adults in the history of individual poverty was not viewed as structural forces that concentrated poverty, criminal activity, juvenile delinquency, and homicide were all acts of individual behavior in response to a crumbling infrastructure. The focus shifted attention away from the need to establish a new system and conceiving of intervention as a collective one. In chapter 6, I talk about the impact of public schools, poor job prospects for graduates, rehabilitation of youths who enter of the criminal justice system, health care, and the general undermining of the system applies to the girls in this study.

It is within this sociohistorical understanding of poverty, and demographics have come to define the poorest sector of African American communities. Violence in the community must be understood in the context of the city. In the 1990s, Philadelphia ranked second among the nation's largest cities in the number of homicides in the 2000s—between 1980 and 2000, it lost 100,000 jobs, according to the Census Bureau, 2000; see also Downs, 1999). As jobs continued to migrate outward, wages stagnated, and employed within the city limits. The result was that only 56% of adults in Philadelphia owned a home in 2000, which made Philadelphia's home ownership rate the lowest among the nation's 100 largest cities. Home ownership, and educational attainment, declined significantly since the 1990s, and the middle class. Until the past few years, Philadelphia has done little if anything positive to

The Problem of Youth Violence

Over the course of three decades, violence against the body increased dramatically against the backdrop of the changes described above. As business opportunities, circumstances, opportunities to find work dried up, and drug markets made their

the highest rates of incarceration of any city in the nation. Stated another way, violence was often treated as an outgrowth of structural inequality in certain neighborhoods. While poverty, drug abuse, alcoholism, and suicide were also inextricably linked to violence, they were also inextricably linked to the focus on individual criminality drew attention to establish policies aimed at treating the problem, not on an individual level but on a community level. More specifically about the quality of life for youths, the lack of targeted rehabilitation in the criminal justice system, inadequate attention to the quality of city life and family life as it

impacted the understanding of how geography, poverty, and crime went together since the mid 1980s for the most part. It is clear that an understanding of youth violence must be contextualized. Among the nation's largest cities, Philadelphia had the second highest population decline in the 1990s, losing almost 10% of its population (U.S. Census Bureau, 1997). According to the 2000 Census, Philadelphia had the lowest rate of employment with only 30% of the region's workers employed. The 2000 Census furthermore reported that Philadelphia had the highest rate of unemployment the fourth highest among the largest cities. Household income, rates of poverty, and rates of unemployment also were reported to have declined in Philadelphia. The 2000 Census, as had the size of the mid-1990s, Philadelphia's statistical report card on crime and violence should hold onto.

Violence Facing the City

Over the past few years, the incidence of youth violence has increased. The backdrop of the economic and social challenges facing the city, with jobs closed or left the city for better opportunities elsewhere and legal employment severely diminished, has pushed many young people into struggling neighborhoods.

It is not surprising that, in response to deindustrialization, the increase of gang activity generated during this period (Hagedorn 1999). As the money to be made, gangs emerged in inner-city neighborhoods. Signs of gang life became a common sight in inner-city neighborhoods, with drug selling particularly associated with drug selling became a major activity in the city. Indeed, the media dubbed Philadelphia the "gang capital" of the nation in the 1970s because of the prevalence of youth gang violence—on average, during the 1970s, youth gang violence claimed 42 lives annually. Membership, almost always divided along racial lines, in the city—the Crips and the Black P. O. S.—black, were the best-organized and most violent. Street fights, which in the past would have been settled far more likely to be settled with gunfire, became widespread and an insidious force for

The greater availability of weapons and the increase in lethality drove the city's homicide rate to a level of insecurity of neighborhood residents. Juvenile violence rose sharply in the 1980s, much of it due to the appearance of crack cocaine. The resulting fear and dismay among the public about the city's and more gratuitous resort to violence became a unique feature for a large American city at the time. Philadelphia here as it set the stage for the future of urban violence that Philadelphia would be a model for. Violence also must be understood in the context of what arose.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Philadelphia was considered a significant area of research on gang activity (and Hagedorn, 1999). The small body of research suggests that the involvement of females in gangs was negligible. Female participation in gangs was often in a supportive capacity: as lookout, warehouse keeper, or in his study of black female gangs in Philadelphia. K. Brown (1977) found that there were few female gang members completely independent of a boys' gang. One female gang, called the "Holly-Ho's," was said to

to the economic changes related to gang membership and activity proliferation (1988; OJJDP, 2001). Indeed, seeing them and vied for control of the streets. commonplace in traditional working-class neighborhoods pursued in plain sight. The dangers were a self-evident fact of communal life in Philadelphia the “youth gang capital” because of the high death toll associated with them during the late 1970s and early 1980s, with 1,000 deaths in Philadelphia annually. Gang membership across racial lines, also increased racial tensions. Bloods, which were predominantly African American, were the deadliest gangs in the city. Gang members, often settled with a switchblade, were involved in numerous deaths. Gang culture was perceived to be a major concern for parents to reckon with.

Moreover, and, moreover, ones of greater concern, they rate up and exacerbated the increase in juvenile violent crime rates began to rise, drug-related and associated with the result was the creation of widespread fear about youth and their seemingly more violent nature. Again, though the story was not told at the time, it is important to recount the scope, prevalence, and incidence of the violence they faced with. Efforts to control that violence require the historical context from which it

emerged, female gang involvement was not well documented (Campbell, 1993; Chesney-Lind, 1993). A review of literature available for that period indicates that female youths in Philadelphia gang life, where it existed, was essentially of limited involvement, as weapons carrier, or girlfriend. Indeed, in Philadelphia during the 1970s, W. Philadelphia was only one all-girl's gang that was active and was engaged in violence. The gang was said to embrace all levels of violence,

including murder. The group was drawing the faces of their female victims unlike girls in Philadelphia who engaged in

Yet, while females in Philadelphia's involvement in the late 1970s and early 1980s period clearly suggest that female youths in Philadelphia's criminal justice system in far greater danger a decade from this time, the growth in crime rates for male juveniles with respect to violent Crime Index and many non-industrial areas is surprising, as female youths were exposed to the same trends associated with deindustrialization. It is noteworthy that in 1980, the violent crime rate was 8.4 times greater than the arrest rate for females; by 1998, it was only 4.5 times greater. In addition to the risk factors that they face, the violent crime rate was far higher for black female juveniles than for white juveniles. In 1980, the arrest rate for black juveniles was 6.6 times that of white juveniles; in 1981, the ratio was 6.6 (Criminology, 1981).

Similar to other large metropolitan areas, Philadelphia experienced a spike in youth crime at the time, Philadelphia's criminal justice system is more accountable for their actions than in the past, including "mandatory minimums" and sentencing juveniles in adult courts. Whereas in the past, especially if they were white, juveniles received "chauvinistic" leniency of the court system, this was not the case in the 1980s. While observers may blame the influx of so many more girls into Philadelphia's youth justice system, the system was not equipped to handle the influx. Treatment programs or rehabilitative services were not available in the criminal justice system. Funding for programs addressing the unique issues of female youth offenders was minimal.

Youth violence arrest rates continued to rise throughout the 1980s until they peaked in the late 1980s. The implementation of "zero-tolerance" policies was not responsible for the fall. Indeed, with the passage of the 1980s Crime Act in Philadelphia, the case of any 15- to 17-year-old juvenile charged with a violent crime with what was deemed to be a

described as taking pleasure in scar- and deriving sport from fighting, not in violence today.

Philadelphia did not exhibit high rates of gang violence in the early 1980s, arrest records for the years 1980-1989 for the youths began to appear in Philadelphia in greater numbers. Indeed, for nearly a decade, arrest rates for female juveniles outstripped most indices that make up the Violent Crime Index crimes. This is not altogether surprising, given that Philadelphia was exposed to the same economic and social conditions and socialization that affected male youths.¹¹ It is worth noting that the crime arrest rate for male juveniles was 1.5 times the rate for female juveniles; however, for black youths. Not surprising, given the multiple factors, the crime arrest rate for female youths of color was 6.1 times the rate for white female youths (OJJDP, 2002).

Philadelphia was an urban area experiencing a significant increase in crime. Philadelphia moved to hold juveniles accountable through harsher penal consequences and, in the most serious cases, by trying them in adult court. For girls, warnings might have been issued for first-time offenders, the historical leniency seemed to all but disappear for girls. There was disagreement on what was causing the problem, but there was consensus that the system, like others around the country, was flawed. There were few gender-specific treatments in either the youth or adult criminal justice systems and services that addressed the needs of girls was all but absent at the time.¹²

Violence continued to rise in Philadelphia through the 1990s, although the application of the law seemed to have peaked even after the rates began to decline. The 1996 Juvenile Justice Act in Philadelphia required that a minor accused of committing a "deadly" weapon was automatically

transferred to a special unit for juvenile targeted offenses—rape, aggravated manslaughter, or conspiracy to commit felonies if they are committed by juveniles. Youth offenders who were transferred to the adult unit were eventually returned to the juvenile unit. This unit were at a minimum fed through a statute, in combination with judges and prosecutors, played a significant role in the criminalization of female violent youths in the courts.” This said, it is important to note that the current judgment since the 1990s is utterly unambiguous among Philadelphia judges and prosecutors regarding the criminalization of female youths that I spoke with argued:

It was better when all youths and juveniles were in the juvenile courts. That way, the burden was placed on the juvenile system, not a youth’s case to the adult system, and the distinction matters on a number of levels. It sends the message it sends to society about

Another family court judge I spoke with said, “Legislation gets made based on yesterday’s news.”

The high-profile case of Miriam White, a young African American girl from South Philadelphia, charged as an adult in the Commonwealth Court in 1999, that had important ramifications for the criminalization of female youths. White, a young African American girl from South Philadelphia, was charged as an adult in the Commonwealth Court in 1999, while the woman stood accused of the death of a white girl. The case was particularly shocking and heinous because White was a complete stranger to the girl and the victim was white. White allegedly took a knife from her relative and, without a word, went up to the girl’s room and killed her. The case was further politically sensitive because the victim was white. The fact that a young African American girl committed a violent and even gratuitous act against a white girl posed the vulnerable image of female youths as a violent perpetrator, creating unsettling moral confusion in Philadelphia pre-dated it, the

eniles in the adult court system; the assault, robbery, vehicular robbery, commit any of these crimes—are considered an adult. While most cases directed turned back to juvenile court, youths special administrative process. The already meting out harsher penalties role in changing the construction system from delinquents to “offend- that while the trend toward harsher unmistakable, there clearly has been judges sitting in juvenile and direct-file of youths. As one family court judge

automatically were sent to juvenile placed on the court to justify sending not the other way around. The dis- vels, the greatest of which concerns ut how we think about children.

ke with put it even more succinctly: erday’s headlines.”

a White, the youngest person ever onwealth of Pennsylvania, was one girls. White, an 11-year-old African ia, stabbed a middle-aged woman to d on her front porch. The crime was ecause the victim, Rosemary Knight, nd minding her business at the time. er kitchen after an argument with a p to the woman and stabbed her. The e because the perpetrator was black that White was female created even sed conventional expectations about uitous crime—in short, it superim- e as victim on that of female as perpe- plexity. While the direct-file legisla- White case sparked intense pressure

for more severe punishment of female in the city. It served as a reminder did not take a firm precautionary stance essentially became something of a tool sentencing, with respect to female justice became a symbol of a too-lenient justice concerned.¹³ While White's crime came sentencing laws and practices for juveniles and for girls, her crime, with all minority female face on violent crime.

Although the 1990s saw a significant metropolitan areas, the number of youth were involved remained relative sense in the overall context of violent Philadelphia peaked in 1990 at 525 and throughout the decade (Wikipedia, 'rate fell to a low of 288, but then in 2006 Hefler, 2006). It is noteworthy that, cities in the United States, Philadelphia 28 per 100,000 people (*Chris V's Va* dence of homicides by females was not spiking, females were increasingly in aggravated and simple assault.

The Neighborhoods of

The Melrose Park and Lee neighborhoods of the city, with the downtown area neighborhoods historically have strong work what is known as West Philadelphia known as North Philadelphia—and drug use, and crime. In both neighborhoods live under the poverty line (U.S. Census values in these two locales rival each

Older longtime residents who have typically characterize their neighborhoods was and tell similar stories that depict their neighborhoods fondly as won

le youths accused of a violent crime of what could happen if lawmakers and against violent youth behavior. It touchstone for proponents of harsher juveniles. In the eyes of many, White juvenile system where girls were con- after the trend toward stricter sen- les was well under way, both in gen- l its attending publicity, put a young e in the city.

nt decline in youth violence in major person-on-person crimes in which vely high in Philadelphia. This made t crime in the city. The murder rate in d then averaged at around 400 a year (“Philadelphia”). By 2002, the murder 006 surged again to 406 (Bewley and in 2006, of the ten most populous hia had the highest homicide rate, at *riety Blog*, 2007). Although the inci- ot a factor in the city’s homicide rate volved in less-violent crimes such as

Melrose Park and Lee

orhoods are located on opposite ends lying between them. Both neighbor- ing-class identities—the first within ia,¹⁴ and the second within what is have severe problems with poverty, orhoods, nearly 50% of the families (sus Bureau, 2000). Indeed, property other for being the lowest in the city. e remained in Melrose Park and Lee hood as being a shell of what it once pict better days. Many remembered derful places to raise children “back

in the day.” Perhaps what distinguishes other most clearly now is their racial composition: 96% black, whereas Lee is mostly white. Among the major ethnic groups the neighborhood is 20% black (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Of the two neighborhoods, Melrose Park looks about it and a more consistent “Good” and “bad” blocks, identified by the presence of abandoned houses, virtually crumbling buildings, leaving few if any residential pockets of urban blight. On Melrose Park’s main street, a third of the stores are boarded up, and many are open at irregular hours—indeed, one has to take a bus or by car to find a large supermarket. Within the community, McDonald’s and Dunkin’ Donuts are the only well-known businesses. Many of the girls that I got to know went there several times a week and celebrated special occasions. Indeed, nearly every one of the girls had eaten at tents of the different “Happy Meals” at McDonald’s.

One of the things that stands out in the neighborhood is the violence is the opportunities its streets provide: ducking into the corner of a vacant lot to smoke a marijuana joint rolled in an emptied container, or using a partially abandoned house to park a car in a state of public spaces in the neighborhood. The presence of drugs and illicit activities. While the police are known in the area, that presence is minimal. The police typically respond if a disturbance is reported in patrol cars with an eye out for trouble. The police, with neighborhood residents otherwise, are the only consistent presence they provide. A community initiative: for example, a neighborhood watch program on street corners from drug dealers or gang members. Consider it could easily look like the police are not in the community, most people living in the neighborhood are not otherwise and experience racial violence.

Within the immediately adjacent neighborhood, during my time, in line with the description

...es Melrose Park and Lee from each
al makeup. Melrose Park is approxi-
re racially diversified: the breakdown
ere is 66% Hispanic, 33% white, and
b).

...ose Park has a more “bombed-out”
...ently lower socioeconomic profile.
... among other things, by the number
...cross each other in Melrose Park,
...s wholly free of the telltale signs of
...in commercial corridor, nearly one-
...nd many that are in operation keep
...travel outside the neighborhood by
...market, movie theatre, or shopping
...nald’s, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and
...nown franchise chains to be found.
...frequented McDonald’s four or five
...occasions with their families there.
...that I closely followed had the con-
...committed to memory.

...about Melrose Park with respect to
...ets provide for making oneself invis-
...cant lot to smoke a “blunt” (a thick
...cigar casing) or sitting on the stoop
...ass around a bottle—the dilapidated
...hood make for easy experimentation
...le police readily make their presence
...largely associated with surveillance.
...urbance is called in or drive around
...trouble, but they make little contact
...rise. Despite rhetoric to the contrary,
...rovide comes in the framework of an
...od-wide effort to “take back” certain
...ang members. Thus, while to an out-
...lice have established a “place” in the
...ne neighborhood perceive the situa-
...tensions as running high.

...blocks from where I spent most of
...n noted above, there were few stores

in which to leisurely sit down for a meal. A regular meeting place in the neighborhood was a store that was open until 4 am every day. Of all types, it sold “loose” cigarettes and the necessary accoutrements for hanging out. A convenience store of sorts, especially since other stores were closed. It quite purposefully had a bench (more precisely a counter) while they waited for their order. It was a crossroad of sorts to meet up with people, servers behind the counter with just a few items of food to be exchanged. Thus, in Melrose Park, inside their homes—many of which were cluttered with belongings, and not set up for entertainment. This, without a doubt, had enormous implications. It only meant that a large part of a generation grew up on hood streets without the benefit of structured programs for teens, known to be an environment of delinquency and crime, while being in the city were unfortunately in extremely short supply.

The idea that violence or crime can be a part of the running of many institutions in the city is a vice windows, like the one in the City Center, from retailers, not only in late-night establishments that do their business during the day, but are also a common sight in check-out windows and porches on a large proportion of buildings that stand in significant disrepair. This is often involved in activities that would increase the risk of violence, like being in a gang or selling drugs. It is part of the community ethos, and many of these things have become part of the routines of daily life.

Despite all this, it would be simplistic to characterize the city by an atmosphere of pervasive trouble from a situation that is about to change, feeling or acting overtly scared. Nevertheless, it maintains a certain sense of vigilance to the city. Always being on your guard in Melrose Park is a fact of life, but it is not necessarily interfering

neal or a soft drink. The most popular food for youths was a Chinese take-out every night. In addition to selling food items, rolling paper, condoms, and other things went out. The establishment acted as a hangout in the evenings after most other places did not lend itself to socializing, (e.g., a ledge) that people would sit on anything, it became a spontaneous meeting place for people. Bulletproof glass protected the entrance through a thin slot opening for money and goods. In Melrose Park, socializing for youths, if not done in bars, were run-down, overcrowded with entertainment—was done on the streets. The socializing had ramifications for fighting, as it commonly occurred. Youth socializing was done on neighborhood streets without any adult supervision. After-school socializing was an important tool for reducing juvenile delinquency. It was in high demand in Melrose Park, and it was readily available.

Violence can occur at any moment is embedded in the culture of Melrose Park, too. Bullet-proof services are available at Chinese take-out, separate consumers are served at various venues but also in a range of establishments. Security is maintained during the day. Armed security guards patrol the streets. Washing places. Bars or gates enclose courtyards. A portion of private homes, even ones with fences, thus, even for someone not directly involved, increase the risk of being exposed to violence. The presence of drugs, violence is an unmistakable feature of the neighborhood. Managing its presence is incorporated into the daily life.

It is characteristic to say that Melrose Park is characterized by a pervasive threat. Unless a girl is expecting violence to occur, she does not walk around Melrose Park. Nonetheless, a girl in Melrose Park maintains a constant awareness of the possibility of something happening. In Melrose Park is considered to be normal. The presence of youths enjoying the moment

when they socialize on the street. In this context, *hyper-vigilance* has a different meaning in Melrose Park. The American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, which defines it as a state of constant attention bordering on if not equaling panic, suggests that vigilance means being "ready," but not in a state of panic or emergency. It means being alert, maintaining a reliable compass. In essence, it is a state of readiness.

Even given the range of serious problems in the neighborhood, many of the African American families in Melrose Park had long and deep ties to the area. For example, the parents of the girls I followed were often in the neighborhood in many cases, so had one or both parents born in the neighborhood, although the majority of the Melrose Park families had incomes below the poverty level. Many of the homes or, if they did not, had residents who had lived in the neighborhood. It would be fair to say that, in spite of the economic poverty that marked the streets of Melrose Park, there is a well-defined, and engaging sense of place and community, with its own vitality and viability. Well-attended block parties are held during the summer and fall months. The air is often filled with music often in the air. These events suggest a sense of community, gated doorways and attitude of "mine" that often characterize the neighborhood, as well.

The neighborhood of Lee, with its high unemployment rates, weaves a tale of more contrasts than Melrose Park. Lee is far harder on the eyes. Lee was a predominantly white working-class neighborhood whose residential sections built up around the street into the area. In the 1950s, Lee experienced the same major cities did, along with the government's assistance. It accompanied it—perhaps even worse. General de Soto stayed behind, as large numbers of poor white residents moved into the area. The neighborhood eventually became redrawn along racial lines, with white, black, and Hispanic enclaves, which is a common pattern in many cities.

Unlike Melrose Park, within Lee, there are many homes without seeing dilapidated or abandoned. The streets are lined with neat front yards are not an uncommon sight.

deed, vigilance, even hypervigilance, in Melrose Park than the one laid out in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, suggestive of an unnecessary level of paranoia. In Melrose Park, hypervigilance is not living all the time as if you are in a war zone, keeping one's wits about oneself and one's presence, it means "observing."

problems that beset their neighbor-
hood families who I got to know in Mel-
rose Park the community. As noted, for exam-
ple, I often grew up in the neighborhood;
I was the daughter of a girl's grandparents. Moreover,
the Melrose Park girls I followed lived in families
where, many of these families owned their
homes and lived in them for several generations.
In addition to and alongside the signs of intense
poverty in Melrose Park, there is also a coherent,
close-knit neighborhood and community that speaks of its
history. Block parties are a common sight
in the neighborhood. The smell of barbeque on Sunday is
a sign of that connection exists alongside the
signs of "running one's own business" that charac-

terizes the neighborhood's high poverty and unemployment
rates. More racially and culturally diverse
neighborhoods to generalize about. Historically, Lee
Park was a middle-class and middle-class neighborhood
that drew in large companies as they moved
out of the city. It experienced the "white flight" that most
cities have experienced due to government neglect that typically accom-
panying it. Generally, it was Lee's poorer whites who
moved out and poorer and working-class black and His-
panic families moved in. Over time, the neighborhood essen-
tially became a middle-class neighborhood, with fairly well demarcated white,
black and Hispanic neighborhoods. This is how it currently stands today.

One is able to walk for several blocks
and see well-kept houses. Well-kept row houses
are a common sight, though certainly they

are not the only sight. While in no sense a commercial center, it can boast two large variety of well-stocked stores. More so, although none of them would be considered a short way within Lee, however, or a vacant factory building that now serves as business. Thus, although a neighborhood of deindustrialization, certain sections appear to have escaped the harsher blows of

Whereas most of the African American youth lived in Melrose Park,¹⁵ all of the white youth followed lived in Lee. While I did not spend a lot of time on the streets of Lee as I did in Melrose Park, traveling to and from meeting the girls and observing the feel of the neighborhood. In addition to hanging out in schools located in Lee (even those living outside of Lee) attending

Finally, I spent one or two nights in Melrose Park neighborhood next to Lee doing ride-alongs to observe police and female youths in the neighborhood to observe the tense exchange between the girls and police officers who theoretically enforce the law. Law enforcement in Lee was officially centered, in practice it rarely seemed to be. Ride-alongs also gave me the opportunity to see the hands of girls was perceived, not only by the residents. It was in Lee during these ride-alongs to see large groups of females squaring off in Melrose Park and Lee were by no means the only places in Philadelphia to which my exploration of the neighborhood. Two places were the central base of the

The Girls of Melrose Park

Melrose Park has one of the highest rates of gun violence in the city, as does Lee, which is a hot spot for girls in both these neighborhoods. The girls set for themselves. Homicide rates in

sense does Lee have a thriving community with supermarkets and a relatively wide variety of franchise chains can also be found, considered high end. One need only walk over, to come upon boarded-up houses that now serves as home to a bustling drug market. Lee, at least at first glance, appears to be the economic downturn.

American girls I followed in my study spent anywhere close to the amount of time in Melrose Park, I spent enough time with the girls who lived there to gain a firsthand experience. I spent three to four days a week in the neighborhood where many of the girls I followed lived.

Each week in the North Philadelphia neighborhood I went on ride-alongs in patrol cars in order to interact with the residents. In these ride-alongs, I got to see how the residents of North Philadelphia were there to protect them. While the neighborhood is characterized as being community-oriented, it is not to be approached in this way. These ride-alongs provided me the opportunity to witness how violence in the neighborhood is controlled by the police but by neighborhood residents. The ride-alongs that I frequently got to go on were off with one another. Although Melrose Park and Lee are the only two neighborhoods in Philadelphia where female youth violence took me, these ride-alongs were a great exploration.

Melrose Park and Lee

The highest percentages of female-headed households in Philadelphia, which contributes to the stage being set for violence, are in the neighborhoods to use physical means to stand up for themselves. Each area are among the highest in

the city, and the specter of violence is part of their day life. While many female youths understand the harsh realities of Melrose Park and Lehigh Valley and take precautions to avoid “trouble” should “trouble” come to them. Although there are violent offenses in Melrose Park and Lehigh Valley for females, the gender gap in both the city and the county is most others in Philadelphia.

The 16 girls on whom I focus differ in their neighborhood environment, level of intellectual ability, and involvement with the criminal justice system. A common history is a history of engaging in street fighting (mostly hand-to-hand) in public spaces, though it can include the girls I met who had not had contact with violence. One girl reported having been in physical contact with her mother put it when I asked her to interview a neighborhood who did not fight, “I don’t know where everyone fights.” Most of the girls in the year echoed her view, yet there are differences among these girls with regard to the types of violence in which they engaged (New Directions further in chapter 3).

My interest was to follow female youths and negotiating of “the everyday,” including violence, so I could arrive at an understanding of how they engage in violence. My initial contact with the girls through networking—girls introduced me to other girls in their neighborhood with girls on my own while engaged in the study. Nine of the sixteen girls I ultimately interviewed were Aiesha, Allie, Cassie, Lakeesha, Manuela, and New Directions alternative high schools for youths.¹ (Allie, Aiesha, Cassie, Kia, Lakeesha, and Manuela were removed from a school in their home neighborhoods for behavior problems; some of these girls had been in foster care placement. Before a girl was allowed to attend New Directions was required by the Board of Education. New Directions is an alternative high school for girls with behavior problems serious enough for the

s part and parcel of the flow of every- eventually find a way to escape the Lee, until they do, even those who must be able to protect themselves, ough the rates of male arrest for vio- e are much higher than the rates for se communities is narrower than in

er from each other in terms of home bility, quality of peer relationships, ustice system, yet what they have in some degree of physical violence or d fighting in a neighborhood's pub- e use of weapons). Indeed, even the with the juvenile justice system typi- cal fights over the past year. As one troduce me to girls in her neighbor- w one girl who doesn't fight. At some girls I spoke with over the course of re important distinctions to be made frequency and extent of the physical ess, 2004), something that I explore

youths in the course of their reading cluding the everyday realities of vio- anding of what it meant for a girl to t was primarily the product of social other girls, or I struck up a relation- gaging in participatory observation. v chose to follow closely (Adia, Aie-, Tamika, and Victoria) attended two⁶ Of these, those attending Paulson a, Manuela, and Tamika) had been e district because of serious behavior een earlier remanded to a residential d to return to her local school, she ation to transition through Paulson. a school for youths presenting behav- em to be removed from their local

school, though not serious enough to (Paulson and Victoria). It's important to note that I was charged with and the subsequent discipline of many factors beyond the actual level of violence. Girls in New Directions had a history of more violence than girls at Paulson, although they had been treated with more leniency in some part of their lives. At Paulson and at New Directions living conditions were better. These schools were located in Lee. After school hours, evenings and afternoons each week as a participant-observer and in the area that surrounded the schools. The schools opened their doors to me and made me feel like I was feeling that administrative staff or teachers were trying to disguise day-to-day life in their schools.

As noted, a large part of my time was spent at Melrose Park, where one of the girls from Melrose Park that as a participant-observer I was able to observe female youths "performing" violence without intervention from treatment facility personnel. Over time, in one form or fashion, I got "in" with the girls and socialized with (Candace, Kendra, and others) to get a passport to move with them through the neighborhood. Their travels took them. There is no doubt that I have intimate knowledge of girls' violence and their relationships. Friends essentially taking me under their wing.

As my relationship developed with the girls, I went into their homes getting to know their lives. What would start out in some cases as a simple conversation to a particular girl could easily grow into a more complex one. The communication, particularly with mothers, also gave me insight into the relationship that girls and their mothers had. When a fight went down, I often had a window into the relationship among the fighters, or if not the fighters, the neighborhood they belonged to in the neighborhood. The more I knew about the network, the better I could contextualize the violence. Her, not only in terms of the larger

to land them in placement (Adia, Kia, that the offense a girl was ultimately position of her case was a product of violence of her act—some of the of engaging in more serious violence had not been caught or they were met the system. Though many of the girls lived in other parts of the city, both of s noted above, I spent several morn- participant observer in these schools m. For the most part, these schools e me feel welcome. I was rarely left teachers presented a front that would ols.

was spent on the streets of Melrose Paulson lived (Lakeesha). It was in bserver I relearned what it meant to ging in adolescent banter. Moreover, go about the business of staging and rference from school authorities or e course of several months, in some circle of “associates” that Lakeesha nd Zalika), which gave me a kind of out their neighborhood or wherever way that I could have developed the that I did without Lakeesha and her heir wing.

n Lakeesha and Candace, I spent time families and their families’ friends— s contact with four people most close to well over ten as the girls’ relatives tion this allowed me with adults, par- e a window on the special relation- ve concerning violence. Thus, when orking knowledge of the social rela- at, of the general networks that they he more I knew about a girl’s social alize what meaning fighting had for collective meanings that influenced

her experience of fighting but also in what she brought to it.

Of the remaining three girls who (Samantha and Shayleen) were placed in a facility three hours outside of Philadelphia (one from Lee, one from Melrose Park in South Philadelphia). Each of the girls was charged with aggravated assault. While Taylor was placed for a minimum of 18 months from the facility before 18 months.

I was introduced to Melissa, the oldest of the girls, by an attorney in the District Attorney's office. Girls in Philadelphia who were charged with using a weapon were automatically referred back to family court. Melissa was charged with using a kitchen knife to stab a friend in the chest. Though superficial, Melissa's case was at first referred to family court but was waived back to juvenile court as a result of a bargain that would place her at Camp Hill.

Lastly, I was introduced to Natira, the youngest of the girls, who was charged with hanging out with Allie in her neighborhood. Natira was charged with hanging out with other youths in my study (she, Candice, and I were in a regular community high school).

It is important to note that as a woman, I would never have been possible had I not spent over the course of a year with the young girls. The trust that developed between me and the girls were African American or Hispanic. The trust that developed between me and the girls over the course of many conversations and observations and behavior were being observed was the result of an accumulation of occasions when I was advocating for a girl with a teacher, or a lunch when she was in the middle of a fight, or a ride to her home or to get her hair done.

Trust, however, is not a static phenomenon. I must assume that at least some of the girls who talked to me tended to ex-

terms of the individual meaning that

from I followed closely, three (Melissa, sent to Compton-Taylor, a residential facility in Philadelphia; these girls all came from the same neighborhood, Rose Park, and one from a neighborhood adjacent to Rose Park. The sentence for these girls at Compton-Taylor was 18 months. While all of the girls sent to Compton-Taylor for 18 months, none would be discharged

only girl in my study to be charged as a delinquent. The District File Unit of the public defender's office accused her of violent crimes in which she was eventually passed on to the adult system. I did not know if their case was to be transferred to adult court or if she had stabbed a male acquaintance in the chest. Although the wound was, surprisingly, only a laceration, she was automatically transferred to adult court when she agreed to a plea bargain for 18 months at Compton-Taylor for 18 months.

Lee was a close friend of Allie's, in the course of my research in the neighborhood (Lee). Natira, like several other girls (Natira, Kendra, and Zalika), attended a

white, middle-class woman, this study was not earned some measure of trust through the months I spent time with (most of the girls were Hispanic, as were most of their friends). Myself and the girls I followed did so through phone calls and meetings in which my thoughts were valued as much as theirs were. It was the meetings in which I went the extra mile, being a court reporter or probation officer, taking a girl to court, helping her through a crisis, or helping a girl with a car problem.

phenomenon that can be easily calculated. In the course of the time, what I was told as an objective truth or a fabrication. As a rule, the girls tend to exaggerate their success as fighters and

minimize their sense of vulnerability. Every girl I met would ask me was, “Are you from the university?” At a certain level, I cannot help but thank Candace, and their friends through the question must have arisen for other people. I have to assume that my presence, in fact, was factored into the situations that occurred.

Finally, being able to interact one-on-one as a participant observer made it possible for me to see that existed within their shared social world. This allowed me to see how girls change from day to day and over longer periods of time. I know that a girl felt with regard to confidence in what she told me. Thus, I could attend to her feelings and also see how our relationship functioned. I was able to allow me access to a range of her thoughts and feelings. I can learn much from the collective experiences of girls, and such insights are indispensable, in addition to the psychology of individual girls is also important. When a particular violent incident comes about, it is a matter of individual agency that the decision to take action is based on sociocultural factors and cultural norms. In addition, in concert with these personal factors, the decision to engage in violence acceptable for girls

y. Also, one of the first things nearly
 Are you an undercover cop?" Though
 emed to put the question to rest on
 ink that as I walked with Lakeesha,
 he streets of Melrose Park, the same
 people in the neighborhood. I would
 a ways that I do not even recognize,
 did or did not "go down").

on one with girls in my role as a par-
 r me to gain insight into the variation
 al and cultural settings. Although it
 d their views about different things
 iods of time, again, the level of trust
 ng in me also had to be factored into
 d to the different selves within a girl
 unctoned at different points in time
 hinking. As noted earlier, though we
 consideration of girls as a subgroup,
 individual life circumstances and the
 central to understanding why a par-
 t. It is ultimately at the level of indi-
 ce an action gets made. It is the larger
 orms mentioned above, operating in
 hat lower the bar and make respond-
 in Melrose Park and Lee.

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tionally left blank

Girls' Violence Viewed from

*Why you gonna take me serious
in charge of myself? That I'm not
me until you know that what I*

There ain't nothing more convi

*This girl tried to really mess r
other girls with her. I knew I wa
on the side of her face with th
They thought I was so crazy th
and left me alone.*

Each decision to fight or not to fight has a number of root causes. Some safe or dangerous is the physical environment" in preserving a girl's physical poverty drive the need for an identity question have, or envision, a chance an adult? What is the involvement of of a given girl?

Family history also contributes in fighting.¹ Is the family a stable one? what extent is violence condoned, ev

t Behavior as n the Streets

*...sly if I don't show you that I'm
...o joke. You ain't gonna respect
...say is for real.*

—Samantha, a 14-year-old girl

...ncing than a good punch.

—Lakeesha, a 16-year-old girl

*...me up once. She brought three
...as gonna get it, so I cracked her
...is can that was on the ground.
...they just picked up their friend*

—Victoria, a 15-year-old girl

ght for girls in Melrose Park and Lee
ne of these causes are systemic: How
environment? What is the role of “repu-
l safety? How do the constraints of
ty as “not a punk”? Does the girl in
to move out of this environment as
the criminal justice system in the life

n determining the extent of a girl’s
? How many adults are present? To
en encouraged, by adults in the fam-

ily? Does a girl's mother have a history of fighting? Perhaps even her grandmother? If so, does she continue to fight still?²

A developmental component exists in girls seeking identities as unique persons. Young girls, especially, enjoy the "rush" that accompanies violence and the aura of sport. Often, fighting is independent in a way that they have not experienced before. At a certain point in time, many older girls significantly reduce their fighting because that rush has become stale, and they view themselves differently as a part of mainstream adulthood that does not include fighting.

Finally, individual psychology, the personality of a girl, plays a large role, too. Some girls are victim more than others and need to fight to feel safe. Some are easy-going by nature. These factors influence why some girls engaging in violence in Melrose Park. The process is both complex and dynamic, and it is not the same for every girl.

In considering the myriad factors that influence violence by girls, it is important to begin by understanding the context associated with violence in poor urban environments. For many of males, female youths must daily negotiate violence on the streets (Ness, 2004). As Tamika lays out, fighting has significant value to a girl living in Melrose Park.

If I seem like I'm scared to fight, they'll mess with me all the time. I mean, they'll mess with me 'cause they know I'm gonna try me at some point till she see I'm not go crying to anyone that I be scared. I see girls go complaining when they lose 'cause they can't fight. They should be proud 'cause they better than expecting that someone's gonna mess with them.

One can hear in Tamika's words a sense of the physical and social realities of her neighborhood. Her assessment leads her to conclude that it is better to fight than not to fight.⁴ The excerpt is also a reflection of the fact that she feels under no obligation that she feels under to do so. No matter what, she will fight.

ory of engaging in violence, and per-
es the girl's mother or grandmother
ts, as well.³ As adolescents, girls are
. For example, younger adolescents,
ompanies fighting, giving their vio-
g makes them feel powerful and inde-
experienced before. With the passage
ly limit their violent activity, either
they have become teenage mothers
result, or they look toward a more
include behaving in such a way.
unique character structure and inner
Some girls experience themselves as
o assert their dominance; other girls
tors come together to play a role in
e Park and Lee. Indeed, the conver-
and the elements that obtain are not

that influence the resort to violence
underscoring that, while the risks asso-
enclaves are framed usually in terms
negotiate their safety on the very same
it out, being a good fighter has sig-
ose Park and Lee:

some girl is gonna think she can
, even if I don't seem scared, she's
e knows how I am. She just better
at her the fuck up. I hate it when
ose. They be blaming other people
just learn to fight. That's a lot bet-
gonna fight your battles for you.

a considered weighing of the cultural
od with respect to interpersonal vio-
onclude that it is safer for her to fight
revealing of the psychological pressure
ter how Tamika looks at it ("if I seem

like I'm scared to fight"; "even if I don't want to, she must show her mettle. The excerpt describes girls like herself in Melrose Park and Lee, suggesting she may have, as seeming scared, a reputation. Should a girl who feels scared abandon her reputation, she might be overwhelmed by the violence of her neighborhood (Ness, 2004). To have a reputation be a useful defense in dealing with an aggressor can also bring forth significant negative consequences. Girls in Melrose Park and Lee must maintain a tough exterior to mask fear about their neighborhood as a way of life. In short, the balance between fear and factors associated with the larger fact of being a female in Melrose Park and Lee does not always signal power or engage in physical aggression.

Certainly, many of the fights that girls in Melrose Park and Lee are immediately tied to self-defense. A girl may "call out" a girl on the street, a sister may defend an associate or a younger sibling. Fighting is a force even in the absence of danger in that a reputation for attack as through the process of fighting can serve as a deterrent to others. A reputation for her when conflicts arise or against girls can be a deterrent. Reputations. As Elijah Anderson, especially in relation to boys, behavior that appears to be a reputation in fact be an adaptive strategy in relation to a set of "prescriptions and proscriptions" that are organized around a desperate search for power in relations, especially violence—which is often found in pockets of the city where the rules are often broken" (1999: 9). Anderson's view of violence as a survival mechanism or cultural strategy in relation to social deviance and ethnic marginalization in Melrose Park and Lee, are understood by a wide range of professionals.

Within the inner city, the cultivation of a reputation is one's "capital."⁵ In the absence of power or a system that does one's bidding, a reputation is a measure of control. This is no less true for girls in Melrose Park and Lee.

don't seem scared"), she determines that this also implies that she (and, I suggest, Lee) must suppress any fear of fighting—could lead to even greater difficulties. On the air of boldness that she projects, the real dangers that exist on the streets are denied. This said, while a degree of denial can be useful in the face of an immediate threat, the pretense can have serious consequences if relied on too heavily. The key is to strike a balance between projecting a confidence in their safety and embracing violence as a necessary response. It depends a great deal on the individual circumstances, laid out above. In any case, being tough does not exempt one from the need to respond to aggression.

For girls enter into in Melrose Park and the culture of honor and being provoked—someone making an surprise attack, or a show of aggression. However, as it is with boys, displaying a willingness to use violence is also a way for a girl to deter future aggression. In projecting she builds a reputation. A good reputation against other girls deciding to "try" her. For girls just wanting to build their own reputation. Anderson has described, mostly in relation to an outsider as self-destructive may be a result of adaptation to the "code of the streets"—the unwritten rules, or informal rules, or behavior that governs public social interaction in drug and crime-ridden neighborhoods. The rule of civil law have been severely weakened. The culture of violence in such neighborhoods is that of a survival adaptation, rather than a form of social control—the terms in which youth violence is usually conceived by authorities and a culture of honor. A reputation for being violent is a valuable asset. Powerful connections or access to a legal system. A reputation for handling oneself provides a sense of security for girls. Again, as Anderson has

carefully described (1990, 1999), the reputation and respect in inner cities is a source of agency that many residents experience. Cultural constraints that reduce opportunities to succeed undermine opportunities for development. If violence has a deterrent value, there is a psychological payoff to violence: it serves as a way to be a “somebody” among peers. Feeling like a “somebody” becomes a goal in itself. Whether a youngster becomes a leader or a follower, the network in which violence is a measure of status is a function of a host of complex variables that differ from neighborhood to neighborhood.

Kia, a 15-year-old girl who was sent to a private high school that accepts youths with suspensions for fighting and for making threats, is no stranger to the kinds of situations that lead to violence. Recently, her sister Tanya had been beaten by a boy. She (Tanya) was suspected of flirting with him, and she was already spoken for. Kia has a keen awareness of the kinds of behaviors that Anderson (1999) talks about: the kinds of behaviors that provide security, whether in the home, on the street, and behaving in accordance with the values of the neighborhood. Indeed, most of the girls I came in contact with learn how to turn conflict into a win depending on the specifics of the situation. They see doing so to be a wise way to survive in a neighborhood created by their neighborhood as they grow up. With great passion in her voice, Kia lays out

I don't think I have a problem with fighting. I don't see it that way. I can handle some a little bit. I can tell me what to do, like my boss tell me what I have to do [to keep that job] and I can handle from no punk cause I ain't no punk. I can be. My mom always tell me to be smart and not to fight. But she definitely says she gonna make me look like I can't handle it. You can do. One time a girl beat me and in the fight she gave me her hand to hold and I didn't turn and run when I saw her

overdetermined preoccupation with
as a reaction to the frustration and lack
ence in their everyday lives. The struc-
nities for mobility in inner cities also
ing a positive self-esteem. Beyond its
ical economy behind the practice of
meone,” especially in the eyes of one’s
omes the major goal one may set one’s
omes involved in a non-mainstream
re of cultural capital is indeed related
er from individual to individual.

nt to New Directions (the alternative
lesser problems) after numerous sus-
threats to physically harm other stu-
situations that go down on the street.
beaten up by a group of girls because
with a boy who, according to the girls,
en awareness of the “code-switching”
at is, the move between a repertoire
which are strongly associated with the
th what are considered more middle-
s in Melrose Park and Lee with whom
on and turn off their “street” persona,
uation in which they find themselves.
to handle the dangers and fears gen-
y go about their daily business. With
t her thoughts on the subject:

n fighting, but maybe other people
attitude, I mean someone gonna be
at a job, and all. I’m gonna just do
. But I ain’t gonna take no attitude
k. I’m gonna be ghetto if I have to
mart about when to fight and when
not to walk away from a fight if it
ndle myself. That’s the worst thing
ne up pretty bad, and at the end of
get up ’cause she respected that I
t coming.

It is noteworthy that, although Cassie had several occasions for fighting (eight fights in one year on the same part-time babysitting job for a family about opening up a day care center in the poor area of Center City “where the rich live”), this has resulted in her being sent to an alternative school. Involvement with the juvenile justice system has given Cassie the sense that she would only go so far. She would pull herself back before she got into trouble. She seemed to have a clear enough understanding of that she would jeopardize it if she got into trouble. She had to stand up for herself in her own defense. She did not want to allow the possibility of a fight slipping out of her reach.

While adults in Melrose Park and Center City are indirectly, about the alienation they experience, about how the effect of being collectively disrespected (of respect become exaggerated in the face of the likelihood of confrontation), the girls in Melrose Park mention themselves. Nevertheless, the girls' concern is relevant to them, as well. One can understand the girls' concern in the preoccupation that both Melrose Park and Center City label “punk.” Every girl with whom I spoke in Melrose Park the term “punk” represented the ultimate insult. Being labeled was the equivalent of being labeled a punk.

As a developmental period, adolescence is a time of fostering and claiming a valued sense of self. The girls' sense of being shaped and reshaped as a matter of course. For this reason alone, the label would be a serious matter. At all costs. Situations that show adolescents being disrespected can be preoccupied with being respected and valued. Cassie, a 14-year-old girl with an extensive history of

I hate to be made fun of. Girls be calling me a punk. If you want to respect yourself, you can't let nobody disrespect you. I mean, son would I be if I just let someone disrespect me? In her mouth, she ain't gonna think I'm a punk. I ain't no punk, and now everybody knows that.

Kia was transferred to New Directions (the academic year), she has also held a job for two years and speaks passionately about the neighborhood or even in the streets. "The people live." Although her fighting is at an alternative school, she has never had a suspension from the system. Talking to Kia left me with a sense of awe when it came to fighting and then a sense of relief when someone else got severely injured. Kia has a vision for her future, and she knew she was in trouble with the law. Thus, while in her current circumstances, she also did a good deed by providing a brighter and more secure future to

Lee readily spoke, both directly and indirectly, about the feelings she felt from mainstream America and how these feelings have devalued her community and increased the stigma against her. The schools I followed did not make this connection, and the phenomenon appeared to have been overlooked. Perhaps we see this issue being played out in the lives of male and female youths who have with them a sense of being misunderstood that leads to a violent put-down. Being labeled a punk or a nobody.

Lee's experience is particularly concerned with the issue of self and identity that is constantly being challenged (Erikson, 1950; Blos, 1982). For Lee, it is something to avoid and disavow at all times. For the girls in Melrose Park and Lee to be seen as both commonplace and varied. As Lee's extensive history of fighting puts it:

...doing that to you all the time. So if you can't let it go. What kind of a person are you? You talk shit on me? If I punch a girl and she can be so cute the next time she know that. Not just her. Now

Indeed, offering a cautionary tale sent to New Directions after hitting her, avoiding a fight and the shame she felt.

I once walked away from a fight with her, she was going to give me a good one and I didn't have any backup, if you know what I mean. One day she got me after school. But that was a long time that I was scared to fight her. That was much, much worse to me.

It is important to note that although reputation is in no way limited to its concern in physical aggression to a neighborhood, as I have written about the social and cultural harm that middle-class girls engage in and the physical harm that they exact (Crick, Ostrander, 1999; Jack, 1999; Simmons, 2002; Upton, 2002). Park and Lee, however, “reputation” in a neighborhood tends to be negotiated in terms of physical aggression and other means. Though an act of such an attack against a girl usually involves physical aggression. Needless to say, reputation has its own set of unique set of dynamics.

What form violence eventually takes is shaped by its structuring conditions—the norms of a neighborhood, the drugs that are used, the availability, and the perceptions that are available to the participant. Embedded in these conditions are multiple subtexts about social, political, and cultural ties. The story is mediated through these conditions and circumstances that participants can get conveyed. It would be difficult for a female living in a suburban setting to understand the intersection of violence and drugs and reputation. For example, when Melissa, the 17-year-old who was punched with a knife, talks about that incident, she talks about her own behavior but about the conditions she lives:

e, Adia, a 13-year-old girl who was
her teacher, describes her regret over
lt for having done so:

th a girl because I was scared that
beating. She was bigger than me,
ou know what I mean. So the next
ere was a rumor going 'round for a
t, and people be making fun of me.
e than getting my ass kicked.

ugh an adolescent girl's concern with
aner cities, the manifestation of that
large extent is. Numerous authors
relational expression of aggression
d the significant level of psychologi-
rov, et al., 2004; Crick, Werner, et al.,
nderwood, 2003). Unlike in Melrose
' for girls in middle-class neighbor-
ns of "popularity," through nondirect
seemingly less serious, the longevity
y far exceeds the targeting associated
o say, this sort of attack comes with
s and serious challenges to be faced.
kes is to a large extent determined by
s that surround it are associated with
used are based on income and acces-
se are based on the scenarios avail-
n the details of a girl's personal story
olitical, economic, and cultural reali-
ts own ritualized language in which
s that are understood by local inhab-
e highly unlikely that a middle-class
would tell a similar story about the
s an inner-city female youth would.
ear-old girl who stabbed a boy in the
experience, she tells a story not just
ne social and cultural world in which

It was a really bad night for me. I had a fight with my brother. I left the house. She be giving me a gun. My brother who is in jail for hit-and-run. He's a violent person, but he really isn't a violent person. [I had a Colt beer] before my friend offered me a drink. A guy was trying to kiss me, and when he left the room, but I was so pissed off. She was hanging out and the incident happened in his chest. I don't know what came out of my mother made me turn myself into a man. I never meant to come looking for me. I never meant to.

It just kind of happened, and I thought that what I did was wrong—very wrong. Before I knew it, it was done, and I was in jail.

Melissa's story, while not a common one, shows that most violent acts by girls do not involve weapons. Where drugs are easily available and weapons are readily accessible, the kitchen knife in Melissa's case is a common weapon to cause more harm than she likely intended. In the past, they were rocks or pieces of wood off the ground in the midst of fights. When reaching for such objects, she had never used a knife. She reported that she sometimes carries a knife for show, and she reports never having used a knife. Girls who carry knives, as well—many girls who carry a knife is a deterrent to being hurt. A knife even when they fight, as long as they have a knife either. Although Melissa had never been in trouble with the law, her brother had similar dealings. Melissa's 19-year-old brother was sentenced to jail for a drinking and driving accident in which he had never been in trouble with the law. The accident of life that occurred as a result of his drinking and driving led to a period of no less than 18 months in jail.

While in no way intending to minimize the role of social and cultural factors have with respect to aggression, girls express and interpret their aggression in a way that is

and a bad fight with my mother before
 grief about not turning out like my
 n. He was high and killed these two
 guy at all. I already had a 40 [large
 and me some Angel Dust [PCP]. This
 he didn't back off, I got really mad.
 and that I ran out of the house [where
 ent had occurred] and stabbed him
 me over me. I saw a lot of blood. My
 the cops because we knew they'd
 to hurt that kid like that.

I felt bad about it afterward. I know
 wrong. It just happened so fast, and
 I couldn't take it back.

on one with respect to its outcome in
 approach that degree of harm, does
 of control in Melrose Park and Lee
 many female youths carry weapons.
 was within arm's reach, leading her
 intended. While she had fought with
 s and sharp objects that she grabbed
 ating. According to Melissa, despite
 ever hurt anyone badly before. While
 rried a knife, it was apparently more
 ng used it. This is true for many other
 ny girls have the perception that to
 attacked but do not actually use the
 as their opponent does not pull one,
 een in trouble with the law up to that
 ngs with the criminal justice system.
 rving a long sentence in state prison
 which two people died. Like Melissa,
 e law before, either. However, the loss
 s reckless behavior resulted in incar-
 o years.

imize the impact that different social
 ect to structuring how girls come to
 n, one must wonder if the aggression

apparent in both middle-class and their different forms, tells a piece of psychological development.⁷ Though some girls and others are encouraged to do so, the fact that aggression is no less a part of

Indeed, for all the reasons stated above, accepting “cultural space” for girls to explain behavior, as Sapir suggests, is not the cultural order but must provide a context about individually making those patterns (1994: 140). Again, it is important to note that girls to engage in violence in Melrose. While the majority of girls with whom I spoke to enhance their security rather than taking great pleasure in beating up a girl afterward, within that commonality, a frequency of fighting was exhibited.

While a fight may have “gone too far” for another girl pause. Judgments regarding aggression had a strong personal component. It was rare to hear a girl justify killing or maiming another girl, even girls who were “hard of attitude.” The far limit seemed to be requiring a girl to need stitches. Up to that point, described by girls as being “notches on the belt,” a girl who was sent to residential placement or the juvenile justice system, the last for cause was out:

I usually be feeling pretty good after a fight. I feels to fight, especially if I mess someone up because the person deserves what they get. I better be ready to mess someone up. I say you want to fight and then feel like you just not the way it works.

Cassie, currently far more willing to fight than the opportunity to fight that comes her way, echoes the regretting her actions that result in her

poor urban neighborhoods, despite the same story regarding girls' psychology. Some girls learn to mask their aggression, while others display it, both scenarios attest to the complexity of girls' lives than of boys'.

Above, Melrose Park and Lee are an example of girls who do not fight in. However, when trying to understand why we cannot simply locate patterns in their behavior, we need an explanation of how people go about their lives and patterns they own (Darnell and Irvine, 2003). This also underscores that the inclination of Melrose Park and Lee exists on a continuum. Melrose Park, whom I spoke with, viewed fighting as a way to protect herself and not jeopardize it, and most admitted to hitting another girl without feeling remorse. The intensity of the fight, a wide range of intensity and frequency,

and "how far" for one girl, it may not have given us a clear understanding of what was an acceptable level of aggression as a component among girls. This said, it is important to note that for causing permanent physical damage or causing permanent physical damage would readily be viewed as being "full on." It is not just about anything beyond scarring a girl or hitting her. Up to that point, injuries were mostly minor, such as "a bruise on their belt." Lakeesha, a cheerful and confident young woman after three encounters with the police, including hitting a girl's face with a razor, lays it

out after a fight. I definitely like how it goes. I like how someone gets someone up. No, I don't feel bad about it. I like how she got. If you're gonna fight, you gotta get up or get your ass kicked. You can't feel bad about f'ing someone up. That's

the way it goes. It's better than Lakeesha to seize any opportunities. Lakeesha's sentiments about not being afraid to get your arm:

When I punch another girl real hard ever did was break a girl's nose. She went to the emergency room. One time I punched a girl in the face with a rock that I picked up—she had to get stitches, and it left a scar. She could have been me who got hurt. I got hurt, and you don't see no one come and help me. I have nothing at all that I'm gonna get.

In essence, each girl assumes that she will receive no more compassion if the tables were turned and she regret over besting her opponent. Rather than sympathy for most girls is closer to the sentiment, "I did it for God." It is with this mindset that many girls engage in street fighting. It is the expectation that the school cannot afford to be too sympathetic toward girls. Understanding arises.

Seeking Out

Though almost every girl in Melrose Park wants to show that she can defend herself, not all girls fight. In fact, only some girls will engage in fights. For example, a visibly angry girl with a bruise on her face goes to far-greater lengths than most girls in an altercation. At Paulson for only a moment she had already had four fights, two of which were verbally restrained by school personnel. She says the following that comes just before she fights:

I like getting hyped up before a fight. I like getting crazy shit. People be saying things like, "You went off. They tell you what you look like." People they start crowding around watching. I don't care about how big a girl is. I just want your punch and how much heart she has. I have a lot of heart. Anyone who says I don't have heart, I'll punch me.

hard, it feels good. The best that I
 e be bleeding and all and had to go
 e I bashed a girl on the side of the
 —she had hit me with a rock also.
 a scar. She had it coming to her. It
 . Sometimes I be the one that gets
 coming round to apologize to me. I
 apologize for.

her opponent would likely not show
 were turned and therefore has little
 rather, the sentiment that gets evoked
 nt “there goes me but for the grace of
 ny girls view what it means to engage
 on that keeps a girl feeling that she
 toward another girl when a misun-

at the Fight

rose Park is at some point called on
 , even after establishing her reputa-
 fighting on a regular basis.⁸ Tamika,
 n a long history of family difficulties,
 st of her peers to provoke a physical
 onth and a half when I first met her,
 of which resulted in her being physi-
 . No doubt, Tamika enjoys the rush

ght. You know, acting crazy. Talk-
 ings afterwards like that girl really
 ooked like. The shit you said. Peo-
 aiting to see what’s gonna happen.
 is ’cause I have a hard punch. It’s
 you have which counts the most.
 o knows me gonna say that about

In this excerpt, Tamika talks about her experience after a fight. It seems that the “crazy” support it brings. While she does not seem to be free to do so. One has to wonder if the support dispel any realistic fear she might have, especially one bigger than herself. The end of the excerpt seems exaggerated and she is working to convince herself.

Like many girls in Melrose Park, Tamika reports that she had her first fight when she was old. Her family had moved to a different block and the girls on her new block were “tough” and demanded that she run errands for them or face social consequences if she did not do so. Her father, “who had been a boxer,” taught her how to fight and she practiced with her brother in the backyard. She claims to be “lean and fit,” that is, poised to fight. Her claim seems more the reflection of her desire to be than an actual description of the way she fought. Without doubt a willing and able fighter, she has won several defeats, according to her own account. Her less-admirable hair pulling and scratching are common when they engage in when they fight with one another. She was present when Tamika spoke to her about her for being less truthful about how she fought and how she contended. Generally speaking, girls who exaggerate other’s exaggerated claims about fighting are often how things “really” went down.

Indeed, most girls augment their fighting stories of their prowess and propensity to fight. It plays a central role in supporting a girl’s image and an unspoken agreement to go along with the dominant fighting narrative, largely characterized by the “ask for it” side of the story and girls who “ask for it” and “ask for it” up, underscores her constant sense of being “tough.” At times, Tamika will acknowledge that she is “tough.” Girls who fight regularly seem particularly confident that they can handle themselves (Ness, 2000).

at the excitement she feels before and
er” or bolder she gets, the more peer
ot admit to feeling scared, we know
vious excerpt that a girl is not really
the hyperbole serves to mask or dis-
about going up against another girl,
e invulnerability she expresses at the
d and suspect, as if on some level she

Tamika has been fighting for years.
reet fight when she was seven years
erent neighborhood, and Tamika felt
ying to rule her.” These girls would
them and threaten her with physi-
so. According to Tamika, her uncle,
ow to “defend” herself, and thereafter
e backyard. Tamika says she became
t, over time; however, here, too, the
a preferred image of herself rather
ay things were. While Tamika is no
e has certainly suffered her share of
t. Neither has she refrained from the
tching that most girls will deny they
another. Other girls at Paulson who
ne said as much. They ribbed Tamika
conducted herself in a fight than she
alternated between supporting each
hting and a friendly sparring about

ghting narrative with exaggerated sto-
to “get crazy.” Peers or associates play
age of herself as a fighter. There is an
h each other’s “hype.” Tamika’s fight-
r authority figures who do not see her
y the way they behave” to be beaten
f having been wronged and provoked.
at she provokes fights “just because.”
ularly invested in having it known that
04). Most youths who cross paths with

the criminal justice system are picked up. My record indicates, as witnesses often do.

I've had charges pressed against me. I had on me stuck. They ain't gonna take it off. I don't care if I have a record. I'm not a punk. The only thing I hate is being away from my family and all. Other

Tamika's excerpt expresses a sentiment that I followed. Whether a girl wins or loses a fight is a sign to others who might think of fighting. Most important is for a girl to show that she is over her. Tamika clearly indicates that she is in her neighborhood to show that she is not a punk. The consequences of having a juvenile record. A girl who is a punk, thumbing her nose at the potential consequences in mainstream society, she also delegitimizes the extension, delegitimizes mainstream society. A girl sent to placement for resisting arrest. A girl who was fighting to need 24 stitches, echoing

I've been arrested. I had three charges. Since I been in placement, I heard people say no bad things about me no more. I got a boyfriend because she knows where I live. I'd do it again [aggravated assault]. I'd do it back here. So what if they send

Victoria's comment reiterates this identity-enhancing function that no one can touch me and many girls in Melrose Park and I

I'm just glad that I stood up for myself [placement]. The security guard touched her when he thought that she was a punk. I'd touch me, if you know what I mean. If someone touches me, no matter who it is, it matter to me if it's a cop. I'd do the

up many more times than their official record shows. They do not show in court. Tamika notes:

I've been arrested seven times, but nothing they can make me worry about no record. They ain't gonna let anyone make me no record 'cause I'm not gonna get sent to placement 'cause then I'm in there. Otherwise, I don't care if I got a record.

A sense of self-protection is common among the girls. For example, if she fights back, she has given a message to the other girls that she will go down trying. She knows that she will not let somebody walk all over her. In her neighborhood, it is more important in her neighborhood to stand up than worrying about the consequences. Apart from establishing that she is not a weak person, the potential consequences of having a record do not intimidate her. She minimizes that mark against her and, by extension, the negative perception of her. Samantha, after her arrest and causing the girl whom she was talking to, echoes Tamika's words on many fronts:

They got charges against me, but only two stuck. I don't care that the girl who I messed up don't care. She also keeping away from my house. When I come home I know where she is. I don't care [about the assault] and don't care if they send me to placement. It don't bother me.

This general theme and underscores the importance of not "bowing" to anyone plays for her. Lee notes:

I don't care for myself, even though they sent me here. I don't care that the man that put his hands on me [stopped shoplifting] didn't have no right to touch me. I'm gonna stick up for myself if they touch me. That. I don't care who he is. It don't matter. It's the same thing.

Despite their apparent comfort with using physical aggression, Kia and Victoria of fighting as Tamika.

It is important to note that several to placement connected to altercations in stores. It was not uncommon to be placed in a store for an unprovoked assault if she resisted when a guard. The guard, frequently only a few years in the same neighborhood as her, would display excessive control in approaching her. However, stores looked to press the matter with a zero-tolerance strategy toward those who had previous contact with family courts for shoplifting, the additional charge of assault could lead to her being remanded to a residential facility.

Tamika, however, far more apt to get into fights had accrued a fairly long list of charges for fighting she did, which fell below the threshold by the police. During the course of her placement, Tamika to get into a fight at least once a week. If a group of girls, wanted to fight her and it came to fruition, she was quick to fall for anyone who wronged her and what she planned to do. That fights did find their way to Tamika and her friends. Tamika's fighting was driven more to protect or maintain her reputation as by her own choice. Tamika generally saw her as "always ready to use her hands."

It was an aggressive outburst directed at a store that resulted in Tamika's remand to Compton-Downing for 6 months: the officer stopped her for shoplifting when he grabbed her arm. Tamika had to stay in the city before the city would allow her to return to her home. It is worthy that in 2004, nearly 2,700 students were sent to disciplinary school in Philadelphia, an increase of approximately 1,000 since 2003. These figures are a result of "twilight" programs (evening classes) that have come out of placement in the juvenile justice system. They are not allowed by law to return to

with standing up for themselves by Victoria do not have as extensive a his-

Several of the girls I followed were sent to court on charges they had with security personnel. It is not unusual for a girl to be charged with aggravated assault if a security guard tried to detain her. Security guards, often years older than the girl, often raised and poorly trained, would be likely to use force against the girl. As a matter of principle, the most serious charges possible in line with minor offenses. Were a girl to have a fight, perhaps for a fight with a peer or an aggravated assault would frequently result in a court appearance at a detention facility.

Victoria's return to fighting than Kia or Victoria, she was charged with assault against her in addition to the street fight. Victoria was on the radar screen and was not detected during my fieldwork, it was not unusual for a girl to be charged a week or to report that some girl, perhaps a friend, had fought with her. While many of these fights never made it into "the talk of fighting": who had to do about it. It would be fair to say that Victoria found her way to fight not so much by her need to save face but by her need to let off steam. Classmates of Victoria would be quick to say "she is angry" and quick

Victoria was charged at a subway officer that precipitated her arrest. Victoria was sent to Taylor's boot camp division for three weeks of questioning, and Tamika struck him and was charged with assault. Victoria had to attend Paulson after boot camp and then return to her district school. It is notable that many students were placed in an alternative school which was an increase of approximately 50% in the number of students. These do not include students enrolled in alternative schools at neighborhood high schools who were sent to the juvenile justice system. Those students were sent to their regular schools, with the idea

that they need to be prepared to return a number in the hundreds.⁹

The origins of Tamika's "attitude" are complex and is proud of—"I ain't gonna change, I used to be worse"—seemingly a result of the relational disruptions in her life. Having an attitude from her mother, who she says that often kept her on the streets when she was young, Tamika says her mother is her best friend. Her mother seems to harbor deep ambition and a sense of pride that she "raised herself." She mentions the fact that her mother drank and implied that it had a negative impact on her.

Tamika's father left when she was young, and her contact with him was radical and disappointing. He had ongoing problems with substance use and has spent time in jail for selling drugs. He is the only male relative who has affected her. He physically abused her when she was five years old, and years afterward, thinking that her mother was lying, she made comments about these incidents, as they occurred throughout her childhood, that she had to stay on her guard or else. Being tough became an integral part of her life, a way of organizing her self-esteem, and a response to the poses it held for her living in Melrose. In conversation with her friends, she says:

I don't need to have friends, and I only have one true friend. Even when she was young, she was home to feed us. I don't need no other friends. I don't trust girls. They always be turning on you. I only trust except those people who know me and love me. They are close to me. My oldest sister, she always call on her if girls are going to rob you. If you see girls, then you gonna not get into a

One can hear in Tamika's narrative a sense of isolation, closeness, her general distrust, and the

return to the community. These students
 e,” which she freely admits to hav-
 change for no one, I don’t want to
 ns at least in part to be associated
 her life. She says she learned about
 r, who had a bad drinking problem
 while Tamika was growing up. Though
 friend now, the relationship with her
 equivalence—Tamika is quick to men-
 makes no bones about not liking the
 lies that “her ways” had a significant

s a baby, and she has only had spo-
 h him since then. He reportedly has
 nce abuse throughout Tamika’s life
 drugs, as well. Tamika’s father is not
 cted her negatively. Her uncle sexu-
 years old. She only told her mother
 other would not believe her. Tamika’s
 well as other traumatic events that
 suggest that she came to feel early on
 else she would be victimized. Thus,
 t of Tamika’s self-concept. It became
 in addition to any instrumental pur-
 se Park. A youngster with few good

I don’t have any. My mom is my
 s drinking, she made sure to come
 ne else. I have my sisters. You can’t
 g on you. So I don’t trust anyone
 from the time I was small and who
 she watches out for me, and I can
 ll on me. If you don’t get close to
 as much trouble.

ive how the denial of her needs for
 the social and cultural climate of the

neighborhood she lives in all work to. For Tamika, like many girls in Melrose Park, a sense of physical invulnerability becomes a substitute for needing support from her sisters, however, reveals that she can trust. In my contact with Tamika, her relationship with her sisters was particularly strong. Tamika's two sisters, at least on the surface, knew what was going on in her daily life. They were older than Tamika, respectively, and ran in the same neighborhood. They appear to cross much at all. This said, Tamika's sisters would come to her aid in the event of a fight if needed. Although the level of emotional support is not greatly among the families that I spoke to, in many instances, could take it for granted that support was needed. While research on the relationship between fighting by girls is virtually nonexistent, my participant observation, was that girls who have strong support from their siblings, on the whole, are less likely to fight.

Tamika is certainly not the only girl in Melrose Park who has found protection and empowerment through physical fighting. In this middle-class neighborhood a girls' sense of physical invulnerability translate into her socially isolating behavior. In my work, I found that in Melrose Park, a sense of physical invulnerability to physical fighting was not readily possible. Why some girls have a sense of emotional dependence and others less so, depends on personal circumstances, in addition to the social context of the community. In this way, their resort to physical fighting is different from that of boys, though I had far less contact with boys. I do not have a full sense of the relationship between physical fighting and emotional dependence.

The Good Fighter Who Is Not

Though not one to hide from a fight, Tamika is a typical African American girl who attends Paul Robeson High School. She manages to avoid more fights than some of the other girls in her neighborhood.

together to solidify her drive to fight. Rose Park and Lee, fighting in some of the same circles as the others. Her reference to a connection with the wish for people in her life whom Tamika's family, I did not sense that her relationship was particularly supportive, as she claimed. On the surface, she seemed to be unaware of the implications. They were five and four years older than her, in different circles. Their paths did not intersect. Still, there was little doubt that Tamika's relationship with her siblings was in the context of a physical altercation if not a verbal one. Emotional support between siblings varied. In the case of Rose Park, a girl, in the major-ity of cases, I found that her siblings would back her if needed. The relationship between sibling support and violence, in my impression, based on participation in the study, seemed to receive higher levels of emotional support. Rose Park, on the whole, seemed less preoccupied with

the idea of a girl who finds psychological satisfaction in physical aggression. Whereas in a mid-stance of relational disappointment might lead to self-harm or burying herself in schoolwork, Rose Park and Lee, girls frequently sought out relationships to replace emotional dependence that they had. The girls had more opportunities for relationships. This reflects a wide spectrum of perspectives on the social problems that confront the girls. The relationship to violence appears to be different for girls with less contact with boys and therefore less experience with the violence that boys experience.

Willing to Take a Step Back

In a confrontation, Aiesha (15), an African American girl, lives in South Philadelphia, enters into a relationship. This is both because

she is generally easygoing by nature, being easily trifled with. It is this condition that saves some girls from having her share of fighting and no longer to other girls. She has come to see fighting and done that." To stay out of fights, she spends time with other girls outside the streets. Instead, she limits herself to her cousins, who feel the same way about fighting, not an uncommon one, especially for girls. Loyalty to their nuclear and extended families is a common theme.

Indeed, many girls I spoke with expressed a desire to stay away from other girls in order to avoid fighting. A commonly held belief that most, if not all, girls hold is that most boys turn on themselves in "he-said, she-said" exchanges. This belief speaks of a widely held view among girls that boys are "because they always turn on you." This sentiment among the girls I spent time with is a common theme (Ness, 2004). Girls typically value their friends more than boys and are more likely to talk behind their backs than boys are to keep their confidences. Whereas girls value a boy's loyalty toward his girlfriend, boys value marks to boys as friends.

This said, Aiesha was sent to P.O. and had her head into the ground and "split it open." She was "mugged" her cousin (made a face at her). When they were together, Aiesha claims she tried to defend herself, but the girl continued to bait her, she then "got angry" and "wanted to watch, and after a while an accident happened. She did not care about injuring the girl so she took her to hospital. She explains:

She came up to me for dumb stuff and I kicked. Girls have to be able to defend themselves. I can't be seeming like a puny girl. If I get in trouble and it's a hassle. Boys are always away. It's like it all depends on the situation. It's just the way you gotta be sometimes. It's just what anyone says about it [fighting]

and because she is known for not a combination of popularity and reputation to fight constantly. Aiesha has done feels the pressure to “show herself” fighting as “being corny—been there she tells me that she basically avoids of school and does not hang out on self to socializing with her sisters and t fighting as she does. This strategy is or girls with close and long-standing families.

revealed that they keep a distance fighting. The tendency reflects a general, girls are quick to involve themselves that end in fighting. Moreover, ng girls that girls cannot be trusted There was almost unanimous agree- with that boys could be more easily r characterized boys as being better lences and as being far less apt to s typically expressed less trust about d, girls, at least verbally, gave high

aulson because she banged a girl’s pen.” She didn’t like the way the girl (at her). When the girl approached escalate the situation, but when the gave it to her bad.” A big crowd gath- dult broke things up. Aiesha said she o badly that the girl had to go to the

E. If I wouldn’t fight, I’d get my ass defend themselves. They have to be k. I don’t like to fight a lot because but sometimes, you just can’t walk e situation. I do what I have to do. etimes. I try not to pay mind to [].

Not dissimilar to Tamika's view of herself, she must counter an act of disrespect and she recognizes all too well that in her neighborhood, a sign of weakness and fear. Her experience is a certain pressure to fight, despite how she feels. In Melrose Park and Lee, whether they are Tamika and Aiesha maintain a certain "punk."¹⁰

From a psychological perspective, Aiesha is that she has close relationships with her mother. While her father has been gone for years, he still maintains contact with her and the family often has dinner together. Aiesha is a good example of how avoiding violence is in Melrose Park. Aiesha elaborates:

While I definitely like how it feels, I don't feel nothing, and I don't just lift my hand and hit you the wrong way. I know I ain't no punk, I know that. Sometimes a girl who is fighting against me because she knows even though I don't show that she has heart. You know, I don't hit you. So sometimes I have to fight, but I do it the way it is.

Candace echoes Aiesha's view:

I do whatever I can do not to fight, but if you back down, I get away with it. But if you back down, then I just have to. The last time I fought, I even. A lot a times you fight to just show you know you say you be the one who is the best. how it is. You just show you ain't gonna let nobody call you what matters.

Who gets arrested and placed in a juvenile facility is to a good extent associated with street fighting, the police do not become

being slighted, Aiesha also feels that
t or face a worse challenge later. She
ghborhood backing down is seen as a
ot also suggests that she senses a cer-
he feels emotionally. Like most girls
ey fight on a regular or limited basis,
n acute awareness of being labeled a

what sets Aiesha apart from Tamika
th her sisters and cousins, as well as
has been out of the home for many
her. Her mother is a practical nurse,
her on one weekend day. Still, Aiesha
violence altogether is quite difficult in

s to fight, I ain't no young kid or
ands every time someone looks at
o punk, and anyone who knows me
has to prove herself tries to go up
n if she doesn't win, she is going to
w, because she wasn't afraid to try
even if I don't want to. That's just

t. I really don't like to fight if I can
own, it only gets worse, so if I have
me I fought, it probably came out
t come out even, and that's ok. You
won and all, but that isn't always
gonna back down, and that is basi-

an alternative school or a residen-
ciated with luck or the lack of it. As
a, most of the time girls engage in
come involved. Many girls who fight

regularly have had no juvenile justice record. In many of their fights have resulted in the physical injury of one or both parties. When a fight goes down, people often do not go home to tend to their cuts and bruises unless it is absolutely necessary. Even when a girl is injured, she does not necessarily tell the truth. In many cases, she may offer no information about who started the fight. When police are called to break up a fight, the police do not always file. Usually it is the size of the fight that determines whether the police will file. In one instance, Lakeesha cut her sister's face. The police reported it. Allie and Natira are involved in fights frequent acts a few times a month, and they have brought to the attention of authorities. As Natira says:

I ain't scared of the police. They do not come to my house unless there is a gun involved. I don't like to be fighting since I been ten years old. I don't want nothing. I fight as much as I want. I don't want them to. It's all a big game.

Allie also explains:

If you don't mouth off when the police come, they will let you go unless you really fuck someone up. I broke up a fight that I was in near the police. They said that I better go home and stay out. I wanted to fight more, but I waited. I waited until I could fight again. So I beat her up later and did not go to jail. It's like that with the police. You just go home.

Whereas the danger for girls in the inner city is closely tied to being sexually victimized, the danger in the 1980s was closely tied to being involved in the drug trade. The 1980s as the overall ecology of high-crime cities was a period of dramatic change. The burgeoning market for cocaine during the 1980s, made inner-city girls both as bystanders and as participants in the drug trade. access to an expanded set of roles in the inner city. Most of the roles were low level.¹¹ W

the involvement, even though some of physical injury of their opponent. When not call the police. The injured parties sues privately unless medical care is required has to go to the emergency room, but not about how she got her injury, or she is responsible for it. It is when the police that charges are sometimes, though the size of the crowd that gathers to see a police get involved (Ness, 2004). For example, a woman with a razor, but the family never involved in street fights or other delinquency most of the time they have not come to court. Tira puts it:

I don't be coming around most of the time. I don't let things really get out of hand. I was in court, and I never been picked up for nothing, and nobody gonna stop me if I want to go. I can't be smart if you ask me.

When the police come around, they gonna pick someone up bad. Some police lady was at school last week, and she just said she was looking for trouble. But then she let me go. She was there until later and then found the girl who didn't get in any trouble or anything. I don't got to be smart about it.

As the street has historically been more feminized, this has changed since the mid-1990s. Crime neighborhoods has undergone a market for drugs, particularly crack and heroin. Cities more dangerous for females, particularly in the South. The crack epidemic gave females an underground economy, though it was not always. While female youths in the past may

have had more options to distance themselves from the pressure to perform violence as a woman, the pressure is much greater. This said, none of the girls I interviewed participated in organized illegal activities.

Interestingly, none of the girls I spoke with cited a violation as a reason for learning how to fight or a tactical approach to standing strong. It is not to say that girls would but, rather, that their need to be able to stand strong is construed mostly in terms of standing strong. Although a number of girls talked about the importance of standing the face of their mother's physical beatings, the critical point where she was no longer willing to fight, a girl would either announce this to her mother or her father that she would hit back or, without warning, launch a counterattack. It was not that the girls were trying to fend off the mother. It was more a capacity to fight, which was already established, and to stand the mother after many years of "taking it" or "not taking it" used physical violence against each other.

Fighting as a Matter of Sports

Not every fight between girls in the inner city is an issue of self-defense. As is the case with boys, fighting for girls in poor urban neighborhoods is often a matter of territory enhancement. This is not surprising because the fight is negotiated on the street, not in school. Many girls look to fighting to make a statement about their identity. In some cases, who they would like to become. For example, a girl who takes care of herself. As Allie, who is poor and Black, says:

Fighting is about image. It's about respect. I don't rule the world, but I can fend for myself. Fighting is independence. I beat so many girls.

This scenario is especially the case for girls aged 13–15. Fighting in this age range almost always

themselves from street fighting, the way to increase security has become girls I followed closely dealt drugs or activities.

One girl cited the fear of male sexual violence to protect themselves against physical assault. She stated that she and her friends were not sexually victimized by males and that learning to defend themselves physically was an important skill. She said that she was talking up to other girls and as a general rule, though not a common scenario, however, the importance of defending themselves in physical altercations. The girl would reach a critical point where she would be willing to be hit by her mother. The girl would then threaten, if hit again, to warn her mother and surprise her mother with a fight. She would learn how to fight in order to use the girl making use of her abilities. She stated that she learned to fight, to protect herself against the threat. Far more readily, adolescent girls learn to fight.

Street and Identity Enhancement

Street culture in Melrose Park and Lee is related to the relationship with boys (Anderson, 1990, 1999), and the neighborhood provides a venue for identity enhancement, as identity for most of these girls is derived from school or jobs, which are scarce. Girls talk about who they are and, in some ways, are someone viewed as being able to talk back and quick to smile, explains:

It's about showing you're no punk. I know how I feel like I do, make you think I do. I'll talk someone up if I feel like it.

Street culture for young female adolescents, ages 12-15, most has the quality of being instigated

as a matter of sport (Ness, 2004). Allie's adolescent quality to it, which reflects the sense of self of youths her age, and its statement. One can also hear how Allie is able through fighting. Indeed, as a girl, she feels in power, if only temporarily. Though normatively adolescent, it is no less so if she were characterized by family instability.

Allie's story is also not unusual for girls. Allie was sent to Paulson after having been in a residential facility because she got into a fight at the mall. Similar to Tamika, Allie says, "hands on her." She had a history of fighting. A judge sent her to placement for a year. Her maternal aunt in a well-maintained section of the city was quite young because she "couldn't read or write" and was using, according to Allie. Her father raised her. He died of AIDS a couple of years ago by health-related problems of one sort or another. That, despite her father's substance abuse, he never questioned his love for her. She would never hit him anything, and he would never judge her. Her father, a Vietnam veteran who suffered from PTSD, was not always able to provide her with a stable home.

As I have noted, however, fighting is not to be explained solely in terms of the psychological ills. As with boys, fighting is a way of expressing youthfulness in peer relations and expressing youthfulness as a kind of "proving ground" to reinforce a sense of fearlessness. As Manuela, a Hispanic girl, says:

It's fun to see fights. It's like watching a really good fight. Sometimes I like to see hair and scratch. They fight like cats. When a girl is gonna get her shirt ripped

A good example of a girl who uses fighting to bring attention to herself, Allie elaborates on her fight:

Allie's wish "to rule" has a distinct adolescent healthy narcissism and the expansive confidence is from this perch that she made her name. Allie manages her sense of being vulnerable. As a good fighter, Allie has a ready means to cope. Although the wish to feel invincible is also significant that Allie's younger years were marked by poverty and several traumatic events.

Allie is one of the girls living in Melrose Park and Lee. She has been remanded to a residential placement. Her experience of a shoving match with a security guard "went wild" when the guard "put his hands on her" for fighting and truancy at school, so the incident is significant. Allie currently lives with her paternal grandmother in Lee. Her mother left when Allie was young because she can't take the stress of raising a kid and her father, who was a heroin user, mostly died several years ago but had been debilitated by drug use for some time. Allie says she has experienced physical abuse and mental health issues, she explains that she felt she could tell no one because no one would judge her. However, it is clear that her sense of vulnerability is derived from post-traumatic stress, was not from a stable environment.

For girls in Melrose Park and Lee can be a way of coping with their family troubles or individual psychological issues. For girls is also a means of solidifying their sense of invulnerability and exuberance. Moreover, it serves as a way of coping with a girl's sense of invulnerability and exuberance. A girl living in Lee, explains:

... watching television. Seeing blood makes me like watching girls fight. They pull punches. Boys also stand around to see if they can get off or something.

... fighting to generate excitement and adrenaline. It operates on what it actually feels like to

I get nervous before a fight. My hair is always down. But when I'm done fighting, I'm always nervous. The worst I ever got hurt was when a girl named Allie hit me. It threw my back out of alignment. I've had black eyes, busted lips, sores, and bruises. My worst gave was three broken ribs. Because I'm a girl, no one thinks I'm a punk. I mostly fight girls. It's harder to fight than the Spanish girls.

This excerpt illustrates the progression of Allie's character as she passes through leading up to and following a fight. Her initial nervousness is transformed into a sense of control as she reveals her mental balance she has achieved. The fight she inflicted, which calculate out to whether she is better than the other of two white girls I followed closely. The story about the additional pressure of being a girl in her neighborhood. To fit in with the other girls in terms of the African American girls and the project. However, because her father was a doctor and awarded a relatively large sum of money for her education at a Catholic school for most of her elementary and high school education behind her, she seems to have a different perspective than her peers that the future holds other possibilities for her. Allie seems to turn on or off, depending on the situation. She recognizes that the fighting she partic-

I can't be all thugged-out my whole life. I know that. No one is gonna tell me how I have to act. I decide how I'm going to act and so on.

The excerpt suggests that Allie is navigating a complex set of expectations, where what is considered appropriate and inappropriate is often defined by others. She has the sense that when she deems it time to act, she will rely on what she learned while in her aunt's professional identity in a "good girl" or "bad girl" identifications. But she makes a point to assert her autonomy in this transition only when she decides to act, rather than being forced on her by anyone else.

nds shake, and my back gets tense. I'm all hyped. I like the aftereffect. The girl hit me with a pole in the back. I got a concussion, and I had to go to a chiropractor. I got scratches and bruises. Worst I ever had. Because I'm white, I have to make sure I can fight black girls because they're the only ones who can hurt white girls.

A discussion of psychological states that Allie experiences following a fight. In the end, her initial reaction is a kind of pleasurable excitement. In contrast to the pain of injuries sustained versus those she has inflicted, whether or not she is a “punk.” Allie is one of those people who; her excerpt also suggests a deeper motivation for a white girl to show she can handle herself. In the end, Allie adapts the speech patterns around her and the “attitude” that they represent. She won a lawsuit against the city and was awarded money, Allie was able to go to a private elementary school years. With a solid basic education, she has more of a sense than many of her peers. Her possibilities—she readily talked about them. She has the swagger and bravado she exudes in her speech. One is left with the sense that she knows her participation in is not forever. As she notes:

...whole life, like if I go for a job. But I have to behave. It's gonna be me that's gonna speak.

...is aware of what behavior is considered acceptable by mainstream standards. One gets the sense that, in order to renege her adolescent ways, she had to go to a private school and identify with her “good” job more than with her current identity. The act of telling me that she will make this decision to do so. It will be her decision and not

While male youths are commonly known for engaging in violence more often than girls, Lee, girls show themselves to be far from passive—an observation strongly corroborated by staff and treatment facility personnel who have made the following emphatically remarks:

You kidding me, girls be fighting more than boys. If you're emotional they'll fight over anything. I've seen a girl say, she-said. They only gonna fight over money or drugs. Boys ain't gonna fight no other way.

Samantha also states:

I may wait for a little while before I get started, I'm gone. Someone says something and I keep wanting to go back and get it. When something opens up in me and then that's when I go to get things off my chest like that.

As does Cassie:

I go crazy when I fight. I just keep going. It's fun. Especially when I make the other person get who did that to her. The last time I fought, people to get me to stop. I just hate it. I just hate like they think that they're something. I just want to get that bitch down to size and she deserves it.

As fighting often turns deadly for boys, it is less so for girls. It follows that especially boys who seek out fights over something minor. For girls, frequent fights during adolescence and feels she has “less to prove.” Signs of waning. Typically, the older the girl, the more willing to walk away from a fight. In the verbal realm. As Aiesha says, “she’ll say whatever the hell she wants.”

viewed in the public eye as resorts, on the streets of Melrose Park and more willing to fight at a moment's provocation, as corroborated by teachers, the police, and the community with whom I spoke (Ness, 2004). Kia

more than boys do. They so emotional. Boys won't get into it over no he-cause. They fight over something serious like a girl. They fight because you look at them the

and I decide to fight someone, but once I get started, I got to pull me off the other girl. I can't stop. In one more swing. It's like something that's it, I'm gone. It feels pretty good

and I'm up on punching and punching. It's like I want her girl bleed. She ain't gonna forget me. The first time I fought, it took maybe ten minutes. I like it when someone gives me a look that says they're not gonna knock me out. I know I deserve it, too.

and boys due to the presence of guns, it's not like girls. Girls will be less inclined to fight frequently, as a girl moves into later adolescence. "As she grows up," her interest in fighting shows that she's a girl with a stronger sense of confidence. She'll respond to a provocation as long as it stays within her boundaries. "If she don't touch me, she can say what-

Violence as a S

It is standing up to a challenge n
 girl a sense of respect among her pe
 there is no shame in her losing a fight
 feel good about herself, as she has sh
 has “heart.” In this way, as psycholo
 “fighting back works instrumentally
 settings.” Far worse than losing a fig
 2004). On the other hand, girls who
 with praise and adulation. On the sub

When a fight is about to go down,
 nue. You run into so and so and fig
 to be popular you have to, so you j
 crowd starts to gather, it’s crazy.

Manuela was sent to residential
 assault charges. She used to sell dru
 liked to fight when she got high. She

Boys like it when girls fight. Girls
 them. Girls like it, too, because it
 are human. Everyone fights in life.
 respect. I don’t have any real diff
 neighborhood and all that. My bo
 when I tell him that I’m meeting
 crowd.

Indeed, in Melrose Park and Le
 brings a girl a certain amount of
 research—mostly on gangs—has be
 tal function of violence for adolesce
 protection and monetary gain (Cam
 2001), such work remains the excep
 pus large enough to sufficiently illu
 uation.¹² Again, while the resort to v
 viewed as instrumental in nature (Bo

Source of Status

more than anything else that earns a
ers. As long as a girl shows courage,
t. Whether she wins or loses, she can
own that she can “take her hits” and
gist Sharon Lamb (2001: 215) notes,
and psychologically for girls in such
ght is to walk away from one (Ness,
better their opponent are rewarded
object, Manuela remarks:

everyone knows it. Go on the ave-
ght. Even if you don't want to fight,
ust get it over with. This whole big

placement for 18 months after two
gs with her boyfriend and especially
explains:

try to make a fight especially for
makes them feel important. Girls
Unless you fight, you can't get no
difficulty getting respect around my
oyfriend comes to watch me fight
someone and there's gonna be a

e, the ability to “hand out trouble”
recognition. However, while some
een undertaken on the instrumen-
nt girls, for example, as a source of
pbell, 1984; Brotherton, 1996; Miller,
tion and does not amount to a cor-
minate the issues material to the sit-
violence by male youths tends to be
urgois, 1995; Anderson, 1999), female

adolescents who engage in violence and aggression. Rather, the use of violence by adolescents is being expressive in nature: that is, violence is used in or trivial arguments aimed at decreasing status, even when violent altercations hold status for adolescent females—for example, fighting to defend one's position (Heidensohn, 1985; Chilton et al., 1989). As Cassie notes:

If I think another girl is coming too close to me, she be dissing me 'cause she know I'm not. I be acting like big stuff. So if I don't fight, she be thinking I'm some punk or something. If I check her, she don't come back at me. I don't care about the guy because if he want to be with me, fine. But the girl just shouldn't be coming too close. I let her know it.

In Cassie's excerpt, one can catch a sense of threat and humiliation, and the feeling that a girl to feel she must “put down” another girl about what the girl does. It is also how a girl meets group expectations if she does not “stand up” by recognizing the use value of a boy's status. I will understand what a breakup would mean in more detail in chapter 4.

During the year I spent as a participant-observer, I found time when a girl admitted to me that she had been “bringing another girl down” typical of a girl's sense of competence. Doing so was also often a way to gain a sense of desirability.

Several studies claim that aggressive behavior is a result of developmental deficits that render them vulnerable (e.g., Kingston et al., 1998; Ness, 2004). I found that for Cassie and Lee a girl's resort to aggression or violence are looked on favorably for fighting, and it is a way to gain status. This is important, as a girl's status is often gained by girls coming to her aid. A girl who is

are rarely depicted as rational actors. A violent girl is almost always viewed as violence triggered by perceived insults increasing situational tension. This is so similar status significance for adolescent males or to defend one's sexual reputation (Hirschi and Gottman, 1994; Chesney-Lind and Datesman, 1987; Chesney-Lind,

to close to a guy I'm talking to, then she be crossing a line. The girl do something, then she gonna be checking. I'm gonna check her. Once I see her so quick the next time. I don't want to go with someone else, that's disrespecting me like that, and I'm gonna

a glimpse of how suspicion, a sense of fear of retaliation conspire to cause a violent girl. It is not just how Cassie feels about how she will be judged in terms of peer status. "I'm gonna step up." And, indeed, in certain cases, monetary assistance is essential to mean to a girl—a subject that I take

participant observer, there was not a single girl that she was scared. It was as if there were girls not to acknowledge their fears—often acted to reinforce a girl's sense of status. It is used defensively to shore up one's

Some girls manifest social and cognitive skills that make them less popular (Talbot, 1997; Henrich, 1997). However, that in Melrose Park often strengthened her peer ties; girls who fight and fighting enhances their identity. A girl's personal security is based on other girls. A girl's fight is generally seen as a valuable

friend to have rather than a pariah, middle-class girls who engage in play about her best friend Natira:

That girl's my homie; she never go
can help it, and I'm the same with
sure that each other is ok. That's th
be there for me.

As a general rule, it is only when
some way or as fighting for reasons
ported by other girls that a girl's viole
is ridiculed by her peers or by her co

in contradiction to the literature on physical aggression. As Allie told me

gonna let anyone mess me up if she
a her. That's the way that we make
the way that I know someone gonna

a girl is perceived as not likeable in
s that fall outside of the range sup-
port behavior in Melrose Park and Lee
community.

The Reason Give for

While on the surface a girl's desire to lead her to use violence is straightforward, "looking bad about my mother," "looking bad between the lines, one can gain a sense of why girls justify the use of physical violence. An ethic of presumptive retaliation (I do to do to me) and an ethic of reciprocity (I do for me), underlies the formation of social norms in girls' fighting. Through contextualizing the social organization of Melrose Park, we gain a better understanding of what girls are committed to in their violence.

It is not simply that every person in the neighborhood is for himself or herself or that cooperation and trust does not exist. However, suspicions of betrayal are common in high-crime, impoverished neighborhoods. Survival in inner cities, where individual resources are limited and everyday life is full of hardship, is often defined with what Elijah Anderson (1999) has called "the code of law-abiding behaviors and maintenance of order" with the perceived lack of interest and investment in its institutions and consequent disorder. Anderson (1999) argues with the sense that they are left to their own devices and for themselves (Anderson, 1999). It is a world where one must be kept in check or one alternatively will be victimized. In this world, one sort or another can break out at any time (Anderson, Jones, 2004, 2009) and, indeed, is the

ons Girls Fighting

description of the types of situations that might be straightforward enough (“someone talk-
t me the wrong way,” etc.), by reading
sense of the emotional logic by which
ence. This logic, centered on both an
to you first what I sense you’re going
ty (I do for you, and in return you do
social rules that in large part structure
ing this emotional logic within the
and Lee, one can get a much better
communicating when they resort to using

in Melrose Park and Lee is only out for
n between relatives and nonrelatives
run high and are perpetually revived
neighborhoods. Strategies for personal sur-
vival and neighborhood resources are
burdens to be managed, often compete
s referred to as “civility”—the display
of mainstream values. This, in combination
of the larger society in the decay of
order, leaves many inner-city residents
on their own devices and must watch out
for themselves. This translates to a feeling that the sur-
vival of the fittest is the rule of the
neighborhood and that if one does not strike first,
one will be struck. The assumption is that trouble of
one kind or another is always just around
any moment (Anderson, 1990, 1999;
and Lee, 1999). This is the natural state of things. Generally

speaking, trust among individuals in the neighborhood is often broken, and issues of betrayal and loyalty are often monitored and assessed. The issue of trust and feelings, and then the real dangers of the neighborhood only reinforce them. The issues of trust and the two have deep ramifications for how girls live and think about one another.

Troubling neighborhood effects include high crime rate, high unemployment, and depression and feelings of alienation that often goes hand in hand with the issues raised in relation to male youths.¹ My research shows that the lives of girls residing in economically distressed neighborhoods are importantly influenced, and their behavior shaped, by the same realities that influence the lives of boys. The ways their lives are affected may, as Sampson and Laub (2003, et al., 2004), be expressed differently. For the girls I followed did not typically react to these factors and their own behavior, they often reacted by their words and by their actions—often in response to another girl's negative motives, the belief that they were not worth anything without a struggle, the belief that you take what you have if you let them; that you have to take to keep that from happening. Many girls believe that making the first move in a fight is worth it if they were not sure of how good of a fight they were. A girl can get into more trouble at school if she is seen as a fighter. At the end, many girls think that it is well worth the risk to preserve their reputation as being aggressive.

Cassie is a good example of a girl who strongly adheres to the idea of striking first. In a head-and-see attitude before displaying her aggression, no matter the matter or style, she is more comfortable with the idea that she has the capacity to strike first. In questions later. Without evident hesitation, she took her position on the matter, Cassie explained:

Girls a lot of the time, they try to get you to fight. They why this is. They be jealous or so. They be jealous of me. I be bad about me in school. She got a

inner cities is something that is hard to deny. Many of the people who live in these cities are constantly in a state of being afraid. The perception of race relations in America fuels these fears and social problems that plague the inner cities. The perceptions that develop out of these fears now people in Melrose Park and Lee

poor, urban enclaves (i.e., high crime areas, to name a few) and the sense of helplessness and hand with them have mostly been explored in research, however, points to the fact that economically impoverished communities and their opportunities are no less structured, and their male counterparts. How girls' and others note (Sampson 2003; Klingman 2004) along gender lines.² Again, while many researchers make the connection between macro and micro levels, they have not communicated those connections clearly—for example, their presumption of a "zero-sum" belief that no one gives you anything unless you take it. The sense that other girls are going to take offense, thus you must take the offensive first. Many of the girls I spoke with seemed to believe that fighting was the best strategy, especially if you were a fighter their opponent was. While many girls do not feel the need for making the first move, in the inner cities it is worth the consequences in order to be seen as aggressive and tough.³

girl who sees things in this way. She believes in taking the first move, as opposed to taking a wait-and-see approach to defend herself. As a result, she is comfortable letting it be known front and center that she stands her ground and, if need be, asks for clarification or self-question regarding her actions. She presents the problem in the following way:

to mess you up. I'm not really sure about something. This girl started talking to me and a lot of people to think I did some-

thing that I didn't do, so I had to stop telling lies about me. I don't want to get hit at me, and she be starting all kinds of things. I could see what was gonna happen. I ain't gonna be defending yourself because you or someone you care about. It's not fair when someone starts with you first.

Lakeesha, who says she is willing to fight back more often than not, offers a similar perspective:

Look, if some girl tries to talk to me and I am supposed to do? I mean, I don't want to do or anything. That's not it. If he was disrespecting me when she does that, but I got to show her that I know what she's gonna play it on me. Maybe I decide to fight back, I'm gonna let her play me for no fool. I ain't gonna let what I get. Shit, she just be looking for it, she's gonna get. She not gonna make it. If no one bothers me, I ain't going to go looking for it. School would just grow up and stop.

The ethic of reciprocity that girls develop is shaped by the mutual need to have backup. Girls typically form understandings that tie to their experience, especially if they are “rolled” by a girl or a large group ambushes a smaller group. This turns unfair—mainly, when one party is unarmed—a tactic that is simultaneously violent and humiliating her (due to the intention to).⁴

Just like adults and male youths, girls in the neighborhood create personal arrangements to deal with police enforcement in such neighborhoods. They usually experience police involvement as a problem to solve. Many of the girls I followed and interviewed had a story about implicit or explicit police involvement with a person or related to someone they knew.

hit her in her mouth so she would need a lot of people being angry lots of trouble and all for nothing. I if I didn't stop it. It's not your fault use someone talking bad stuff about 's a way of standing up for yourself t.

g to walk away from a physical fight example:

my boyfriend and all, then what on't fight to keep a guy tied to me wants to walk, let him. But she be that. So he can do what he wants, her game and that she ain't gonna fight her or maybe I don't, but I ain't . No way, no how. Then I deserve ng for trouble, and so that's what ke me look bad. I ain't no punk. No oking for trouble. I wish girls in my p all this stupidity and silliness.

s commonly ascribe to is motivated if a "situation" presents itself. Girls they will come to each other's assis- on" (when several girls ambush one smaller group) or if a one-on-one fight y introduces a weapon and the other eously aimed both at "getting" a girl nsity of the beating she is subjected

female youths in Melrose Park and o ensure their physical safety, as law is inconsistent at best. Residents usu- s creating more problems than they d the adults in their lives had a ready ce racial bias, either in the first per- w. The use of offensive language and

insults by police officers in the courts time and time again. The court system residents of Melrose Park and Lee as be unfair, leaving people to feel vulnerable and old, see the best option to be to whenever possible and not look to the tem to provide them with protection.

Along these lines, girls almost always to back them, as well as the members. While occasionally a boy will be looking network is almost always exclusively considered dishonorable for a male peer. Indeed, if a male wants to retaliate sister will get involved on his behalf. A girl is expressing loyalty in line with of people close to her. When she is going also equate to her stepping in to protect times the girl is simply a friend and to be in a fight. The latter example is ranging in age from 13 to 15, who are way to build their reputation and in the

As a rule, if a girl is known to have rolled on. Most of the girls I spoke with with being rolled on or, if not, knew. Each girl I spoke with (and the parents with) was aware of the risk of being had come up with a loose plan for occur. It is important to note that they often surrounded by a great deal of her concern about being the victim of the boastful claims about having been the rife among girls. Pride related to having to a girl being able to say that she “gotter to pick herself up off the ground” work of supporters to mete out even had received. The narrative ends with essence, undoing her victim status. But rather than simply losing a fight for leaves the girl vulnerable to further a

of their duty is a complaint I heard from them, rather than being perceived by them as a neutral forum, was also viewed to be preferable. Thus, many residents, young or old, do take matters into their own hands rather than the police or the criminal justice system or any other kind of assistance.

Young people always turn to their sisters and cousins for protection, members of the cliques they "hang" with. When a girl is rolled on, a girl's security is at stake. In most cases, it would be a male youth to physically attack a female. In fighting another girl for a boy, a girl may see the situation as an opportunity to protect her own interests, as well. Sometimes, a girl may see the situation as an opportunity to see more the case for younger females who are more likely to perceive fighting as a matter of the vein of sport.

When a girl has good backup, she is less likely to be rolled on. Many of the girls I had contact with either had a personal experience of being rolled on or knew a girl who had this happen to her. The stories of all of the girls I had contact with rolled on, and each, in her own way, dealing with the situation were it to be a matter of the phenomenon of being rolled on is a common type, too: while girls have a legitimate right to defend themselves, this kind of an attack, exaggerated and often involving multiple girls as the target of a such an encounter are often connected to a girl who has been rolled on is often connected to a girl who "got it bad," had the strength of character to stand up to it, and then summoned her own network of friends to deal with harsher treatment than she herself could handle. In many cases, the girl coming out on top and, in the process, being seen as a victim (that is, a punk who fought with heart against poor odds) is often the girl who was rolled on, so anything that she can do to

reverse that perception protects her important instrumental value to her and, with.

Kendra, a 15-year-old girl who attends Melrose Park and who spends time here on the dance, expresses a set of views typical of her generation with regard to being rolled on. Her perception of a supply of girls to back her up on school is not unique in her neighborhood. She lays out the terms of her arrangements for striking back:

There are maybe four girls who I can count on to back me up on school. I got them, and they have me—I got them. I know who you got behind you if you want to fight with me, you better know. I once got rolled on—these girls rolled on me but within an hour, I came back with my girls. I was the one who started it all and messed her up. She ain't gonna be rolling on me or anyone else. I don't think she knew who she was messing with. She ain't gonna come after me. She ain't gonna mess with me around. There ain't gonna be no ne-

Lakeesha, who was present while Kendra was speaking,

If you don't have someone you can count on, you're in big trouble. I got rolled on real bad. I needed a lot of people to handle me. I'm a good fighter. Even if you are [a good fighter], you can't do if five girls start beating on you. I got rolled on because they want me to roll with them. I got rolled on one night and f'd them up real bad. So, you can't win. Sometimes you win, and sometimes you lose. I see it that way that I see it. I mean I rather not get rolled on. I don't want someone gonna come at me that way. I don't have no choice.

“Not liking the way a person looks is not the reason that younger girls give for why they want to roll with me.”

reputation and therefore has impor-
indirectly, to the girls she is aligned

ttends a mainstream high school in
hanging out with Lakeesha and Can-
to other neighborhood girls her age,
basic premise is that having a ready
ort notice is tantamount to surviving
the logic of retaliation and her own

consider to be my “homies.” I have
nem on speed dial. And everyone
something comes down. So if you
be ready to fight with them, too.
came and messed me up real bad,
th my girls and we got the one girl
up reaaally bad. I don’t think that
one else anytime real soon. I really
dealing with when she decided to
ake that mistake again. I don’t fool
ext time, and now she know that.

Kendra was speaking, added:

call on quick, you gonna be in big,
d because the girl thought that she
me because she knows I’m a good
ter], there is only so much you can
. I got plenty of friends to roll with
them. So we went back that same
ometimes, that just be the way it is.
es you lose. It’s how it is. That’s the
t be fighting like that and all, but if
ay, you know, I don’t got no other

s at you” is the most frequently cited
hy fights begin. On this score, Shay-

leen, who is currently in placement. When she looks at me the wrong way, I may hit her too long. I don't need to be doing that. From the standpoint of an outside observer, a slight to a girl who is in the mood to fight. Over the course of the many fights that I have been involved in, it has been impossible at least half of the time to determine if a fight has been deliberately made or whether it was accidental. However, as I spent more and more time in the sense of what it meant for a girl to be slighted. With that, it became easier for me to see a high potential for being experienced as an opening to increase one's status. For most girls who grow up in inner cities, a slight is on. With time, it became clear to me that many altercations between female youth are fought which one girl was seen as implying a slight to another girl. While self-esteem in this age group is fragile, slurs or slights can take on gargantuan proportions if security or fragility factors heavily influence how one feels.⁶

With great annoyance in her voice, she described a problem she had with a female youth who had slighted her a couple of days earlier. It is noteworthy that the girl nor had any direct contact with her. Tamika approached the girl with "attitude" and the girl countered with her own display of anger.

She be swishing her hips and acting like she want to bring attention to oneself]. She just want to know. She just be trying to put me down. I'm in a mood, well, then she gonna get into something and then gonna get into something and then gonna get into something and all that?

Assuring me first and foremost that she was not interested in or concerned about what others thought, she sums up the issue in the context of a girl's reputation of her reputation:

for aggravated assault, says, "If a girl
her. I ain't gonna listen to no shit for
at." It is important to emphasize that,
observer, what constitutes an insult or
to fight can almost be imperceptible.
that I observed, I would say that it was
figure out whether some affront had
there was indeed anything to avenge.
the time in Melrose Park and Lee, my
be perceived as weak became height-
r me to identify encounters that had
ced as a provocation, an exposure,
nding among other girls. Of course,
s develop this heightened sense early
e that the combustible ingredient in
ouths was a real or imagined slight in
g that she was "better" than another
oup is naturally in a state of flux, thus
an importance, a girl's overall degree
into how a given situation makes her

e, Tamika tried to explain to me the
h who walked by her in McDonald's
orthy that Tamika neither knew the
ner before that afternoon. In the end,
tude," and a fight nearly ensued when
lay of aggressive baiting in return:

ng all jo [an exaggerated display to
t gets on my nerves. That's all I got
herself above everyone else, and if
a pick it up and maybe we're gonna
a fight. Who does she think she is

that she was not at all remotely inter-
er girls thought of her, Allie squarely
girl's self-esteem and the importance

If you are pretty, prettier than he always tell. It's about status. You ha

The ire that a girl unleashes by what she wears, how she carries herself is related to the perception that she. The many ways in which a girl can seems to be endless. It is not simply that you are that raises the likelihood of a sometimes much more. Genuinely be standing out seems to heighten the c she can simultaneously send the mes her thinking that she is above her peo as she also presents herself as being wonder why a girl in an inner-city ne of importance to herself inspires such

While no doubt some of the deta competition that ensues among girls ries about resource loss, the dynamic vincingly be reduced to economic a with boys, the cultural significance o racism has to be factored into an an. The general emphasis placed on resp age-related preoccupations more inte articulated in terms of self-image and

Along these lines, Allie offers an the depth of jealousy and envy that e

It's like, if another girl gets attentio
It's as if she's saying she's better t
down a notch. You gonna keep he
gonna check her, and that gonna r
cially if you be feeling bad about so

The emotional threat that Allie su experience when they perceive them while not unique to adolescent girls, to their sociocultural backgrounds a noted, whereas middle-class girls n

er, she feels insecure and you can
ate me, you make me.

calling attention to herself based on
self, or the scene she makes in public
e “thinks she’s special” (Ness, 2004).
manifest this attitude of specialness
the act of pretending to be better than
girl being the object of criticism and
being prettier, smarter, or in some way
chance of a girl being targeted unless
sage that her talents do not add up to
ers. Thus, a girl can stand out as long
g “regular” in other ways. One must
neighborhood who attaches a measure
n suspicion and animosity.

iled attention paid to slights and the
s in inner cities is tied up with wor-
c that is being described cannot con-
and concrete material concerns. As
of respect as it relates to poverty and
analysis of the phenomenon for girls.⁷
ect has the tendency to make typical
ensified. For girls, the issue often gets
d their desirability to boys.

insightful analysis, which speaks to
exists among her peers:

ion, she’s taking it away from you.
han you. So you gonna knock her
er from making you look bad. You
make you feel a little better, espe-
omething.

uggests girls in Melrose Park and Lee
selves to be upstaged by another girl,
points to meanings that are specific
nd present situations. As previously
egotiate jealousy and envy through

what has been termed “relational aggression” (Rose Park and Lee are staged and set here does not act as a substitute for physical aggression). While physical aggression is presumed to be a more acceptable channel for girls in middle-class communities, relational aggression is not as an acceptable channel for girls in middle-class communities. It is not the harming of girls in middle-class communities; it is rather than indirect ones.

The literature on relational aggression among girls in middle-class neighborhoods (e.g., Rose Park and Lee, 2002). In these settings, severe aggression are the order of the day, but typically in theory, the aggression that girls in middle-class communities is discharged in the majority of situations. The surrounding community does not pose the same harmful impulses and intentions, and girls do not resort to violence, such behavior may be more common. Whereas relational aggression can cause physical harm, when it does, it is more common phenomenon rather than being its own category of relationships to inflict injury. This is the phenomenon of relational aggression. I am interested in that female teenage jealousies in poor communities of the greater disadvantage that female girls face. Restrictions against girls in middle-class communities and the consequences to their future are more likely. Middle-class girls are therefore more likely to engage in aggression rather than direct ones.

Another way to understand and explain the behavior of girls in middle-class communities is to consider their attention to social status. Such an interpretation may be more common in a context of collective devaluation, where girls are countering the perception of being less valued. In Melrose Park or Lee is thought to be a more common phenomenon. Her behavior is viewed as ignoring the social status of youths tend to be preoccupied with their own status. However, because female friends are more likely to emulate one another's boldness and attitude,

gression,” these same issues in Mel-
tled through force; social aggression
or physical aggression (Ness, 2004).
ed to be a male phenomenon in mid-
gression is viewed more tolerantly, if
rls to express negative thoughts and
others that is basically off limits for
is doing so by direct physical means

ession, which primarily pertains to
s, testifies to this (Jack, 1999; Sim-
te teasing, brutal gossip, and ostraciz-
cally not physical aggression. At least
nflict in middle-class neighborhoods
ations through covert means. As the
ositively sanction girls enacting their
d certainly it does not support their
ust remain below the radar screen.
ometimes lead to the enactment of
ore a secondary consequence of the
defining feature—it is the manipula-
that is fundamental to the phenom-
inclined to believe that it is not simply
r neighborhoods run deeper because
ale youths are subject to; rather, the
class neighborhoods using violence
es that flow from them are formida-
more apt to embrace indirect modes

frame the ire that girls in inner cities
n-seeking behavior as an act of con-
makes a great deal of sense within a
ere self-esteem is importantly tied to
beled a punk. In essence, when a girl
signal that she is “above” another girl,
he sensitivity to respect that female
a. This is not a straightforward mat-
and acquaintances often encourage
which then brings attention that can

cause a girl to get beat up. The girl who is dismissive is most commonly experienced, the worry that another girl will lose esteem that many adolescents in her

To be sure, much of the time a girl's self-esteem plays out around her desirability compared to one's same-sex peers. In the context of direct comparison to one's same-sex peers, it is not something that is unique to girls. To the extent that it does for girls. Although the issue of "respect," what constitutes respect for youths is often not one and the same for boys. A male youth's self-esteem are bound up with recognizable family resemblance, may be expressed in different ways. For example, respect for a boy may come out in the context of appearance, relationship to fashion, relationship to boys. As Zalika, a young woman in a mainstream high school in Melrose Park, Illinois, when asked:

Being a girl means you got to be a lady. You got to be the same time, that is, if you're not interested in you. A guy is ok if you're doing that all the time and seeming to respect you if he thinks you're out there. A guy to think that you're a lady but

Zalika was quick to add, as most girls who are interested in boys, that she does not change her behavior to maintain her own integrity as someone who is not intimidated or bowled over. In truth, it is more feelings of insecurity than girls' self-esteem that is a way to make a girl feel more powerful. Thus, while status is a significant concern for boys and male youths, "desirability" is one that is self-measured by girls. Hence, a girl's self-esteem is an area and therefore would be quite sensitive to

Other reasons that girls cite for their self-esteem are loyalty to designated others, and ven-

who in some way is felt to be aloof or
 enced as “asking for it.” As Allie sug-
 l outshine you speaks to the low self-
 neighborhood seem to wrestle with.
 girl’s sensitivity to being respected
 mpared with another’s. The dynamic
 -sex peers and the competition that
 preoccupies boys nearly to the same
 gh boys are also concerned with the
 s “disrespect” for female and male
 . Indeed, the issues that a female and
 d to, while they possess some recog-
 , and often are, expressed in differ-
 girls in inner cities frequently plays
 ational snubs, and, in some form or
 ika, a 14-year-old girl who attends a
 Park goes out of her way to explain

both tough and not too tough at
 o lesbian and you want guys to be
 ou fight, but you don’t want to be
 g like some wild thing. A guy won’t
 t there acting stupid. You want a
 not that you’re a sap.

girls do when talking about their inter-
 ge herself for anyone. Also, that she
 eally anyone thinks of her. She fights
 meone who cannot easily be intim-
 eemed to me that there were many
 wanted to admit to, and fighting was
 rful than she often felt she was deep
 cant preoccupation for both female
 e of the major ways in which status is
 is vulnerable to feeling shame in this
 nsitive to the reactions of others.
 fighting are insults to their mother,
 ting pent-up rage. Like being looked

at the wrong way, the first two are . . .
Samantha explains the subject in some

I'm gonna hit someone if they disrespects
my moms, I wouldn't be here. It's why
mom is the highest because she raised
you. She gave birth to you. She's the
mother what, she's still my mom and
I fight with her and curse her out
if someone talk bad about her. You know
it's about a lot of things. You understand
[if you don't understand the kind of
It's kind of hard to explain.

Samantha's statement conveys the depth of her love for her mother, despite the fact that her mother has many problems, which at times compromise her ability to care for her family. The excerpt aptly characterizes the relationship between Melrose Park and Lee and her mother. In the face of her mother's failures as a parent, Samantha understands the sacrifices her mother has made to raise her, especially after her father's death. She is therefore willing to go to great lengths to defend her mother in the face of criticism from others.⁸ In my travels I witnessed few girls who were willing to extend the same kind of unconditional love and support as Samantha on another occasion said as much. After emphasizing how much she loved her mother, she was likely to fight someone who put him down. In contrast, her father had maintained some level of respect for her. In her eyes he did not deserve the same level of respect as the woman who bore her and took care of her. She was not explaining why any better, and wanted

Beyond one's mother and immediate family, loyalty extends to a wide range of associates, though not necessarily on a formal basis. It is not unusual for girls to defend someone with other girls based on the norm of loyalty. A girl who is "out" of a clique on a given day is often extremely close to back up one another. This loyalty has a pragmatic dimension to the arrangement.

invoked without much provocation.
In detail:

respect my mom—if it weren't for
worse than disrespecting me. Your
raised you. She breaks her neck for
the reason that you're here. No mat-
ter, nothing can change that. Even if
I say it, it don't mean that I'm gonna let
you be dissin' yourself if you did that. So
you understand? It's a complicated [inaudi-
ble] kind of thing that I'm talking about.

The intense loyalty that she feels toward
her mother has had her fair share of
tested her ability to parent and care for
characterizes the feeling that many girls in
have for their mothers. Despite her mother's
Samantha understands that her mother made great
efforts for her father left the home. Samantha
struggles to preserve a sense of positive
regard for all that has gone wrong between
her instances where girls were willing
to show unconditional loyalty to their fathers. Saman-
tha when I asked her about this directly.
When I asked her about her father, she said she was less
attached to him. She explained that, while her
involvement with her over the years,
she has the same amount of respect as the woman
she has. She said it was "just different," could
not be compared to leave it at that.

In an immediate family, loyalty may be pledged
though sometimes only on a temporary
basis. Girls move in and out of "understandings"
that have an ebb and flow of who is "in" and
who is "out" week. Two girls do not have to be
together; most girls realize that there is
no permanent arrangement. The arrangement is akin to

one hand washing the other: cooper knows that if she wins a fight in the schoolyard, she is building her own reputation indirectly as much for sport as for instrumental reasons. She is passionate about standing up for others. And she is determined to show their mettle and therefore able to back up another girl, which amounts to a great deal. Natira, a girl with a ready smile, offers a different aspect of loyalty:

There's this girl on my block that I know. The first time she saw me fighting and said I was a fighter. The next time I saw her, she said she would watch mine, especially if I have other people at school who I don't know. If someone comes down on me one day, she'll be on her to cover with me, and sometimes she'll even fight your way out of something. I mean, if you see a girl that you're gonna fight, you let her know you gonna try her. I may feel like I can't fight her up and all. But if she's friend of mine, I'll fight her. If I can't fight them, I protect her.

Zalika, a good friend of Lakeisha's, is also of the caliber of her fighting skills, despite her size. She appears at the moment to serve as a

Last year I had these three girls, and they fought each other. One moved away, and she didn't come since she stopped going to the school. I was fighting with another girl from my school, and I been in one fight with her so far. She's really mean, really, really good. Like you know, like you. It's not like I look for a fight, but I know who's gonna be there for me if I need it. I'll be someone.

And lastly, Victoria, who has been a friend of mine, speaks to the sense of fun that often

ation benefits both. Moreover, a girl in the service of helping another girl, she is more likely to be successful. Younger girls who pursue fighting for various reasons typically are quite enthusiastic. As noted earlier, many girls are eager to take advantage of an opportunity to fight. They are happy to come by another opportunity to fight. This provides further insight into the pragmatic nature of their decisions.

I don't really hang with. But one girl told me that she thought I was a good fighter. She said if I would watch her back that she would since we live on the same block. I know she would be there for me, but on my block, I know that I can count on her. Sometimes that's enough not to have to fight. It's crazy. You don't just look at the girl, you look at the girls behind her before you can fight a particular girl and beat her. If I can't fight with certain other girls, I won't probably won't fight her.

Another girl, who is petite, yet confident about her abilities, describes a relatively fluid inner circle of friends that she shares with her well:

And we'd take turns looking out for each other. Another I don't really see anymore is from the school I go to. So this year I be hanging out with her, and we said we'd roll together. She's a really good fighter. I don't have to worry if she's with someone or something, but I like knowing she's there. I decide that I'm gonna step up on my own.

Another girl, who has been a member of the group at New Directions for nearly a year, describes how she accompanies girls' fighting:

I smacked a girl in the face the other day. She was really nasty about me. I was in the mood to fight, but I was totally not expecting it. We both got hurt. A teacher came and pulled us apart. I was embarrassed in front of my friends, the way I just hit her and she was so pretty upset afterwards. She's such a bitch. I don't know how to keep her mouth shut. She's really is, and that's why she got punched.

Girls readily acknowledge that anger is a natural byproduct of pent-up rage. The anger that many girls experience is often the result of long-standing family problems or traumas, and it varies from girl to girl.⁹ While some girls will often defend her mother no matter what, if she is with them, she may also harbor intense anger. For girls who have outlets readily available, fighting becomes a way to release the steam that builds up inside her. As Allie says,

I get mad thinking about my mother not being around, and sometimes I just want to be punching someone. That's not what I should think, especially when I start a fight. It's just going on. It may not be right, but it's just my feelings sometimes.

Allie's words underscore the progression from anger in the past to fighting in the present. The act of fighting psychologically help Allie feel less vulnerable. Fighting to undo a sense of helplessness and gain control over someone she is capable of dominating is a way that she assuages the hurt that she has experienced, fully and partially. In Allie's case, the source of her anger is a pinpoint. As mentioned earlier, Allie's mother was very young. Her mother died when Allie was very young and never was able to function as a single parent. Any contact Allie had with her mother was sporadic. For the most part, erratic and disappointing. Her mother often make plans to see her and then never came by. While Allie would not

er day because she said something
l to fight, so I just swung. She was
started to fight, and then a coun-
was laughing about it all day with
and she was so surprised. She was
th a stupid bitch. She don't know
thinks that she's tougher than she
nched in her face.

Other reason they fight is to deal with
walk around with can be related to
the accumulation of everyday pres-
As illustrated above, although a girl
matter what has transpired between
nger toward her. With few other out-
es a way for a girl to let off some of
s Allie plainly puts it:

her doing drugs when I was a kid
mes it makes me feel like I want to
why I fight always, but sometimes I
at, it's one of the things that can be
I guess that it is how I handle my

ression from thinking about hurts of
he excerpt suggests that fighting can
ictimized. At times, then, Allie uses
ness in one area by exerting power
nating. In hurting another, it appears
erself has felt, even if only temporar-
ource of past hurt is easy enough to
's mother left the family home when
veloped an intractable drug problem
stable parent in Allie's life thereafter.
ner over the years that followed was,
ointing. Indeed, Allie's mother would
n not show or call to explain why she
ever say that she stopped loving her

mother, on a number of occasions she has lost respect for her mother and, at some point, her mother would be the mother that she would like to be. The admission was not something she was prompted to.

By all accounts, Allie's paternal aunt had a stable and loving home. Although Allie says, "her," his mental health problems had a stable home. Allie's father died about the time she was just 12. While Allie describes her difficult family background has left her to work out. While she was not very vocal about her feelings directly (not surprising, at her age), fighting served as an important coping mechanism. Significant stress and also in relation to her mother. The girl uses fighting in this way, in Melrose Place, of the girls who fought did.

Kendra, in an uncharacteristically honest way, talks about her family situation one day when she is at a Chinese take-out. Her revelation about her mother's early bad day at school in which she left her mother at the end of the year:

Sometimes things feel like they get too heavy and I need to let off steam. My mom used to smoke a pack with cigarette butts a couple of times a day, no matter what. She ain't had no energy. I get to thinking about things, and I feel like punching someone out right in front of me. Nobody better get in my way 'cause I'm in that mood. I'm not gonna listen to no one.

Here, too, the procession from a state of anger to a state of reflection. Kendra is conscious of the fact that she has hurt her, so she at times will strike back. She recalls what her mother did to her, trying to directly address the troubles she has in her hands. Yet, although Kendra harbors anger, she nonetheless perceives herself to owe

she was willing to confide that she had at some point, had stopped hoping that her father was what she wanted and needed her to be. I thought that Allie would elaborate on when

her father, the man who raised her provided her with a sense of security. Allie always felt her father “was behind her” and that left him unable to provide her with the support she needed. About a year before I met her, when she described herself as a “happy” person, her difficulty was with many feelings that she has yet to process. I was very comfortable speaking about these things (at her age), I had little doubt that Allie’s coping mechanism for her at times of significant disappointment. Although not every girl in Rose Park and Lee, a large proportion

of girls in a vulnerable state, openly elaborated on their feelings when I accidentally ran into her at the store. I thought her mother came after a particular incident. I learned that she might be held back at

school. It was too much for me, and I just need to get away from her. She beat me, and she even burned me. I don't know why. She still be my mom though, but she's not my mom. Easy life, either, I guess. Sometimes I get angry. I know I take it out to the street. I don't know why. Right now, but I don't even know why. I don't know why they gonna be sorry. Not when I don't even listen to anything then. Nothing.

The link between anger to aggression is quite obvious. Allie cannot hurt the actual person who hurt her, so she takes it out where she can. While Kendra's anger here does not appear to be an open expression of anger she had experienced in her mother's life, her great anger toward her mother, she feels she owes her mother a great debt to her mother. What-

ever insults and injuries have muddied the years, Kendra still sees her role as views coming to her mother's defense personally feels.

While the preceding two examples with mothers who have in some way source of anger in a girl's life is not overly simple to generalize the phenomenon. Clearly, mothers are not the only Fathers are often cited as the cause recurring negative experiences, as a professionals who have passed through (teachers, probation officers). It is the importance relationship between a girl and her on a number of scores and, for that relationship also one of the greatest in a girl's life.

It is likely that more girls who report sexual and physical abuse than they see followed (in total) acknowledged so. I followed closely, two reported being physically abused (roughly 16% respectively). While the correlation between aggression in boys has been well documented (Widom, 1989; Oliver, 1994), the effect development of aggressive behavior significantly less discussion. What we who go on to be incarcerated for crimes in their life been physically abused (1990; Beck and Mumola, 1999; Lederman in most of these cases, the abuse appears rather than a case of a few isolated Lind, 1992, 1997).¹⁰

Though we can only speculate on the absence of parental influence on to think that processes of learning for of boys when it comes to violence; are by the same principle of reinforcement aggressive than comparison groups,

died the waters between them over
s protecting her mother's name. She
se as a higher duty, despite how she

bles of pent-up rage are associated
y harmed their daughters, the main
always her mother, and it would be
nomenon of girls' anger along these
ly ones who girls feel anger toward.
of a range of negative emotions and
re teachers, the police, and various
gh the lives of girls (i.e., social work-
ortance and often the primacy of the
mother that makes it so significant
matter, makes the mother-daughter
sources of strength and attachment

ort to using violence experience sex-
lf-report—around 40% of the girls I
me history of abuse. Of the 16 girls
g sexually abused, and five reported
and 35% of my study sample, respec-
n excessive parental force and aggres-
ted in relation to adult male violence
ct of maternal physical abuse on the
in adult females has stimulated sig-
do know is that nearly 62% of girls
nmitting violence have at some point
American Correctional Association,
rman and Brown, 2000). Moreover,
ears to be part of an ongoing pattern
l incidents (Widom, 1989; Chesney-

the effect of parental socialization, or
actual behaviors, there is no reason
r girls differ dramatically from those
guably, learning for both is governed
ent. Thus, as abused boys are more
one would expect that when a girl

has been the target of violence and that as fighting violence diminish, the likelihood of aggressive impulses would also increase. This condition for girls in Melrose Park and elsewhere, it no doubt can provide insight.

In the literature on violence, however, physical violence has taken a back seat to sexual abuse in the study of violence.¹¹ When physical abuse is written about, it is largely done in a nonspecific way, leaving out the sex of the offending perpetrator and the sex of the victim. Moreover, there is little attention to the context surrounding the abuse and little or no attention to other abuse in the girl's life, creating the impression that violence can be thought about in that way.

What this boils down to is a body of literature that typically become violent because they are violent, not violent because they have been violated. This framing in any way minimize the harm that sexual violence does, and that the relationship between child sexual violence by females in this framing is not the same as that physical abuse of a child by a parent. It is an act of victimization and gender so important that it to be underestimated or overlooked. It has not been the case. Indeed, developmental research has examined the role that physical abuse plays in the lives of girls, in general, apart from inquiries into whether a girl's mother has been the abuser.¹²

Lastly, while loath to admit it, as we have seen, it is over boys. Even in the early stages of the conversation, it is kindly to another girl getting too close to the subject, partly serious and partly kidding, Kiara says, "I know, in the context of why other girls fight."

Look, I ain't never fought over a boy. I know that some girls be bugging their boyfriends. Some girl be sleeping with their boyfriend and they get mad near that, believe me. I see girls go to school and they get mad, shit is serious stuff. You don't be with a boy unless you ready to die.

the prohibitions against her committing violence, and that an abused girl would express her anger. While abuse is not a necessary condition for Lee to seek out and engage in violence, it can lead into certain cases.

However, physical abuse has historically been used to explain why females commit violence. When it comes to females, this is a common theme. Having unclear the exact nature of the perpetrator, or his or her relationship to the victim, and a lack of understanding of the dynamics surrounding the contextualization of its meaning of the experience, the impression that all abuse is equal and

is a common theme of literature that suggests that boys are beaten, while girls become violent sexually. While I do not want to ignore the impact that sexual abuse can cause, I would argue that childhood physical abuse and later adult violence gets deemphasized at great cost. In the context of the same sex is simultaneously being socialized, it certainly cannot afford to be ignored. Unfortunately, however, this has been a common theme in research that has not adequately examined the role of violence in predicting aggressive behavior. This is a common theme in the specific impact when the

as noted earlier, girls frequently fight. When talking to a boy, a girl does not take offense to her interest. In a harsh tone, she weighs in on the subject, although it is over boys, not herself:

... and I ain't never gonna do it, but I'm gonna go out when they find that another girl did. Whew. . . . You don't want to get so crazy over that kind of shit. This is just fooling around with another girl's life. I know it with what comes next. I know it

happens all the time and everybody and it's too much trouble if you ask me only, then he can be with some

Somewhat more willing to discuss ing that neither would she fight over wanted to add on the subject:

I would be mad if another girl wa know that never happened to me. But it happens all the time, and g thing fight a lot. The other day at this black girl and this Hispanic g The black girl says, "You be hittin be hitting you, you dumb bitch." T and it was supposed to continue a happened after that. That's all I kn be cheating on her before, so I don the other girl gonna make a differ

Manuela, a girl who readily admit clear that she will not fight over a boy that to fight a girl who is talking to y girl who disrespects you, not fighting

I don't care about the guy or anythi cause she deserves it. The bitch jus ain't fighting over the boy. I'm fight in a way that says she thinks I'm a

No doubt, how a girl responds to personal life history and neighborhood ing adolescent male-female relation Interestingly, despite whether it is ir as a matter of pride, also deny that when the girl in question is their r becomes a matter of pride for a boy the reputation of a female member o negative things to the same effect ar

y does it, but it's asking for trouble
k me. If a boy don't want to be with
one else.

s her own views, although also insist-
er a boy, Zalika had something she

s talking to my boyfriend, but you
I don't know why, it just never has.
irls that be mad over that kind of
school a fight broke out between
girl over just that kind of a thing.
g on my boyfriend and I'm gonna
teachers came and broke it up fast,
fter school, but I don't know what
ow. That girl knows her boyfriend
n't know why she think beating up
nce.

s that she likes to fight, also makes it
r. However, she makes the distinction
your boyfriend is about "checking" a
g over the boy per se:

ing but I'm gonna mess that girl up
t be asking for it. The way I see it, I
ting the girl because she be acting
punk.

losing her boyfriend is related to her
od scripts, rules, and roles surround-
ships and peer group expectations.
a reality the case, boys typically, and
they would fight over a girl except
mother, sister, or cousin. Indeed, it
to fight when another boy impugns
of his family, far more so than when
e said about his father. A boy would

likely admit to fighting if something is done to him because not to do so would reflect a more intelligent scenario than the one in which a man would move on his girlfriend.

Whether or not female youths admit to having sex without less an understanding among them than they would like to set off limits. In practice, however, girls are often in their romantic interests all the time. Whether or not they feel the disrespect that a girl often perceives in being taken to start two girls down the path to a relationship, they run as high as they do in part because they are often condoned, it is expected that most boys will be having sex with several girls at a time. This does not reflect well on a boy's reputation and a boy confirms this. He was a minor convicted of sexual assault to Compton-Taylor for 18 months for a crime that was so bad that the boy had to be hospitalized for a period of several years, the charges against him faded with the passing of time. In his character study of Roger in just a few words shines a light on the persona he must assume to keep himself from being conscious of the image of himself that he is projecting. It speaks to the instrumental value of having sex.

You have to hold yourself a certain way. It's all about how people be seeing you. You have to be a certain way if you come across as being serious and not just hype. I like the ladies, but I don't like it if a girl is hot. It don't mean nothing.

In addition to liking the company of women, communicating is that, especially if you sell a certain lifestyle that you have to keep up in order to maintain. Spending time and money on several girls at a time appear like he is a player and not a person who is trying to attract and keep the affections of a single woman. From this standpoint, his desirability is important to him because that he can attract and, to a lesser extent, maintain, in some form or fashion.

insulting was said about his girlfriend poorly on him. But that is a different matter. If another boy is suspected of making a girl admit to fighting over boys, there is no doubt that “messing with someone’s man” is a serious offense (and boys) move in on each other’s territory. Whether the violation is real or imagined, the boy who is accused, and then reciprocates, is enough to lead to a physical confrontation. Suspicious of a girl’s use, while promiscuity is not openly admitted by boys, especially those who sell drugs, it is often done simultaneously. Having several girls is a status among his peers. Roger, a 17-year-old drug dealer before he was remanded for beating up another male youth so he was criminalized. Known to family court over a series of appearances against him had gotten more serious charges. The characterization of the situation with girls, and the fight on a host of other issues related to his court appearances. He is constantly accused of what he must project. In short, Roger is accused of having “girls on the side”:

...a way to maintain a certain status. They gonna treat you in a certain way. You know, as being the real deal, so you know I gonna mess around with them.

...of girls, what Roger is also commu- nicated about drugs, there is a certain image and status in order to be viewed as the real thing. Having several girls at once makes a male youth look like a winner; the message is that he can afford to have several girls at once. From the boy’s perspective, the status increases with the more females he has. The extent, that he can take care of mon-

Not surprisingly, some of the biggest fights are over boys. Competition over boys can have an added economic dimension to the typical adolescent worries or “he-said-she-said” a need to protect their place as a girlfriend. This role often comes with spending money and perks; even boys who do not deal with girlfriends for “incidentals.”¹⁴ This is the “B.M.” (baby’s mother)—the girl in a union with a boy—(Ness, 2004). Kimmberly, that she named Thomas, after his father, said the matter:

Derrick [her son’s father] buys my son things. When he stops coming around, how we get things, so he got money. Girls see that. Maybe have his baby so they get his money. That. Me and Derrick had a real thing with another girl for nearly three years. That’s why I get in the way of that if I can help that, but it happens a lot. Any girl get a boy, just let another girl take away what he got. No matter what a girl tells you, that’s what she want.

Despite her earlier cited assertion that boys are not the issue, Cassie is an example of another girl who is serving her relationship with her boyfriend for nearly three years. He buys her things and they spend time at each other’s homes. The two spend time at each other’s homes together. In addition to the fact that she would like to see him to another girl would also mean a loss of support. Cassie has grown accustomed to how she gets through the relationship. She sees her in “cute” outfits, so he helps her. She knows that she would never fight over a boy because of protection of protecting her pride and shield her boyfriend, Devon, were he to stray. While Devon has also given her reasons to question her

gest street battles start with two girls
ver boys in low-income areas clearly
nsion that raises the stakes beyond
aid, she-saids"—girls frequently feel
boy's main girlfriend because that
ney and a long list of other coveted
drugs are frequently looked to by
This is especially the case if a girl
mother of a baby produced from a
a, who recently gave birth to a boy
ather, brings home the reality of the

son diapers and toys. I worry that if
gonna make it. He does some deal-
, so they want to hook up with him.
m to take care of them. I didn't do
thing. No bullshit. We know each
a long time. I ain't gonna let no girl
it. It just ain't right for a girl to do
gonna protect her interests and not
t it took her a long time to get. No
what she's really thinking about.

n that she would never fight over a
er girl with a strong interest in pre-
yfriend. Cassie has been with Devon
things, and she is close to his family.
homes and celebrate major holidays
t she says she loves Devon, to lose
n the loss of a measure of financial
ed to Devon's assistance and factors
week—she says that Devon likes to
s her whenever she asks. Her insis-
r a boy seems to be more a combina-
lding herself from disappointment in
n has always stood by Cassie, he has
now truly monogamous he is. Many

girls will voice a hard line about not
 tice, they will defend what they see
 principles rebuking the idea of fighti
 comes to shove.”

What Actually Happ

As has hopefully been made clear
 in Melrose Park and Lee are not a r
 imagination. Fights are frequently se
 and not far from school grounds. If
 place, it is not uncommon for as m
 females, to come as spectators. Mor
 ers-by and are typically not broken u
 in danger of being badly injured or h
 being too extreme. Where that line is
 parent, peers, or other observers who

It is not fighting but fighting unfa
 in Melrose Park and Lee. Scratching
 biting in a fight is viewed negativel
 convey that they do not fight “like a
 in her face, and then I banged her hea
 ’cause someone pulled me off her. I
 confides, “I smashed her in the mou
 a punk.” However, of the many fight
 year, few went down as “cleanly” as g
 themselves in the midst of a fight an
 than anything, how a fight progress
 girls are. Usually a fight ends when o
 far enough—one girl is bleeding badl
 ered. Often, whether winning or losin
 to be restrained.

There is unanimous agreement a
 ers, and police that it is harder to b
 cally described as being more “emoti
 Sergeant Palazzo, a police officer wi
 around in his patrol car, elaborates o

fighting over boys, though, in practice as their “turf.” Pride and oft-stated anger over a boy often fade “when push

Reasons When Girls Fight

By now, street fights among youths are an occurrence by any stretch of the imagination. It is not unusual to get up to “go down” right after school. The word spreads that a fight will take place and many as 20 to 30 youths, males and females, are drawn to the spontaneous eruptions. They draw passers-by, even by adults, until one party is humiliated to a point that is viewed as a fight. The fight drawn depends in large part on the people who are present.

Anything that gives a girl a bad reputation, such as pulling hair, spitting, pinching, or hitting, is a fight. Most girls go out of their way to avoid a fight. Tamika reveals, “I punched her in the head against the ground. I only stopped because she would have kept on going.” Kendra says, “I hit her with my fist ‘cause she called me a bitch.” The fights I witnessed over the course of a year were the ones girls suggested. In reality, girls protect themselves any way they can (Ness, 2004). More often, the fight depends on how equally matched the fight is. Onlookers deem that things have gone too far if one girl is or is otherwise obviously overpowering, girls do not want to stop and need to finish the fight.

Among treatment personnel, teachers, and police, break up girls’ fights. Girls are typically “more emotional” than boys and more “devious.” The girl with whom I spent many nights riding the bus was in this:

Girls just won't let it go. You tell them to walk and they get in your face and curse at you to walk, and he does. That's a major problem for boys and females.

Most girls will report that they accept the loss to a girl, though, again, many will acknowledge a loss before a fight. Melissa, who tends to lose fights,

I like seeing a girl get all messed up [laughing] and have to wipe their face with a towel, and sometimes they even cry. I like to see them just take my beating and walk away. I like to see them up the girl at a later date, but if I know I've hurt her, me, I just let it go.

As previously noted, the regret that a girl feels after she hurts another girl is a common theme. The girls that I spent my days and nights talking to admit after the fact that she felt some regret. For instance, Zalika was somewhat annoyed about injuring a girl she fought. The girl had to go to the emergency room. Zalika had to get 20 stitches. Zalika, with noticeable anger,

Why you asking me this? I don't care about that stuff. I didn't fight to get my ass beat. I should I feel bad or anything like that? No, I'm not messed up.

Zalika's words echo the sense that Rose Park and Lee have about doing well. Here again, the notion of a competitive success is viewed as being at another's expense. The other girls I spoke with, believed it was a matter of when to wait to be the recipient of the same loss. For those girls, the question for them is not "if" but rather "when."

them you're going to take them in, you give you out. You give a boy a chance for difference in dealing with males

actually like how it feels to hit another. I know that they often get nervous to approach fighting as sport, explains:

up. You know, they start bleeding on the face. They be all upset and every-
body cry. I don't cry if I get messed up. I
cry. Sometimes I'm gonna try to beat
her now that she's a better fighter than

that one might expect an adolescent
girl proved to be hard to find among the
girls with. Indeed, I found it rare for a girl
to cry if she hurt another girl badly. For
example, I enjoyed when I asked her how she felt
when a girl was injured so badly that she had
to be hospitalized. She reports that the girl had to have over
a week of annoyance in her tone, says:

are. She came up to me for dumb
reasons. She be stupid, and so why
she got that? That's not my fault she got

that many of her female peers in Mel-
bourne do unto others before they do unto you.
In a competitive environment where one person's
gain is another's expense can be found. Zalika, like
many, was smarter to aggress first rather than
reactive behavior. When it comes to standing
up for herself, most of the girls whose paths I crossed

Unlike boys, girls ordinarily take a weapon into their hands: for many girls, using a weapon is a way to defend themselves with one's own two hands. Most girls carry a knife or a small weapon if they think they are about to be attacked. Some girls carry implements that, while not technically weapons, can be used to cause harm (i.e., a box cutter). Many girls who carry a knife say they have never used it to attack and have never used it.¹⁵ In addition, some weapons may at times do so if they are used in a violent manner.

When weapons are introduced into a fight, they are knives or a sharp implement. This is a common theme among youths that when a girl has a knife, she uses it on the face of the girl she is fighting. Lakeesha says it bluntly:

This way she gonna see herself in the mirror and see what I did to her. She never gonna see herself the next time. Take my word for it, I've used it to cut and cut someone. It has a lot to do with it too.

Allie elaborates further as to why a girl might use a knife as her weapon of choice:

A girl gonna use a knife to cut and cut someone. You see that girl look prettier than her. You want attention to herself wearing tight clothes. You want to see boys. You're gonna take away someone's face. You gonna scar. This way you don't feel so bad. You're not cute. It's just an insecurity. You want to be like everything, so you get them with a knife.

Many of these themes have already been discussed in previous excerpts. Of particular issue here is the theme of cutting another girl down to size. Indeed, the data show that while males shoot while females cut was a common theme among individuals, male and female, with all participants unanimously confirmed this to be the case.

A negative view of fighting with weapons suggests that one cannot defend oneself. Most girls claim that they only carry a knife to be rolled on. However, some carry a knife (or a weapon like a knife or a gun, can opener, flat can opener, or corkscrew). They do so for "show" to deter an opponent. In addition, girls who usually do not carry a knife think they are in imminent danger. When they go to a fight, more frequently than not they get cut. It is common knowledge that if a girl has a knife, she will likely try to cut the other girl. Sha, who does not mince words, puts

...in the mirror every day and remember
...a forget. She not gonna be so bold
... It's not like I'm gonna just go out
... with what the other girl is about,

...a knife or a sharp object is typically a

...other girl because she jealous. She
...r. Especially if the girl be drawing
...clothes. Getting looks from other
...me of her power if you give her a
...d about how you look if you know
...e thing. For girls, how they look is
...here it hurts when you cut them.

...ready been raised before in other
...the meaning of a girl's wish to literally
..., the commonly held perception that
...consistently reinforced by the many
...whom I had contact. Girls' mothers
...e case, as did many of the boys with

whom I also spoke. In fact, no young woman I came in contact with denied the basic premise of the theory of aggression—which at times seemed to be credible and not an exaggeration.

To cut a girl's face in a fight is implied to be a way to extend further one's sense of territory to a place where a girl is thought to be nearby. The act of cutting another's girl's face occurs in a neighborhood it suggests—most fights between girls result in scarring or injury—even to just talking back. This act seems to increase a girl's felt sense of territory. If a girl does scar another girl's face, it is so as one of her fighting achievements. The prevalence of girls scarring each other's faces has been noted.

It is noteworthy that the boys I talked to were not leaving a mark on their opponent. They were concerned with using violence as a means of communication, sometimes it centered around money or territory, and in many cases it was driven by a desire to have had more to do with performing poorly in school, a sense of safety, not marring their opponent's appearance.

Ten of the 16 girls I followed closely carried weapons. However, again, it is important to mean many things. Of the ten girls, one carried a blunt object that was used as a weapon, one used a blunt or sharp object that was used as a weapon, she used a box cutter, and two, a knife. The use of a weapon all the time. It would be fair to say that a number of street fights that involved a cutting were a relatively small proportion of the total number of fights among girls about the possibility of carrying a weapon. Often when girls carry knives, just to have a knife, injury that occurs is the result of a situation that is one of premeditated and deliberate aggression.

gster or parent who I came in con-
Unlike other contentions about raw
questionable—I observed the asser-
eration.

ued with symbolic importance. It is
of prevailing by leaving a “mark” in a
most vulnerable. While in reality the
turs far less than the stories that sur-
een girls do not result in permanent
about one’s willingness to do such a
ense of power, belonging, and accep-
face, typically, she will recount doing
ts. Little scholarship on the dynamics
s been undertaken, to date.

alked to were not preoccupied with
. Rather, boys seemed to be more
way to enforce a territorial claim—
y or proprietary rights of one sort or
rug related. For boys, the use of guns
ower and increasing one’s perceived
onent’s appearance.

ely reported having at least one fight
important to note that a weapon could
one said she used a bat, six said they
as picked up during a fight, one said
e. None of the girls reported carrying
ir to say that, even though the num-
utting implement represented a rela-
number of fights, there was vigilance
hat weapons would come into play.
as when boys use guns, the serious
tuation gone bad and not necessarily
ttack.

Mothers, Daughters, Double-Generations

Rather than being positively reinforced, girls in Melrose Park and Lee are “taught to be on their own” and stand up to anyone who intimidates them. The mother typically plays a key role in setting the example. The burden falls on mothers as head of household in these neighborhoods—girls’ fathers rarely live at home and encourage their daughters early on to fight back. Mothers want to become similarly capable. In fact, mothers are often the catalyst of the moment when a girl is told to stand up for herself on the streets or face her mother’s wrath. They do not want their daughters to fight; rather, they want them to be able to defend themselves, given the circumstances, on a daily basis. While fathers ordinarily discourage their daughters from fighting—they expect them to be able to take care of themselves, as a general rule, fathers play a smaller role in teaching their daughters to approach fighting. As Aiesha explains:

It’s different in these neighborhoods. In my neighborhood, the way you’re brought up. My father, he don’t want me to go to prison to hit back but never hit first. He say it worth it. My mother, she don’t want me to go to prison. She want me to be able to take care of myself. She think I should be able to take care of myself. She don’t want anyone thinking that I’m weak.

While a socialization process which rewards a daughter’s aggression is atypical, it is more akin to what transpires between

Daughters, and the Interaction Dynamic

enforced for demonstrating passivity, socialized from a young age to “hold their ground” when disrespected. A girl’s mother is often in the process of this. Just as it often seems to be the case that mothers are more likely to stand up to an outside challenge—most mothers actively encourage their daughters to fight their own battles so that they will not be taken advantage of—mothers and girls in equal number talk about how they must stand their ground in the face of adversity. This does not mean that most mothers are aggressive; rather, they feel that their daughters must learn to stand up to the dangers that surround them on their own. Mothers do not discourage their daughters from doing what they have to do—as a general rule, mothers are more likely to be in shaping and influencing how girls fight back:

My daughters. Mothers tell their kids to fight. I told my girls, if anyone hit me, I have permission to hit them back. And, if I hit them back, to make sure they know I don’t want me being scared of nothing. I’m not scared of myself if she’s not around. She’s not scared of myself just like my brothers. She’s not scared of me so they can get over on me.

Thus, in many ways, thereby mothers both stimulate and encourage their daughters, typical by mainstream standards, and often fathers and boys across class and

ethnic background, it is in no way hoods, especially in African American enon. Although the messages that A to their daughters about violence h ways from generation to generation, endures over time, as demonstrated I followed were also well schooled i they were growing up.

The view and approach to fighting Lee take has everything to do with their neighborhoods and the structure that grow out of it. As already discussed frequently “step off” from both their as fathers (Anderson, 1990, 1999), th and multifaceted. Even in cases where characteristics play an important role in the scarcity of unskilled jobs that pa family in Melrose Park and Lee diffi man, 1999, 2006, 2007). Contrary to employed men are less likely to marry of wedlock (because a woman would observed that those fathers who lived (Testa et al., 1989), and girls with e were more successful in school.

Yet, mothers and grandmothers i become the sole wage earners in a g 60 hours a week at one or more low a high percentage of the jobs that th casual jobs that do not provide them efits. Without a partner to help wit to-day basis, mothers and grandmot and the ones who teach their child and often overwhelmed, it comes as parent, low-income households can their children’s behavior and environ are entirely absent from such househ friend, uncles, or other male relativ some fathers who live away come ar men are present in the home, the dis

anomalous in inner-city neighbor-
hood families.¹ Nor is it a new phenom-
enon. African American mothers have given
advice that has certainly changed in meaningful
ways. Like any social communication that
changes over time, in chapter 4, the mothers of the girls
discuss how to “handle” themselves when

discussing that mothers in Melrose Park and
Lee are at the socioeconomic disadvantage of
the absence of social relations in the families
discussed, men in Melrose Park and Lee
face financial and caretaking obligations
for the reasons no doubt being complex
and individual and family history char-
acteristic. Determining a man’s employability,
and how a living wage makes supporting a
family difficult, at best (W. Wilson, 1987; New-
York Times popular conservative arguments that
single women who have their children out-
side the home lose her benefits) (Murray, 1984), I
found that men at home tended to have steady work
and were employed but nonresidential fathers

in Melrose Park and Lee frequently
visit the girl’s household, often working 50 to
60-hour-paying jobs. Making matters worse,
many of the women work are “off the books”:
they do not have health insurance or other ben-
efits. With child-rearing functions on a day-
to-day basis, fathers must also be the disciplinarians
and teach their children how to survive. Overburdened
mothers, it is no surprise that mothers in single-
parent households find it difficult to closely monitor
their children’s behavior. This is not to say that males
are absent from the household. In many cases, a mother’s boy-
friends live in the family residence, and
visit her frequently. However, even when
the discipline of a girl is usually left to her

mother or grandmother. It is therefore worth considering the messages that low-income mothers send their daughters about physical aggression. A study written on the subject from a normal perspective and an inquiry would be beneficial.

Given the time constraints of many mothers living on the street, mother-child relationships, the importance of self-reliance and independence, and the quality of parent-child interactions and affection, are commonly relegated to the background. That mothers in Melrose Park and Leavitt are as mothers in middle-class neighborhoods are in short supply. In the absence of positive role models, often harsh communication patterns are common in poor, inner-city neighborhoods, however they are perceived that way.

Rather, mothers in Melrose Park and Leavitt, what many of them refer to as "coercive" neighborhoods, send a message that their daughters are on their own two feet and therefore should be self-reliant. Socialization messages that stress the importance of independence are often delivered in a no-nonsense approach. A no-nonsense approach is meant to communicate "take it" and to assure anyone who may be questioning. Thus, whether in the context of relaxation or conflict, the interaction between mothers and daughters is loud and confrontational.

Few authors have addressed the nature of interaction between mothers and daughters in inner-city neighborhoods. One exception is Way (1996) discussion of the subject. Way argues that rather than representing a sign of trouble, shouting and anger are an important part of life in the family and peers "real." Rejecting the path of passive behavior is often viewed, Way has argued, as the demeanor of female youth in her work. She argues that it is outspoken, to have one's voice be heard, and to be of "courage" and "strength."² The path is embraced by many poor African American

fore particularly critical to carefully examine how some urban mothers communicate to their daughters. Little, if anything, has been written from the daughter's perspective, however, and such

experiences of many mothers and the harsh realities of urban life beginning in infancy typically stress the importance of a tough exterior; the more nurtured daughters, such as the direct expression of affection, tend to be in the background. This is not to say that these mothers do not love their children as much as mothers in middle-class neighborhoods or that empathy and warmth are absent. It is a framework that contextualizes the relationship between mothers and daughters in urban areas. However, it can often look and be perceived as harsh.

Mothers like Lee typically do not believe in "coddling" their daughters; the cultural expectation is for them to be competent enough to stand on their own feet and be expected to do so. Indeed, the emphasis on the importance of strength and independence is often expressed in a no-nonsense tone of voice. This no-nonsense confidence in the girl's ability to handle life on her own might doubt it that the girl is not "soft." The direct banter or related to a serious matter is often used, and adolescent daughters can turn

the no-nonsense aspect of this "blunt" style of communication to their daughters or between female peers. One observation worth noting is Niobe Way's research. She has argued that, for urban teens, the ability to be blunt, speaking one's mind and showing confidence in one's relationship with family is a positive psychological lens through which a girl's self-worth is characterized. The loud and brassy style of communication is viewed as a positive—the ability to be heard and, in essence, as reflective of a public boisterous display of "image." The importance of this for African American girls has in particular been

viewed poorly in school settings: girls labeled as conduct disordered, and treating them with respect.³ Way's work on the communication patterns of these girls is more than an acute display of aggression; the style of communication is necessary forms of antisocial behavior. It suggests the one that typically would be concluded.

At the same time, it would be a lesson about the positive qualities of bluntness in its own right. My observations in Park and Lee left me unconvinced that bluntness is equated to being real or honest. In conversations between mothers and daughters, or between daughters, the potential for a greater degree of honesty did not always bring it about. Indeed, talking openly about their feelings, and being vulnerable. So-called straight talk often, when deeply examined, went unresolved, and took a long time. What determined whether a conversation was a communication of real or deep honesty in a relationship to a specific party and the context would argue that what is most significant in the conversations between girls and mothers in Melrose Park are the conversations, although the effectiveness of the conversations is determined by individual and familial factors.

Taking the discussion a step further, in conversations between mothers and daughters and between daughters, on a continuum, it is also imperative to understand the continuum of fighting on a continuum. Though mothers protect their daughters as encouraging them to stand up for themselves, mothers hold differing views about when to go on the offensive. Again, what affects the effectiveness of the mother and other familial relationships. In the interview, Aiesha's mother, Ruthie, sub-

What you tell your kid depends on the situation. You don't have to be a hard-ass to get your point across. It's about what people say. But if some-

Girls displaying such behavior are often viewed as defiant. This work is important in that it argues for girls to be seen as something more than defiant. It challenges the assumption that defiance is necessarily linked to delinquency or other negative outcomes. It suggests another relational possibility than is typically included under such circumstances.

It is a mistake to generalize unconditional support from such communication or to idealize the quality of observation of female youths in Melrose. The directness always and necessarily present in Loud and angry outbursts between girls and their peers, while holding the promise of genuine exchange and intimacy, often proved to be difficult. Girls tended to have a hard time expressing their opinions, especially when they seemed most angry. This often reflected discord that was not always understood, and, in some cases, was present for a long time. The blunt display of a girl's opinions and her expression had more to do with the individual personality of the girl. I was struck by the cultural permission that girls like Lee had to engage in no-nonsense talk that was tied to an array of indi-

vidual experiences. Just as the interactions between girls and their peers must be understood on a case-by-case basis, so must how mothers view the necessity of discipline. Mothers typically see the best way to discipline their daughters as teaching them to learn how to protect themselves. The continuum is the individual history and personality of the girl. Among the mothers I interviewed, one described a less-common perspective:

... on the child. I tell Aiesha . . . you have to respect. You don't have to worry about what anyone comes at you, you can't just

walk away from that. If you put your hands on something bad is going to happen. You don't argue at them. You don't argue if they have their privates. Kids can stay out of the house if they think about things. It's all a matter of how you think about things. It's all about how a person reacts to the situation. My mother sat me down and said, I suspect that they will sit their kids down when they're old enough.

It is no surprise to hear that Ruthie's mother, Aiesha's readiness to fight—she substituted a more proactive one, as contrasted to many of the other mothers could be because Ruthie is a good 15 years younger than her mother's friends' mothers. Ruthie had Aiesha's mother who was nearly 40 years old. According to Ruthie, in the mid 1960s, the streets of West Philadelphia were not as violent for girls. It is not to say that there was no gang life or that gang life, which was prominent in the streets of her neighborhood somewhat less so. According to Ruthie, the frequency of fighting was different from what it had been, both in terms of frequency when it comes to girls. The pressure to fight and the stakes were also far less. Only in rare instances did she rub someone the wrong way and get into a fight.

Ruthie explains that, in her day, girls were much more likely to avoid fighting. Whether or not a girl was in a gang, if she was not, it was a matter of the circumstances of the individual girl. In the past, by the force of the community, it did not have to be a female youngster. According to Ruthie, a girl could communicate to others that she could "handle herself" and that was all a girl needed to do to deflect attention. However, Ruthie describes the situation in the present, whereas a girl can limit her fighting in the past, in the future, nowadays, a girl still has to put up with some form of fashion; otherwise, she would be targeted and preyed on by other girls. For Ruthie,

yourself in a dangerous situation, . . . But if someone hits first, go back . . . have a group. Spit in their eye. Grab . . . of danger. It's all a matter of how . . . matter of how you tell them to think . . . mother sits 'em down and explains . . . down, and I sat my girls down, and . . . ds down when they have kids and

thie is less interested in promoting . . . scribed to a defensive stance, not a . . . y of the mothers I spoke with. This . . . years older than most of her daugh- . . . iesha, her youngest child, when she . . . o Ruthie, during her teenage years in . . . hiladelphia where she grew up were . . . ay that there were no fights between . . . nment in her day, did not make the . . . at unsafe or like a maze to be navi- . . . tency and degree of violence today is . . . n generally speaking and specifically, . . . on girls to fight was far less, and the . . . e cases did a girl have to worry that if . . . she could be putting her life in jeop-

if a girl wanted to, she could pretty . . . t a girl fought had much to do with . . . liked to fight, and, at bottom, the life . . . While gang life was a reality and real . . . ave to be a part of growing up for a . . . ie, an "attitude" helped a girl commu- . . . le" herself, and a lot of the time, that . . . trouble coming her way. These days, . . . tion differently. She concedes that, . . . if she is smart and driven toward her . . . prove her ability to defend herself in . . . is more vulnerable to being harassed . . . nie, this is a major difference between

her day and that of her children's. Ruthie is saddened by the changes in her neighborhood and feels nostalgia when she spoke about the neighborhood she grew up in.

It is important to note that while Ruthie is much less than many of the girls I interviewed, she has a completely different profile when it comes to what I put it, from a young age, Tisha was associated with peers who readily engaged in violence toward the kind of drug use that immediately after she finished high school and was arrested several times, the last time resulting in a short-term incarceration. The fact that Ruthie gave the same message as Tisha, that fighting, it is anything but unusual for girls in their neighborhood. Different trajectories with respect to violence and the so-called good child/bad child phenomenon exist in abundant supply. In Ruthie's case, unfortunately, social science literature on sibling adjustment and outcomes in poor urban settings, and additional factors, may be relevant and useful.

Whereas Aiesha tries to keep her daughters away from violence, she more readily has accepted violence in her own life. She thought her daughters turned out so different from her lifestyle in the context of the disappointment of her biological father. While Aiesha's father was in the home for many years, had always been present, Tisha's (different) biological father had only visited her erratically. Clearly, the presence of violence did not guarantee that a different set of negative forces that entered into her life would be a force that shape individual behavior. It is not differential parenting—must of course be considered (Manke et al., 1995). In Tisha's case, the sociocultural factors resulted in a trajectory that was different. There were fewer mine fields to negotiate. In Ruthie's opinion, in her voice, Ruthie explains:

I worry about my Tisha because she is much better since she started v

Ruthie was clearly disturbed and sad-
ness and seemed to have a sense of
Melrose Park of her past.

Aiesha is a good fighter and fights
followed, Aiesha's older sister Tisha
when it comes to fighting. As Ruthie
is both a rebel and a "warrior." Tisha
embraced violence and gravitated
impaired or ruined futures. She never
went for drug possession on two occa-
sions stay in the county jail. Despite the
message to both of her daughters about
for siblings in the same family to have
violence. Indeed, examples of the so-
called women within families in Melrose Park
from my study alone, that was apparent.
The study offers minimal insight into differ-
ences with respect to psychosocial risks
and research in this area indeed would

at a distance from violence, Tisha far
away from her life. When asked why she
acted differently, Ruthie explained Tisha's
injuries the girl suffered in relation
to her biological father, who did not live
and always filled a positive role in her life,
but had a substance abuse problem and
in delivering the "right" message about
that her daughter would overcome the other
in her life. Factors beyond parental influ-
ence—factors in the environment other
of course be taken into consideration
of the mix of individual, familial, and
social doubled outcome; with Aiesha, there
was. With obvious upset and consterna-

she is not settled inside herself. She
was working a few months ago over at

the Home Depot. She be trying to
that she can do that before she does
of stupid people who can cause you

At the other end of the spectrum,
didly about the importance of her g
does not only think that a girl must k
happens to find her. Depending on th
of a girl being the aggressor—where
course of action. Exhibiting careful
explains:

Sometimes kids fight not to be dis
kid is gonna feel small. He or she
ments. Only thing can do is fight.
that to you, they'll keep on doing
boys are. Have more to protect. C
used, taken advantage of. They ha
and what they gonna do if someone
to anticipate trouble even before it
that way. A girl has to stand her g
anyone tell you otherwise because

In remarking that girls have more
the additional risk that a girl faces o
ever, that she also was referencing t
about: that females must manage the
in essence, that, in Melrose Park and
not a man. Thus, girls must be ready
surprisingly, Fazia's daughter Lakeesh

Fighting not really gonna solve no
one the message that they can't jus
that clear, it gonna be easier for yo
here, and everybody knows it. And

Both Aiesha and Lakeesha are fa
crossed my path. Samantha, a girl I a
ting to know, is less typical. Samant

to turn herself around, and I pray
 es herself more harm. There is a lot
 a trouble around here.

Lakeesha's mother, Fazia, talks can-
 girls being ready or "prepared." Fazia
 know how to defend herself if trouble
 ne situation, she sees the importance
 e to do so would be the far smarter
 ul thought about the matter, Fazia

srespected. You pick on a kid, the
 e has to fight. Tired of rude com-
 If you keep on letting someone do
 it. Girls have to be rougher than
 an't let themselves be stepped on,
 ave to make it clear who they are
 e crosses a line on them. They have
 t happens. It's kind of always been
 round, not just boys, and don't let
 it's just not true.

e to protect, Fazia here is alluding to
 f being raped. It was my sense, how-
 he reality that many mothers talked
 ir lives without a male helping out—
 d Lee, the buck stops with a woman,
 for "all the shit that goes down." Not
 na holds this perspective, as well:

problem, but it gonna give some-
 t walk all over you. Once you make
 ou. That's just the way it is around
 l that's that. That's just how it is.

airly representative of the girls who
 also spent a fair amount of time get-
 tha, a white girl originally from Lee

with two previous assault charges, with another female youth over the head with stitches and almost lost an eye. Her more than many of the girls I met. In her shaping her use of violence was quite Samantha's mother, Melinda, burned a number of occasions. Melinda also right, including lots of assaults. It was Samantha's family, no distinction in norms for females fighting. According to Samantha or another has been locked up, including boys had dealings with family court, after Karen (the oldest of the five children) assault as an adult when she was 17, and Karen broke the girl's nose and collarbone, pinning her against the ground.

Samantha reports that, when she was a child, her mother told her that if she did not defend herself on her, "she would beat her up here." This is a common theme between mothers and daughters. Samantha's mother, at a young age that her mother meant business, told her about "doing what she has to do," she said with a sense of sensibility:

I can care less who gets hurt as long as I can win. I'd better fight if someone threatens me. My mother says, but if I bring home some problem with me, she's gonna be on my case. She wants me to be raising no punk. She wants me to be strong. She also don't want to be having to deal with things to deal with without that. She wants me to be strong after me.

One can hear in this statement how different it is from the socialization of girls with girls' socialization—passivity and aggression deemphasized in Samantha's case but not in the same sense suggests that the lesson in aggression is not Samantha's extremely violent maternal role. Samantha would transgress more typically

as sent to New Directions for hitting with a bottle—the other girl needed 19 resort to violence was more extreme case, the role her mother played in quite apparent. As previously noted, and Samantha with cigarette butts on had a long arrest record in her own would be fair to say that, in Samantha was made with respect to males and antha, her whole family at one time ding her two sisters; two of the three as well. In fact, Samantha's older sis- (children) was charged with aggravated given the severity of the altercation— rbone as a result of repeatedly slam-

e was seven or eight years old, her fend herself against kids who picked "myself"—a not uncommon exchange Samantha must have realized from a business. Talking in a matter of fact way e gives a clear sense of a me-or-them

ng as it's not me. My mother said I ne. If I lose, she gonna understand, without even trying to stand up for about why. I guess she don't want me to be able to stand up strong. o fight my battles. She has enough ne don't want to have to be chasing

ow the role norms usually associated and providing nurture—were not just t were penalized. Moreover, common ession management given by Saman- model increased the likelihood that pical gender norms associated with

violence in an extreme way. Yet, when I read her narrative how her mother helped to shape her, an important factor in how local social norms reinforced those teachings and led her to violence. Clearly, Samantha was not the only other children who very likely were violent, that, while perhaps different in degree, they start from a place where fighting is a norm. More than individual pathology is it possible to look at the makeup and its frequency.

While girls can inflict harm seemingly without, typically contend that they do not care for anyone else, in reality, many things they do. Evidence that girls can take the perspective of their relationships with friends, a common theme, or a sympathetic view that they take of a person who they believe to be a good person, without the psychological capacity to understand a person's situation or feelings, suggests that in most cases, the social situation surrounding them, communities like Melrose Park and Lee Park, are key to understand behavior.

In Samantha's case, the loss of empathy was more extensive than limited to her immediate family. She does not represent the typical girl I follow in my research, to be thought of as falling at the far end of the spectrum, being driven by deeper familial and social factors. Like many other girls: Samantha experienced trauma in her developmental years, in keeping with the research on other dysfunction. More than any other girl, Samantha appeared to have problems with attachment, a diagnosis of an attachment disorder, which is in violation to the rule, frequently both men and women in violence, especially those who belong to the inner city system, are seen as psychologically damaged. These often accompany psychiatric diagnoses, such as a diagnosis of a personality disorder. The wide range of people who exhibit testify to this. The psychological research does not support a single profile.

le one can easily hear in Samantha's train her to be violent, again, it's also al networks in Samantha's neighbor- are implicated in Samantha's resort cautioned to defend herself against e receiving messages about fighting ee, were similar in kind. Only if we viewed as something that is broader ble to begin to understand both its

ngly with abandon, and although they re whether what they do hurts some- do and say contradict that assertion. spective of the other is seen in their ent they make about a stray animal, about the bad fortune of a sick rela- rson. Generally, it is not that a girl is o identify with or understand another stive of a sociopathic personality; in unding violence in low-income com- must be brought into the foreground

mpathy appeared more comprehen- adversaries. Again, Samantha does owed. Her resort to violence should d of the spectrum and, importantly, personal issues than is the case for nced significant trauma during her ith a history of family violence and of the other girls I followed closely, ems commonly associated with the er. Though she is more the excep- ale and female youths who engage come known to the criminal justice damaged. While certain behaviors oses, behavior alone does not make onality traits that the girls I followed gical makeup of the girls does not fit

Needless to say, the three mothers' preferences to the table, which influence their daughters' exposure to aggression. While each recognizes that her daughter lives in a neighborhood where violence is a constant, each also understands that society that will devalue her, each desires at the same time that each wants her daughter to maintain a sense of the immediate neighborhood, each also desires that her daughter not to socialize her daughter into a life of violence and physically, to "survive" the neighborhood. This is something that mothers in Melrose Park constantly negotiate. Despite their differences, they all have understood "the place" that violence occupies in her daughter's life. They understood that they wanted their children to repudiate violence and to find a life that is meaningful in the context of the world. If they were a mother to believe that her daughter was exposed to violence, as the public service campaign suggested, she would certainly opt for a different path.

As mentioned earlier, whereas sexual violence is a major factor in why girls turn to violence, the research suggests that of the three mothers discussed here, the two reported to have physically abused their daughters and the girls reported being victims of sexual violence have routinely put forth the argument that they cannot convincingly make the case that their daughters have been sexually or physically abused recently. Similar to the deviance pathology argument, the research suggests that a population of female youth in both neighborhoods are trying to understand their behavior as a result of such exploitation.

Mothers in Melrose Park and Lee Park are often seen as feminine and dainty behavior. More often than not, being in physical violence does not necessarily mean that they be thought of as any less feminine. The research suggests that femininity as constructed by mainstream culture, which is right by low-income urban girls, is seen as a set of values that more closely fit their lives. The research also suggests that literature on how male youths in these neighborhoods construct and affirm their masculinity is often seen as a set of values that more closely fit their lives.

s discussed above bring personal dif-
e how they socialize their daughters
s the need to prepare her daughter to
ce is all too common and in a larger
oes so in her own way. And, at the
ughter to transcend the limitations
ch understands the price of choos-
o an assertive posture, both verbally
hborhood. The balance of these two
Melrose Park and Lee have to con-
ferences, all the mothers I dealt with
e had in their neighborhood and in
that a blanket statement urging their
turn their back on fighting was not
orld in which they lived. No doubt,
ughter simply just had to “say no” to
ign of the 1980s under Nancy Reagan
r such a solution.⁴

xual abuse is often cited as a major
as is physical abuse, it is notewor-
ed above, only Samantha’s mother is
er daughter, and none of these three
d abuse. While scholars of girls’ vio-
ument, in Melrose Park and Lee, one
hat only, or primarily, girls who have
sort to engaging in physical violence.
gument, too large a percentage of the
neighborhoods engage in street fight-
caused in large part, if not only, by

typically do not encourage so-called
ver, in Melrose Park and Lee, engag-
necessarily cause an adolescent girl to
than girls who do not fight. Rather,
ream culture, while not rejected out-
electively appropriated alongside val-
However, while there is a consider-
n economically impoverished urban
masculinity through violence (Oliver,

1994; Bourgois, 1995; Anderson, 1999) about how female youths in such neighborhoods negotiate their femininity. It is especially suggestive of a problem with gender and undermines the assumptions underpinning the adjusted and genuine girl.

Interestingly, although girls in Melrose Park fight themselves aggressively, they typically do not fight in their relations with boys. I observed that the interests of their boyfriends above their own interests, a caretaking role, and spending a great deal of money. For example, Lakeesha, with whom I spent time in Melrose Park, carefully chose her outfit before leaving the house. She and her friends discussed how they were going to fix their hair and their current romantic interest, which could be a source of their extra money was spent on clothes at the local beauty salon. The emphasis on appearance for girls who fight in low-income neighborhoods is different from girls in their general age range. Those who fight readily gravitated toward fighting with a focus on appearance than those who fought with a focus on appearance.

The preoccupation with appearance for girls who fight in low-income neighborhoods is different from girls who fight in low-income neighborhoods. Girls who know that they are going to fight with a focus on appearance will remove her hair extensions so that her hair will not get pulled in a fight. In some cases, girls who fight will agree to meet at an appointed time to change their clothes. In addition to the metaphor of a war, for, she has a long list of war scores and has left scars on her opponents. The identity of girls who are interested in attracting boys and Lakeesha's identity as a fighter oppose one another.

In sum, there is little evidence to suggest that girls who fight view themselves to be any less feminine. If anything I observed lead me to believe that girls who fought to be any less feminine. A girl who is popular with boys, notes, "I can't be a fighter if that's what I have to do." Allie approached me and girls who were interested in calling them

9), relatively little has been written about neighborhoods who also engage in violence as if the resort to violence automatically role socialization and identification underlying what it means to be a well-

Melrose Park and Lee often assert they assume a traditional feminine role of loved girls routinely placing the interests of their own, frequently catering to boys in a great deal of time on their appearance. I hung out several nights a week in Melrose Park and applied her makeup before school and Candace talked a great deal about appearance and wanted to “look good” for their dates. Outfits would change from week to week. Much time was spent on getting their hair done at salons. The emphasis placed on outward appearance by girls in these neighborhoods seemed quite characteristic. There was no indication that girls who engaged in violence were any less self-conscious with their appearance, at the least.

Violence does not fade away even when the opportunity arises. For instance, if time permits, a girl who has been in a fight they do not get destroyed should her opportunity arises, two girls on the brink of fighting would take a break so they can go home to change. The emphasis on meticulous self-care Lakeesha is known for is to her credit, some of which have been attributed to her. The qualities of Lakeesha the adolescent girl and Lakeesha the fighter do not cancel out or

suggest that girls who engage in fighting are less feminine for resorting to violence. Nor do I believe that boys necessarily perceived Lakeesha as less feminine, either. As Allie, an attractive girl who was also a fighter, can be cute yet still mess some girl up, Lakeesha apparently had no trouble finding boys who were interested in herself. Indeed, I often

found that boys took pride in the p
Some boys would even come to wat
was going to fight. It is the girl who fi
be perceived as operating outside of
the girl who fights for the “right” reas
girl’s mother, as well. Suffice it to say,
of Melrose Park and Lee, violence i
meted out by both males and females

Fighting History

One must also look closely at th
given the integral role that mother
daughters’ use of violence. It is note
with directly or heard about indirect
everyone had a history of fighting w
just a few fights to a more regular fre
to stop fighting altogether. Even thos
several years left the possibility of f
that is, if it came down to defending
to. The list of provocations that justif
physical altercation might be longer,
Much had to do with the situation th
heard mothers say that, despite their
fighting was a medium that one som
was true even of the women who ha
sha’s mother, Fazia, explains:

I’ve been on my own since I was
myself. I was in a foster home ‘ca
back. I was physically and sexually
be strong, strong-willed, strong-r
getting beat up. No choice someti
a weapon sometimes—a screwdri
talk your way out of it. It’s differe
kids. Kids didn’t disrespect their
now. Generations have changed. C
They’re a lot wilder today. Someor

physical prowess of their girlfriends. Each if they knew that their girlfriend fights excessively who is more likely to appropriate gender expectations, not sons; we will see that this is true for a from the perspective of the residents something that can, and does, get 5.

Stories of Mothers

the fighting history of girls' mothers, play in the development of their worthy that, of the mothers I spoke over the course of my study, nearly when she was younger, ranging from frequency, and about one-third had yet the women who had not had a fight in fighting open if it was "necessary"—her family or someone she felt loyal tied taking a situation to the level of a depending on the individual parent. that presented itself. Over and over, I best efforts, fighting or the threat of sometimes had to communicate in. This and not fought for a long time. Lakee-

11. Used my body to take care of cause my mother wouldn't take me y abused by relatives. I learned to minded. Learned how to fight by mes but to fight. Would fight with ver. Not like it is now. You could nt now. Whole block helped raise elders. Doesn't happen that way Outside, kids are different people. ne puts hands on your person, you

must protect yourself. Kids fight about what they feel they deserve. More than have a job. Fast money. Look. There are drugs everywhere, everywhere. I fight in about 10–15 years, but I use. Muslim. If you're a kid, you really at some point, not just talk a good go so far without being able to put

The excerpt gives a sense of the how she managed as best she could, certainly makes a connection between and her subsequent use of violence as violence as having instrumental value survival and her survival on the street becoming “strong” (psychologically actually) that she was able to eventually control in her turbulent life. The excerpt to physical aggression as a first step existence in her community. Once she both internally and externally, her need level diminished.

It is generally not a disappointment, especially if the reasons for fighting are clear, ever, a girl typically takes a negative mother was “high” when the altercation girl’s mother to stand up for herself to do so would suggest a failure of mother is out of control and acting like mother to “act like a hood” was an error teetering on recklessness by a girl as impressive.

Indeed, most of the mothers I spoke cutting back significantly on the extent became pregnant with their first child some insights regarding her mother,

My mother was in a gang. Her friend [mother] tried to shoot her own mo

about the same things. Respect, that most of the young guys rather sell it a certain way—to be known. No one gets high. Me, I haven't had a need to fight a lot before I became a cop. You have to be able to defend yourself in a fight game. Talking these days can only get you your fists where your mouth is.

adversity Fazia faced as a child and grew up under those circumstances. Fazia identifies the trauma of her younger years as an adult. She identifies her use of violence, in terms of both her psychological and physical, and a Muslim (spiritually) experience some measure of comfort. She suggests that it was through her mother (emotionally and physically) and a Muslim (spiritually) experience some measure of comfort. She suggests that it was through her mother (emotionally and physically) and a Muslim (spiritually) experience some measure of comfort. She suggests that it was through her mother (emotionally and physically) and a Muslim (spiritually) experience some measure of comfort.

to a girl if her mother fights, especially if it is deemed necessary and proper. However, her view of her mother's fighting if her mother's fight took place. It is one thing for a girl to see her mother fight if she is put in a position where not only her mother's character and another thing if one's mother's fight like "she be a kid or something." For a girl to see her mother's fight, whereas bold behavior was likely to be viewed by her peers

who spoke with (including Fazia) reported that the incident to which they fought once they were a child. Along these lines, Cassie offers the following to Estrella:

My friend died in her arms. She [her mother]. She was only in gang because

her moms wouldn't take care of her. Her mother was an alcoholic. We had 10 years. Someone killed my mother. My moms had her son when she was in a gang. She was supposedly a pimp, she don't really do that stuff anymore.

Cassie's mother's story, while fraudulently common, is historically and geographically uncommon. Historically, it is well known that the street was a refuge for urban youths in impoverished backgrounds—the lure being the sense of structure that it offers. Whereas gang membership has significantly declined in Philadelphia in the past decade, those who came in contact with were members of the street. Growing up, organized gangs were a major part of the neighborhoods.⁵ Therefore, not surprising that many girls I followed reported having some involvement in their youth, although gang membership was largely male. Often the involvement was as a girlfriend of a gang member rather than as a member. These were exceptions, even those exceptions were often holding drugs for a boyfriend.

Adia's account of her mother's fighting is an example of that females tend to gravitate away from the street when pregnant. In Adia's mother Angeline's words, once again:

My mother and aunt hung together. They were fighting up. They beat up people, I know. My mother she stopped fighting when she had me. She ain't no more now. My mother no longer fights. She ain't no more that far, but I know that she would be a good mother for her family. But she ain't no low-life, and she ain't no trouble. She don't go looking for it. She ain't no more pretty much know not to mess with people. She respect from people.

Adia's excerpt is especially interesting because of the line she makes between mothers who fight

er. My mother really raised herself. I haven't seen her much over the last few years. Her father right after she was born. She was 16, and then she stopped being a pretty good fighter in her day, but she's a pro. Now her kids fight [*laughing*].

Street fighting with extreme violence, is not terribly well known that gang life has been a defining element in impoverished neighborhoods with troubled sense of belonging, empowerment, and social presence on the street had significant impact in the 1990s—indeed, none of the girls I interviewed were members of gangs—when Estrella was growing up. The element in poor Philadelphia neighborhoods, a number of the mothers of the girls I interviewed had the kind of involvement with gangs in their day was limited to being the mothers of children fighting themselves. While there were some mothers who were limited to street fighting or

Street fighting history also supports the idea that many girls move from street fighting once they become members of gangs. In this case, the theme of gang life appears

to be a common theme in a gang when they were coming out of the gang 'cause she told me. My mother, she had kids. None of her sisters fight. She doesn't feel like she has to go out there and fight if it came down to protecting her kids and so she keeps out of that kind of thing, if you know what I mean. People respect her at this point. She gets a lot of

respect. This is interesting with respect to the distinction between those who do fight and those who do not fight (“she

ain't no low-life"). As noted above, v of others fighting in situations when being challenged, or as a matter of lo is looked down on. There is a social children they will "grow up" and tak pursued in the name of family well-fighting that is not connotes a lack of all fighting by mothers is considered ceptions about girls' fighting exists o said about the fighting in which girls'

In many ways, the world in which trying to find their way in today is no mothers when their mothers were co rate to say that the issue is one of deg spoke felt that the "street" had becom male and female, and that the stake cantly. None of the parents I spoke Most thought that the amount of fight far greater, and far more serious, with Ella, who was no stranger to fighting

Kids these days really can't get by themselves. Girls fought when I w now. It's not just kids who come ou Down here [Melrose Park] is ter fight just the other day. A lot of th boys or something ridiculous. Gir I think that it's hard to be a kid handling yourself are a lot more c cations.

While Aiesha's mother, Ruthie, a "fighting" as a teenager, in my many sized that the use of weapons back t playing great emotion in her voice, the need to walk the streets carrying with a weapon—nor did she person described the street fighting of her c She elaborates:

while there is widespread acceptance of family safety or respect is seen as loyalty, gratuitous fighting by mothers is an expectation that after females have taken care of their family. Thus, fighting itself is seen as honorable, whereas the responsibility is not. Said another way, not unlike by the community. Just as people on a continuum, the very same can be said of mothers engage.

Girls in Melrose Park and Lee are not so different from the world of their coming of age. Perhaps it is most accurate to say. Most of the adults with whom I spoke were more dangerous for children, both in terms of the rules had changed significantly with thought this was for the better. Fighting that girls engaged in today was not in respect to degree. Tamika's mother, as a girl, tries to explain:

... without knowing how to defend myself was coming up, but it's much worse than on the street but grown women. It's terrible. A lady brought her kids to me and this fighting starts out being about girls are gonna line up to fight you. It's really hard today. Really hard. The terms of it are complicated with a lot more impli-

...acknowledged that she did "a little bit" in her conversations with her, she emphasized that when was much more of a rarity. Disrespectful she told me that she had never felt the need to carry a knife like kids do today or to fight anyone. She also said she didn't really know anyone who did. She also said that today as being "fair" for the most part.

It was one to one. You had a prob and then it was over. You didn't ha to come back with a gun. You did you or jump you when you weren't That's what you have to be expectin game out there today. It's downri it makes me really mad to think al make a lot of sense.

In contrast to Ruthie, who has not mother, Terry, continues to this day t up in a single-parent household and While she never was in trouble with always on "the wild side." Kia explain lems" when she was a teenager, and, grandmother for a few years after s her act together." It seems that Terry had Kia and has had a string of arres use. Kia describes her mother as hav appears to be at a real loss to explai ways, however. She also seems quite not like it when her mother fights:

My mother just a few months ago the neighborhood. I'm not sure wh one with a stick and then pulled a mom back. The lady, she then came brought ten other people. My mot thing was a big mess. The cops ca because nobody really got hurt. Us the situation gets really messed up

Unlike Kia's mother, the majority of including those whom I have mentio ken about specifically, only fight ur Shayleen says her mother, Gloria, o means she stands up to anyone harass ing for a fight. The same goes for Tar an extensive fighting history when sh

blem with someone, you settled it, we have to worry that anyone was going to expect a girl to pull a knife on someone looking with five or six other girls. It's a whole different ballgame today. It's a whole different ballgame. Downright scary. Downright stupid. And about it. The whole thing just don't

had a fight for several decades, Kia's to fight on a regular basis. Terry grew up was the youngest of four children. In the law, according to Kia, she was that her mother had "a lot of problems in fact, Kia was sent to live with her father he was born while her mother "got started" began using drugs shortly after she was arrested for shoplifting related to her drug use. Kia is a short fuse and a big mouth. Kia is in why her mother continues in her life is genuine when she says that she does

got to arguing with someone from that it was about, but she hit someone with a knife. These kids were holding my mother back with two others. My mother was hit on the head. The whole thing was a mess, but they didn't arrest no one usually the cops won't bother unless it's out of hand and way out of hand.

of the mothers of the girls I followed, and those whom I have not spoken to under limited circumstances. Indeed, she only fights "when she has to," which is not out there" looking like a mother, Ella. Though Ella had a daughter who was growing up, since she stopped

drinking a year ago, she reports rarely. The only time Ella says she now gets “gets in her face” or if she has to stan

However, it is important to emphasize that this differs from mother to mother. Fazia,

Girls and women are more emotional and want to calm down. It’s just in the moment you take much for the words to go flying behind unless you decide that you need to take a while for a girl to get to the point, but you can tell when a girl makes a difference. Things don’t bother her like

While mothers, for the most part, are trying at least some of the time, they were the tendency of girls to keep contentment necessary. Mothers, to the contrary, in serious situations that turned physical to them dissipated. For most mothers, maturity when assessing the “need” for intervention. Clearly for most mothers, as they are on the sense of empowerment that comes from a similar story whereby discretion was the course and principle, and only when the need of physical confrontation brought into

Alliances and the Double

As touched on previously, primarily mothers rely on a network of females to help. However, mothers and female relatives are part of the network, too. As briefly discussed in previous instances, including bringing a fight to a girl (disrespect) and when a one-on-one fight (that is, when additional girls enter the scene), that can elevate an altercation. A girl’s mother will jump in. With reg

ely engaging in physical altercations. involved in a fight is when someone d behind her kids.

hasize that what constitutes a threat , Lakeesha's mother, puts it like this:

onal. They get hyped. They don't em. It's who they are. So it doesn't ing, and the fists can follow close a just ain't gonna live that way. It e place where she is gonna give it akes the decision 'cause she seems like they did.

agreed that girls cannot avoid fight- re unanimous in their recognition of ous situations going far longer than seemed more ready to end conten- l once the immediate emotions tied s, the need to employ judgment and to fight was cited again and again. ged, their egos were less dependent fighting often delivered. They tell a s exercised as a matter or strategic a discretion failed was the possibility to play.

e-Generational Dynamic

rily with respect to peers, girls typi- o ensure their physical safety. How- e an important part of a girl's backup chapter 1, there are certain circum- to a girl's doorstep (a major sign of fight between two girls turns unfair into the fight or weapons are intro- on to a more-serious level where a gard to the first matter—bringing a

fight to a girl's doorstep—one's house confrontations. Often, when a fight is made "unavoidable." It means that is being "called out." Even if that is who approaches, a girl's mother typically or a challenge she will not tolerate. house and her children, as well as the confrontation. Similarly, no mother would be sitting or standing by her daughter if her conditions.

The "double-generational" dynamic of a fight alongside one another, is an important example. Park and Lee, having no obvious parents, Little if any scholarship has been developed. Lakeesha's mother, passionately notes

No hood gonna be coming up to my house to keep that junk on the street and on my house, it's no longer between my daughter and I, she gonna have to deal with me, and I'm not a joke. A girl shouldn't be acting like she's going up to no one's door acting like

Under such conditions, it is accepted that a mother will go out on the street to protect her loyalty to various peers will almost always be in some cases on a weekly basis, mothers are committed to "watching the backs" of their daughters. Obviously could not be expected to intervene. If about, it would be unusual for a mother to see her daughter was outside fighting, especially in front of her house.

Much of the time when a fight is brought there by just one other girl. She may "bring the posse," either because she wants to up the ante on her own or the girl to have upped the ante on her own. Mothers accompany her daughter to another location. She perceives her daughter to be in danger and intervenes to the level that includes mothers.

se is seen as being off limits to such
comes to the household doorstep, it
a girl, and, by association, her family,
not the intention of the female youth
ically views the situation as a threat
The mother is going to protect her
the family's reputation to withstand
wants to be thought of as not protect-
r daughter is attacked under unequal

nic, whereby mother and daughter
important feature of fighting in Melrose
parallel among boys and their fathers.
voted to the phenomenon. As Fazia,
s:

my doorstep and menace me. You
out of my house. You come to my
daughter and that person. Now she
I ain't no little kid. That ain't no
e no woman, and she shouldn't be
ke she big and bad.

epted—indeed, even expected—that
with her daughter. Whereas a girl's
certainly undergo change over time,
others tend to be permanently com-
neir daughters. And while a mother
ntervene in what she does not know
her to stay away when she knew that
specially if the fight was going on in

comes to a girl's doorstep, it is not
Sometimes a girl will come with "her
up the ante or because she perceives
er. At other times, a girl's mother will
woman's doorstep because she per-
and feels the fight needs to be raised

An example involving Lakeesha's fight that unfolds along these lines. After fighting for many years, approximately a lengthy conversation about girls' violence, she ended up fighting a 20-year-old woman who came to her house to accuse her friend. Incensed that the young woman had entered the gate of her front yard but right up to her house, that apparently escalated, Fazia "got in" and the two began throwing punches, with Fazia hitting the other woman. But even before the police arrived, bystanders, around 30 people, gathered. Included in the group were neighbors and friends who were visiting Lakeesha at the time. The police over to get a better view of the spectacle. To break up the altercation, several additional officers, the many people who had gathered—about 10 or five associates with her to Fazia's defense, the young woman, as she was from the area.

Given how large the crowd that gathered, the police quickly on the scene. Even after the police arrested her if she did not stop fighting, Fazia refused to. As discussed in chapter 4, Fazia had no chance to walk away from a situation where she would continue to argue and, according to her, she would end the incident without further "pyrotechnics" if she "lets herself go." Fazia worked up to go inside. And since the police arrested her and took her down to the station to appear in court two weeks later, she left the crowd; indeed, the situation got worse. More than ten females down to the court date, Fazia was ordered to attend court to perform 20 hours of community service. I can not help but wonder if my presence at the court played a role in Fazia fighting after the incident behind her.

Afterward, Fazia seemed to truly regret the incident pulled into the altercation and spoke

mother, Fazia, is a case in point of a
Though Fazia had managed to avoid
tely a month after we had our first
olence and her own fighting history,
woman who rang her doorbell. The
Lakeesha of “messing” with her boy-
an brought the fight not even to the
to her door, after a verbal exchange
n her [the young woman’s] face.” The
Fazia reportedly getting the better of
the first punch was thrown, accord-
e, mostly women, surrounded them.
s who lived on the block, two friends
ime, and people in cars who pulled
acle. By the time the police came to
ditional fights had broken out among
-the young woman had brought four
door, and neighbors who knew the
rea, also took up for her.

athered was, the police arrived fairly
e police told Fazia that they would
ng and go back into her house, she
6, often when females are given the
n to avoid arrest, unlike males, they
g to police officers, give up the chance
problem. Fazia, admittedly prone to
down that road,” was apparently too
she would not go inside, the police
the station. Fazia was issued a cita-
ter, as were several other females in
so out of hand that the police took
e station in a paddy wagon. At her
end an anger management class and
service, which she agreed to. I could
e and my inquiry had in some way
the decade-plus abstinence she had

y regret that she had let herself get
e about it at length when I accompa-

nied her to her hearing. She realized she should have sent the girl on her way but she still incensed that the young woman had stood on the front steps of her house like she had no shame. The incident behind her at the time of the hearing was more than the reaction that Fazia had on the day of the hearing. The matter of the woman having called her name out loud in front of Fazia's house made the situation more difficult. Within the respect-driven ethos of the community, it is to make her response equally as public as the incident. Through much verbal back and forth, it resulted in a verbal exchange from both sides.

Lakeesha, in contrast, seemed to take the incident as a joke. She had gotten. She said, with a wide grin, "I'm a professional about game [she boxes well]." Rather than being angry over her fighting, her mother's fighting was a lesson. The next day, and, as a result of it, Lakeesha was in a hospital for a short time. Although there was some support from those who supported Lakeesha and those who supported her mother, nothing more came of it.

It is just as important to address the role of the mother in not intervening under certain circumstances. The role of the mother is typically grounded not in preventing a fight but in making sure a fight goes down without incident. The mother will just stand by while her daughter fights, sure "no one gets in it." Typically, a fight is started by several girls start fighting at once or, once started, the mother will not break up a fair fight in which the girls are fighting. A mother might also jump in if the fight is about fighting her daughter to disrespect her. The following speaks to the situation:

I don't usually get in her business. If she's fighting down fair, I can't not get involved. If she's fighting and you have to let people know you're there, you have a lot more to do with making you're there. It usually doesn't come down to you. It's usually that you will if you have to.

that it was just “dumb stuff” and that way. Yet, on the other hand, she was had the audacity to show up on the d. Fazia clearly had not put the inci- aring. Perhaps even more significant an emotional level was the practical attention to herself—getting “crazy” uation a “show” for “everyone to see.” he neighborhood, Fazia was pressed ublic. The dispute escalated, and, after ed in a slew of punches being thrown

ake pride in how “crazy” her mother n on her face: “My mother has a good than being humiliated by her moth- as big news in Lakeesha’s school the ha gained minor celebrity status for a e degree of tension between students who were more allied with the young

the fact that mothers are stalwart in umstances, too. A mother’s involve- eventing her daughter from fighting yn “on the up and up.” Frequently, a daughter fights it out just to make mother will only jump in when sev- n the rare occasion, when she can- her daughter is being badly beaten she perceives the mother of the girl er or to directly challenge her. Fazia

, but if the fight isn’t gonna come l. Anything can happen out there, you gonna protect your kid. It has r intentions known than anything a to getting involved, just showing

As we have seen, a girl's mother may try to learn how to protect herself as well as her daughter; yet, she also knows how dangerous it is to get out worry about a fight careening out of control. This tension in Fazia's words as she talks about the situation involved:

In some sense it's an art. Figuring out your own problems and when to get involved. Sometimes in other neighborhoods where if you see someone in your experience and do better the next time. Because a fight is gonna lead to your kid getting hurt, that is serious trouble and you gotta be smart. You gotta always be smart. You gotta always be smart. You gotta always be fooling around out here.

This said, during my fieldwork, I observed a mother stop an onlooker from breaking up a fight because her daughter was not winning. Indeed, adults often intervene, but that, when a girl fights, she is practically "allow" a fight to continue. Fights often do not typically last as long because mothers intervene, though the altercation that starts in the middle of the end of the school day.

In short, mothers have a steadfast concern for their daughters' safety. Paradoxically, they may encourage a girl to escalate a violent situation because she is virtually assured of additional reinforcement. That a girl who does not feel secure about her safety in the possibility of a fight escalating will fight more for the reason than that her chances of prevailing are better if she can rise to the occasion if her mother is confident she will be in putting forth a strong effort.

The identification and commitment to the daughter, no matter how angry a girl may be, are central to the situation, she will also defend her. As Sana had burned her with cigarette butts and was talking about her comments:

usually sees encouraging her daughters the best way to protect her daughters on the streets are and is not without control. One can hear the talk about when to and when not to get

out when to let your kid settle their own way. Around here it's not like if you're wrong, you just chalk it up to bad timing. I mean, it's not like every day someone is killed, but you miss a situation where someone is in some serious trouble. So you gotta be careful and take precautions. There ain't no

I had, on several occasions, seen a girl get into a fight, even when her daughter was in Melrose Park and Lee recognize the importance of standing up for herself and typically fights that take place on school grounds where school personnel intervene quickly, the fight often gets finished after the

best identification and commitment to the cause. This commitment can act to encourage confidence, as many a girl knows that she has the support of her family and friends. Common sense dictates that a girl who has her family in her backup is more likely to avoid a fight whenever possible, if for no other reason than the support of her family are lessened. The surer a girl is that her family will support her, the more confident she is. The message that she is "ready."

Confidence goes both ways. In most cases, a girl who is confident in her mother for past transgressions. Samantha, the youth whose mother was in prison when she was younger, passionately

If you say something about my father, I will give you money. But you can't say anything for my moms, I wouldn't be here if my father raised you. Especially, with no father, you have to respect her for taking care of you. You have to respect her for taking care of you there for her if she need it. I think you should do no matter what goes down between you and me no matter what.

Why the double-generational dynamic on the side their daughters has no corresponding dynamic on the side their fathers has not been carefully studied and is difficult to fathom. In the first place, many fathers do not stay in steady contact with their sons, and many are in prison. Moreover, if a father's brothers came to his side would be seen as a weakness thus undermining the boy's stature rather than a strength. This conclusion is not typically drawn if a father's defense. Rather, when males fight, it is usually a small structure of a gang, it is usually a small group. In my travels, I did not see or hear of a fight between male youths fought it out. The fights I saw were in some way gang related.

On ride-alongs with police, the police often see female group fighting was apparent. In many encounters where between 20 and 30 women were in a fight. In one instance, the police were called in two times, the police just broke the fight. However, the third time they came in with a mother, daughter, an aunt, and a cousin and took them away. Several other women were taken away. In many instances, not all of the women who gathered were fighting. Some did not were yelling and maintained a distance from the other side and egging on those who were fighting. Sergeant Palazzio notes:

Girls and women are more emotional than boys. They want to calm down. They have to be calmed down. Even when you tell them you

er, I never fight over him. He gives
hing about my moms. If it weren't
e. Your mom is your highest, she
er around. She break her back for
hat, no matter anything else. I be
k my mother know that about me,
n us, and I know that about her, no

amic in which mothers fight along-
ponding parallel to boys and their
ed; however, the reasons are not so
there are fewer fathers who live with
ons. Some have minimal ties at best,
t may be that a boy whose uncles or
een as unable to fight his own battles,
rather than strengthening it. The same
a girl's mother comes to her daugh-
t alongside each other outside of the
ll group of peers who "run" together.
f fights where more than four or five
ts were typically one on one, unless

phenomenon of mother/daughter and
On numerous occasions, I observed
30 females gathered in relation to a
re called back three times—the first
altercation up and issued warnings.
back, they handcuffed a mother, her
took them away in the police wagon.
ay separately in squad cars. Whereas
actually became physical, those who
a verbal presence making taunts to
no became physically involved. Again

onal. They get hyped. They don't
mouth off. Too much pride to back
you're going to take them in, they

Mothers, Daughters, and the

just keep at you. My female office
with breaking up guys' fights any
starts up, it takes a lot more to get
more trouble. It doesn't have to be
of the time. It's hard to talk sense i
treated badly whether in reality she

ers tell me that they'd rather deal
r day. Once a girl [or any female]
t her to back down. It's a whole lot
e that way, but that's how it is a lot
nto a female who thinks she's been
e has been or not.

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tionally left blank



6

Culture Neighborhood

*I don't think that most teachers think that
kids in my school gonna tell you they're
honest. It don't matter to me what they say,
it shouldn't be like that. It's not about
about collecting their paycheck.*

*Most kids come to school need help
in math and reading. They have a lot of
things, problems at home, the schoolwork,
it's amazing that we can do more than we
not relevant, given what they have to deal
tude that comes through the door every day
before anything else can happen. We have
leave his or her attitude at the door when
PM to face the rest of his or her day.*

—Mr. Gordon

It is not only one's mother, other family members, or a girl's relationship to violence. The broader community, comprised by its schools, justice system, and the configuration of other institutions, plays an important role in the production of violent events in a given neighborhood. Such events, too. Clearly, neighborhood

re and d Institutions

Teachers really care about kids. Most of them don't, that is if they're being paid. But they think about me because I'm a teacher that is concerned about my students, but most of them are.

—Samantha, a 14-year-old girl

Teachers are doing a lot more than instructing. They're dealing with so many things. There are drugs all around them, and they're not doing much teaching at all. We're just trying to survive every day. The attitude is what has to be addressed. It's not the rare kid who can walk out the door and then pick it up at 3 o'clock the next day.

—Mr. [redacted], a teacher at New Directions
alternative high school

family members, or peers that shape the institutional infrastructure of the neighborhood, housing, police force, criminal justice, and the structure of its commercial economy, among other things. Schools play a central role in the production and reproduction of social inequality in the neighborhood or in the limiting of opportunities. Schools are places where people share

more than just geography. They are products of some degree of cultural identity, customs, and interests. Neighborhood institutions that support a healthy local economy and the well-being of communities rest, are vital to informing what, for example, the quality of the education in a neighborhood quickly suggest that a neighborhood has been left behind or is one of the neighborhoods where social institutions cannot sustain faith in the possibility of a better future. Trust grows much dimmer—a phenomenon discussed by Sampson and Lee. As Cornel West (1993) puts it, when institutions are “depressed,” so are the people who depend for their livelihood and for their well-being on those institutions.

Indeed, it is not only the conditions of the neighborhood that eroded when houses fall into disrepair, but also, and more important, the community culture. Community culture (Sampson et al., 1997). To suggest that the sense of community that residents of a neighborhood have been able to maintain in their counterparts, only that the sense of community in a neighborhood gets broken down in the absence of public activities are compromised by the erosion of trust. The diminution of such a feeling has been linked to the prevalence of violence in that, as the sense of community wanes, the barriers against the discharge of violence are also lowered (Sampson et al., 1997). In such a situation, one feels that there is nothing to be done to preserve what remains, that the constraints against destructive behavior are gone.

In addition to the observation noted above, West (1993) has persuasively argued that the “structure” as the economy and political system is a structure, however, West is not just talking about the functions that typically comprise an institution, but of feeling, values, and ideas that gets embedded in the life of a community and to which social institutions give life. As an institution, culture provides the framework within which a community organizes the work and the social behaviors. As such, institutions play a central role in educating the young. In a loosely par-

places where people are likely to share cultural language, social perceptions, traditions, which are the building blocks of the foundation on which strong communities are built. The outlook of a community is. For the school system and other public institutions to serve residents whether their neighborhoods are full of promise and opportunity. In neighborhoods that do not function to sufficiently maintain the future, the future for many residents is bleak. As I readily observed in Melrose Park and its surrounding areas, in neighborhoods where social cohesion is low, the inhabitants who depend on them for their well-being.

The loss of the housing stock that becomes vacant or simply disappear. Perhaps even the disintegration of a neighborhood suffers. This is not meant to imply that all the residents become disconnected from their fellow community members in a given neighborhood in important ways—public space and the “street” being viewed as unsafe. This has significant implications for the incidence of one’s connection to others lessening the prevalence of aggressive impulses frequently (see, e.g., Jacobs, 2006). Similarly, the less that is invested materially, the greater the chances are that social cohesion will be lessened, as well.

As noted above, also relevant to this discussion is the fact that culture is as much a product of social structures as it is a product of individuals. When he refers to culture as referring to the network of roles and relationships within an institution but, rather, to a structure that is encoded into the everyday social life of individuals and groups, as active agents, then negotiates the system of collective norms by which individuals live and gives meaning to events and actions. In a parallel way, neighborhoods shape girls’

attitudes, beliefs, and values, similar to what their peers do. It would be fair to say that these girls' feelings, values, ideas, and practices associated with their relationship to a wide range of institutions are shaped and view the populations that they interact with in these ways, rather than individualized ones. It is important to understand what it means for a girl to engage with these institutions, to make sense of how girls characterize their relationships with institutions that importantly influence their lives, and how themselves come to view those institutions.

As touched on earlier, there is a general sense of Melrose Park and Lee of being marginalized. For African American and Hispanic girls, this sense of being themselves as closed out of white, middle-class life by the failing institutions meant to serve them. They perceived the authorities in their lives—school, neighborhood employers, and the police—as being, in a word, as being “ghetto,” a word that carried a cultural or personal value. While girls were quick to refer to themselves as ghetto, the word had a different connotation: in addition to referring to a place (e.g., dress, etc), “ghetto” stood in contrast to mainstream culture “their way.” On a surface level, girls did not view mainstream values as anything they would want to emulate.

This is not to say that the girls are not seeking out professionals in their lives as usual. Some girls do have a professional genuinely takes an interest in their lives, and that is not ordinary. Girls certainly reported having relationships with a probation officer, a lawyer at Legal Aid, or a social worker. However, for most girls, the street culture is the ones that get repeated again and again. The street culture is the subtext of a girl's experience at school.

Educational

Whether at Franklin High, at Newton-Taylor, the threat of violence br

to how parents, extended family, and in Melrose Park and Lee, a girl's feelings associated with violence are in dialogical institutions. Major institutions relate to serve in collective and stereotypical ways. One more deeply comes to understand violence through attempting to understand how they are perceived by neighborhood residents and how, over time, girls' experiences change.

Generalized feeling among residents of neighborhoods stigmatized by mainstream culture. The girls with whom I spoke typically saw themselves as middle-class America and abandoned by institutions that serve them. Barring a few exceptions, they viewed their lives—their teachers, potential mentors, police—as viewing them negatively or, at best, as suggesting the intrinsic lack of their neighborhoods. Girls in Melrose Park and Lee are often referred to as "the term" in their hands possesses a certain "style" (loud, rebellious) and stands for doing things against mainstream expectations. On the surface level, it means rejecting mainstream values and being interested in.

They are single-minded about perceiving all institutions as uncaring, but rather, that if a professional or teacher cared for them, it is seen as being out of the ordinary. Having a favorite teacher, a "good" professional, or a parent who really cared about what happened to them were the exception rather than the rule. Stories laced with disappointment are common, and again and function as the organizing principle.

Conclusion

... Directions, at Paulson, or at Comp...
 ...reaking out on school grounds con-

stitutes a major preoccupation of so corridors being transformed into t time again, I observed the military-li describes in his book *Maximum S Inner-City Schools*, particularly how practices of keeping order rather tha expectation that order will turn to school day. As Devine points out, s grams and resources are typically s money allocated for surveillance (cameras) continues to multiply.¹ Al the training of the mind, it can seem becomes less educational and more be the case, particularly in the altern time in, regardless of the recent nati ing and greater accountability requir

Indeed, alternative high schools the nature of the population they se years is not relevant for many stude Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has p Although required by law to place o that perform better, in the 2005–20 tled to transfer, only 3,000 actually d openings to accommodate the need.

While I found security arrange and range of alternative schools in and body searches were standard pr of schools, hall monitors acted as every floor, though security practice tive schools. For example, while you they entered the building, the youth addition to being searched, were no them into their classrooms. School a schools were particularly concerne smuggle a weapon into the building fiscated at the front door and return student needed an object from his o she would have to be accompanied b

school personnel, resulting in school tightly controlled spaces. Time and like paradigm that John Devine (1996) *Security: The Culture of Violence in* the school day is organized around imparting knowledge and how the disorder shapes the sequence of the school budgets for educational pro-slashed in inner-city schools, while (i.e., guards, metal detectors, and although an institution dedicated to in all too frequently that the priority custodial in nature. This seemed to native school classrooms that I spent onal emphasis on standardized test-ements.

rarely meet academic goals, given erve and because graduation in four nts who attend. If anything, the No ut more pressure on these schools. children in failing schools into ones 06 school year, of the 185,000 enti- id so. In reality, there are insufficient

nts to differ between the mainstream which I spent time, metal detectors ractice in all of them. In both types gatekeepers at strategic points on s were more obvious in the alterna- ths at Franklin were searched before s at Paulson and New Directions, in t permitted to carry book bags with authorities at these latter-mentioned d that their students might try to , so personal possessions were con- ed at the end of the school day. If a r her book bag during the day, he or y school personnel to get it. Despite

the elaborate measures, some weapons otherwise have gotten through, still e

In all of the schools in which I spent a student's comings and goings were un- tices were designed to meet safety g- rity guards and other staff members, carry walkie-talkies. On several occa- cell phone to contact security person- seemed to be looming. While the fo- mote safety, students at the same tim- lence or something "bad" is expected- ent expectation, of course, the receipt- is individual. Adia, who is unique am- tain her future orientation and her c- ments as follows:

If you treat kids like they're a "ho- like it don't matter how they act. know anything about me. I'm just get out of here as fast as possible with my life, so what they say to m- a funeral director someday and ru- my own business.

While security arrangements act- entering the building, they were le- confrontations between students, wh- issue, again, often at the expense of e- of vigilance was not similarly apparen- As long as a youngster was not overth- ipation generally went unchallenged. I passed through appeared to have d- ago. At Paulson, for instance, it was- given classroom with their heads do- completed the lesson. The students v- evenly split down the middle between- reach out initially, but when their ef- youth would for the most part be left

ons, though clearly fewer than might
 escaped detection.

ent time, it was apparent that a stu-
 der surveillance, and security prac-
 guidelines set out in advance. Secu-
 including administrators and deans,
 sions, I observed teachers using their
 nnel or the main office when trouble
 cus on security is an attempt to pro-
 e are also given the message that vio-
 d of them. Beyond that larger appar-
 ot of the message for a particular girl
 ong her peers in her ability to main-
 larity of what she wants to do, com-

od” or something, they gonna feel
 . These teachers here don’t really
 gonna go about my business and
 because I know what I want to do
 e don’t really matter. I’m gonna be
 n a funeral parlor. I’m gonna own

ed to limit the number of weapons
 ess effective in controlling physical
 hich remained a major management
 educating students. The same degree
 nt when it came to teaching students.
 y disruptive, his or her lack of partic-
 . Most of the students in the schools
 isengaged from learning a long time
 typical to find half the students in a
 wn on their desks while the teacher
 who were “resting” were pretty much
 n males and females. Teachers would
 orts met no success after a while, a
 t alone.

When asked why they “slept” in class with “the work is boring” and “I was bored,” it was common. Sometimes girls simply quit a subject like algebra had for their future work and not be using it.” Even more common in contact with students who saw themselves as having a hard time in school and seemed to be investing their time in a girl once she decided to sleep some time between girl and teacher or the girl said it was not the policy of all teachers, most had a policy of students as long as they did not cause trouble. Those who wanted to participate to do so were often nonparticipating students to get credit. One girl with whom I spoke said they only had trouble with parents, probation officers, and the court had jurisdiction over them. At other times, the work might play around in the classroom. In the rooms that I spent time in, especially those that were overly chaotic or overly subdued with

This does not mean that girls did not have dreams. Their aspirations were poorly organized. One girl who wanted to be when she grew up, she said she wanted to be a lawyer. But as I pressed her to provide me with details of what it took to get admitted to law school, she said that the legal profession began to crumble. She said at a level that she lacked the necessary capital to actually embark on such a path. Her words convey the uncertainty:

I ain't gonna go to all that school. I ain't gonna try to get a job bagging groceries. I ain't gonna get a job at the grocery store. I don't get a job at the grocery store. I ain't gonna go to a beauty parlor down my block. It ain't gonna happen. I know it. I'm not too worried about it.

Though Manuela's idea of success was based on mainstream values (being a lawyer), one can see how she vacillates between the psychological

class, girls offered a range of reasons, "I was out late last night" being the most common. I questioned the importance of a particular reason. As Kia put it, "I be doing all that I can do to the point, most of the girls I came to school with limited horizons in the world of their energies accordingly. Disturbing incidents sometimes resulted in a tense exchange of words, but not getting up to make a faint effort. While I had reached a point of not pressuring students about the trouble. This allowed those students to attend at the same time that it allowed the school to get credit for attendance. Many of the girls who attended to avoid getting into more trouble, or someone in the system who was a trouble maker. At times, girls engaged in doing their own thing in the room. The atmosphere of the classroom in alternative schools, often seemed to be one of little activity.²

They do not have aspirations, though typically they do. When I asked Manuela what she wanted to do, she said "maybe a lawyer or a hair dresser." I asked her for more details—for instance, what she would do—her abstracted vision of entering a profession. She seemed to recognize on some level that she had the drive or resources to do all that was required for a demanding career path. Manuela's

...l. That's gonna be too much. I'm gonna go to the grocery store this summer, but so far no one's gonna be too much. I know I can make it. If I don't make it, maybe I'm gonna look at the other side. I'm gonna work out some way, I just don't know how to do it.

...was not wholly divorced from mainstream culture. You can hear in the preceding excerpt how she negotiates the cultural stances of trying and giving up. It

seems that as long as she keeps alive the possibility of a better future, she does not have to directly face the anger and frustration of her situation. Having limited career chances and economic opportunities, the attitude she displays and the street fighting she engages in are an immediate way to feel important and to have some control over her future. Each time Mariana is asked about her future, she reassures herself by raising the idea of a better life, without really weighing her actual prospects. How often does she take stock of her prospects as a young woman? How does the average youngster Manuela's age think about her future? How do they proceed along their careers? How do they know what the requirements even were to get into a university?

Teachers in my study were willing to be honest and were helpful in providing a window on the reality of the situation. In a sense of worth, as well as the range of expectations that professionals held toward their students. In a study by New Directions, was asked why kids don't do their homework, he said:

What kids think of themselves has a lot to do with how they learn. They tune in to what they think they're capable of. They're smart. But what they're interested in is what they need. They're not going outside the box. They're not going to challenge to teach them anything that's not relevant to their lives. They just don't see the real-world application for kids to want to give up their time.

As Mr. Cuomo, a learning specialist at a school for nearly five years, notes:

Most kids just don't care. . . . The problem is that the program. Kids perceive themselves as being treated that way. They're going to school that way. They're going to school that way. It wasn't that way at first. The "person" on it is a problem. The shirt is a problem. They identify kids. When cops see them, they treat them as kids but adults. It's a set up. It's a set up. One of these programs, but there's a problem. It's really a mess. It's like this vicious cycle.

the possibility of “making it,” she does feel a sense of humiliation associated with her limited economic possibilities. The ghetto attitudes in which she engages serve as an armor to minimize any worry that she might be stuck. Manuela hits a roadblock in her thinking, unable to see a clear path or another possibility without ever fully committing or having strong feelings on the matter. At no time does she pause to sit back and think through her options. While she cannot be expected to know exactly what her career path is, Manuela seemed unaware of the need to embark in that direction.

Parents are expected to share their views and indeed were often critical of their students’ educational merit and the prevailing attitudes that they as educational institutions fostered. When Mr. Gordon, a teacher at the school, says that parents do not invest more in their school-

...there is a lot to do with why they don't invest more. It's not that they need in their neighborhoods. What they are interested in is based on what they see in the neighborhood. So it's a big challenge. The concept of social capital doesn't have a direct application to the ghetto. It has to have immediate relevance. It has to have immediate relevance to get their attention.

...a journalist who has worked at Paulson for

...there are no consequences with this. The ghetto is seen as a ghetto because institutions see it as a school for bad kids. They learn to act accordingly. Wearing a shirt that says “Paulson” labels them. It helps security to have a label. If you pull them over, they won't look at you. From the minute that they start in the ghetto, it isn't any other place for them. It's a vicious circle. Once you're in, it takes a

lot of focus to work your way out of focus, at lot of them don't. A kid or he or she leaves with. It all depends with and if he or she connects to someone. Just one important person can

Exhibiting the anger and alienation on a daily basis, Tamika, who says things, was quick to assert the following

If a teacher gonna automatically talk or walk or talk—fuck her. I got nothing for her time trying to get me to pay attention. I gonna listen to nobody like that. You gonna respect you? Forget that.

In Tamika's comment, one can clearly see her being measured short. She would appreciate a pat on her shoulder.³ One gets the sense of being well in advance of being devalued. Tamika would maintain her pride by separating her identity from the situation and adopting an identity in opposition to it, thus, whatever interest in learning she had is expressed. To learn, Tamika would have to "get something" out of school. Remediation would likely cause her to feel less able. However, most of the girls I found were less angry than Tamika, also saw the value of their futures. Adia, a less-angry girl, expressed a lack of concern that school personnel

I didn't want to go to class. I got tired of how I ended up here [New Directions] with girls. Fought too much. Smoked. Franklin they don't care. You just get the teacher out. I haven't learned nothing. Mr. Gordon, he my nigger though. He ok with teachers. He ok with me. I know the teachers too strict, but he ok with me. He can

f it. And while some kids have that
can come in with more focus than
ls who the kid ends up associating
omething or someone that is posi-
n make a difference for a kid.

n that many poor urban girls experi-
seems irritated about a wide range of
ing:

hink I'm stupid 'cause of the way I
g to say to her. She just be wasting
attention and stuff like that. I ain't
ou don't respect me, then why am I

arly hear the relentless experience of
otly be described as a girl who has a
sense that Tamika rejects the teacher
herself. In effect, Tamika can only
erself from the institution of educa-
position to it (Spencer et al., 2001);
she might have is likely to be sup-
e to admit to herself that she wanted
vealing her hope as well as her need
er to feel too psychologically vulner-
ollowed, who presented as being far
ir teachers as not really caring about
offers a similar impression about the
I have for students:

t kicked out of Franklin, so that's
ons]. I fought too much. Hung out
oked all day. Weed. Cigarettes. At
walk in and out. I would cuss the
ing at this place [New Directions].
He cares about kids, not like most
at some other kids think that he's
cares about the kids here.

Although Adia realizes the connection (at teachers and fighting) and getting if anything to change her behavior, she “learn[s] nothing.” She feels that in her, and she therefore makes no teacher’s concern is not a silver bullet teachers were seen as caring about trying to make kids understand, there at least some girls applied themselves nection between engagement, achievement (ton et al., 2008): when teachers are v in at-risk students, their performance way.⁴

Girls in Melrose Park and Lee are personnel for their academic problems extra step to voluntarily reflect on how said, if asked directly, most girls were Cassie asserted:

It’s not my fault. I give it a try but thing. I don’t know how to do these head down on the desk. They make more interesting, then I’d be able something, I guess I do better at it

In this excerpt, Cassie goes from changing the subject by focusing on the end, it is too uncomfortable for her own academic difficulties make for her poor performance: not enough Melrose Park and Lee get to the point school, the odds of them getting the them. Moreover, in the cultural context learning is devalued and youths tend negative attitude about school, making one feels one must hide. The vicious that characterizes many a youngster Park and Lee fits the classic picture (1997) and other scholars have poignantly

reaction between her behavior (cursing) and being in trouble in school, she does little to change as she sees school as a place where school personnel have invested little in her. Her apologies for her behavior. While at the same time, I did find that in classrooms where teachers attend to their student's individual needs and where there was a meaningful difference in how they interacted with students. Indeed, research supports the connection between school environment, and school behavior (Appleby, 1998). Viewed as having a greater investment in her education, she is significantly affected in a positive way.

Students are quick to blame teachers and school systems and, in most cases, do not go the other way to show how they view their own abilities. This is often because they are not aware of their academic difficulties.

... I ain't understanding it or some-
 of the problems [math], so I just put my
 head down and go to sleep. I think if the work was
 easier, I would be able to stay awake more. When I like

... a feeling inadequate to giving up to
 find another reason for the problem. In
 order to think for very long about how
 she feels, so she offers another reason
 for going to sleep. Truth be told, once girls in
 an environment where they have fallen behind in
 school, the help they need are decidedly against
 the context in which they find themselves,
 and tend to collectively feed off each other's
 lack of interest in learning something
 new, creating a cycle of devaluation and withdrawal
 from their educational experience in Melrose
 Park, a ghetto schooling that Jean Anyon
 has eloquently written about.⁵

Many girls are further embarrassed at an alternative school, which makes caring less comfortable. Mr. Griffin, a serious, no-nonsense and respected teacher of many kids at

Coming to an alternative school depends. They are labeled to the kicked out of the neighborhood. He know I see that some of these kids don't get it fast, a lot of them can't they're going to get it. And once they them all the time that they need to they just beat out time until they removed or push through to the necks hackles get raised. I think we're doing but nobody seems to know what the problems are so vast.

In the course of my work I found that personnel were sympathetic to kids. Many teachers at Paulson, New Directions, had little previous experience working in schools and no degree in education at all, although some were pursuing some type of certification. The staff, given the low pay and probable frustration, was the teachers who were both experienced and working with inner-city youths who were unresponsive from them.⁶

It is in this context where girls for the first time at school and perceive themselves to be in a place where much fighting is planned out or breaking ground for youths to confer with each other. Developmentally has primacy in their lives. The gossip that drives fights gets worse in these circumstances that commonly provoke fights. As Tamika describes:

See someone speaking to the guy that you like. You sit there all day thinking he

and because they have been placed at an angle about learning even more uncommonsense type of a person and a favorite of Paulson, speaks to this last point:

labels them. How it plays out in the outside world as bad kids. Being a lot to do with self-esteem. You know they are really trying. But when they imagine that if they keep at it that they are far behind, it's hard to give up to catch up in a meaningful way. So they either get in more trouble and are sent to next class or grade before too many are doing most of these kids a disservice, to do with them because their prob-

that even when teachers and school counselors, they often were not well trained. In some schools, and Compton-Taylor had little success in school settings; some did not have any resources, many were actively engaged in purchasing, there was also a high turnover among teachers, and burnout. Again, not surprisingly, it was often the experienced and specifically devoted to the subject seemed to garner the most favorable

the most part feel little investment in the subject, devalued by school authorities that they look out. Schools end up being a meeting place for one another about peer issues, which is not good for their lives. It is frequently at school that the subject is talked and reworked, with the range of issues that make fights never being in short-supply.

you're talking to, and it burns you, now you're gonna take care of that

bitch. Shit, it damn hard to wait 'ca
 are until later when you can settle
 you're outside [of the school], it's
 times girls they act big when they
 the same way when you see them
 they have to live up to how tough t

Fights that occur on site are usual
 pute over a perceived slight and oft
 same corridors are where informati
 that have been broken up and will b
 should be noted that at the schools i
 least as much as boys. This is becaus
 fight over small slights, given the gre
 produce a gun—if not immediately,
 male and female youths were unanim

However, without fail, school perso
 “tougher to handle” than boys. For
 schools at which I spent time, girls'
 up, given the intensity with which g
 word “intensity” was commonly used
 principal of Paulson, explains:

The hardest thing is to keep a girl i
 They cross boundaries more. Whe
 Reasoning can only go so far if a gi
 thing. A lot of the time, you just ha
 talk to her afterward. Usually that
 can't talk to a girl, it's just finding t

Mr. Gordon echoes the same sent
 comments further. Rather than simp
 veys an appreciation for the degree o
 them:

About 80% of girls in my class fig
 gerous than boys. They will cut y
 bring you down. Boys get that way
 their best to hurt you. They will pu

because you gotta stay right where you are on the matter in your own way. Once you're in a whole different matter. Some-thing happens in school, but then they don't talk about it outside because they know that they might be talking.

Usually the result of a spontaneous dis-ruption, a "go down" in the hallway. These fights often get communicated about fights and they continued when school lets out. It was in the school in which I spent time, girls fought at school. Boys, unlike girls, are less likely to be injured. There is a greater chance that an opponent might be injured then at a later point in time. Both studies are confirming this observation. School personnel uniformly viewed girls as being more violent. Now, suffice it to say that, at all the fights were deemed harder to break. Girls "went at each other." Indeed, the study is inclined to refer to girls. Mr. Martin, the vice

principal, sits on her seat. They keep things going. When girls get mad, they really lose it. When a girl gets her mind fixed about some-thing, you have to wait it out and see if you can talk to her. It works a lot better. It's not that you know the right way to approach her.

Mr. Martin is as Mr. Martin but expands his definition of being critical of the girls, he con-siders the level of competition that gets raised among

girls. Girls are more far more dan-gerous, stab you. Do what it takes to win, but it's not normal. Girls will do anything, throw out every stop to get you. Throw

chairs, stab you with pencils, call each other. First thing they call each other out of fights establish respect. The thing act because they also can't be tell kids all the time not to fight situations, but if certain kids won't play you're making against fighting falls

Mr. Lawrence, a teaching manager, makes a connection between girls' and fighting, and the larger context that is

A lot of girls try to deal with their. Girls are harder to reason with than want attention. They want different things aren't as deep. Words aren't to earn his respect by fighting it out something goes down really wrong see the same fight be fought over a fight is done, for the most part it's

Ms. Lafayette, a behavioral specialist, held by many that girls have more "is

Girls have a lot of issues. There are but they are not available to all girls of girls have issues from home, memories of the past, neglected or abused in family by parents. There are a lot of things difficult to teach them. Much harder better for girls to be in an all-girls get the attention that they need a complicated when boys, on top of nature. When you add boys into the exponentially more complicated with

Clearly, however, at the schools often played a role in exacerbating a intervened. When cursed out or other

you bad names; they will degrade each other is "bitch." Girls who stay they let things go. But it's a balance seen as being scared to fight. We and to use talking to settle situations by those same rules, then the case is apart.

anger at New Directions, specifically academic weaknesses, their resort to influences their fighting:

their educational flaws by being bad. than boys. They will argue. Most attention than the boys. For boys, it a part of it. The boy just is going out, and then it's usually over unless it's gang related. You don't and over again by boys. When the usually over.

alist at Franklin, reinforces the view "issues" than boys:

some services in school we offer, s. I think that they should be. A lot mental health issues, traumatic issues one way or another. Not necessarily things going on with girls. Makes it der than boys. Maybe it would be environment. This way, they could and not have things become more everything else, enter into the picture equation, the situation becomes with girls.

I spent time in, personnel all too altercations by the way in which they otherwise challenged by students, secu-

rity guards often became belligerent to restrain a youth before he or she began defying the youth's sense of anger and defiance with regard to the training and experience on this score:

School security people have to be sometimes they're just a little older than the same neighborhood. So some causes situations to escalate. It's not know, paying staff \$6 and \$7 an hour is going to happen when things from [lets out a big sigh]. And then the school that occurs comes down during the The whole thing is crazy. What is than the kids, larger than the school cant changes in the way we run school things to really change in any significant

Although youngsters in inner cities impaired based on their school performance measures their intelligence in other intelligence with respect to reading do not capture or credit the social intelligence that many of the youths I spent institutional neglect (in the realm of disaffection renders many youths unprepared for the future. Said another way, on some aware of how behind they were academically defended themselves against feeling for many of these girls, the attitudes of doing well academically were unlikely

The Juvenile Justice

Several authors have noted the complexity of the justice system itself as a process structure (Lind, 1997; Baskin and Sommers, 1997).

themselves. They would frequently become physically aggressive, intensifying frustration. Mr. Martin's comments on the expertise of security personnel are illus-

really smart with girls. But sometimes the kids are. They're usually from sometimes they just grab kids, which is really institutionalized racism, you know. I don't know what people think from the get-go are set up like this [the school is blamed because the trouble on the school day on school property. The wrong with the situation is larger than school. We need to make some significant changes in inner cities if we expect a significant sense.

Girls are often labeled as intellectually inferior. In performance, there is no yardstick that compares their arenas—in particular, their social and cultural surroundings. Academic tests measure intelligence and emotional intelligence, but not the time with possessed. Unfortunately, the interaction (education) interacting with personal experiences is likely to use school to obtain a secure level. The girls I followed were well academically and thus psychologically humiliated by “opting out.” Thus, the values, beliefs, and norms associated with the girls are likely to surface in the school setting.

Justice System

A critical need to consider the juvenile justice system's impact on structuring violent girls' lives (Chesney-Lind, 1997; Miller, 2001). In fact, we know

relatively little about how the criminal justice system views girls as agents of aggression, not only with respect to how they are viewed by the system but also with respect to how punishment is effected as a result of how the system operates. In the past two decades, the way in which the system has dealt with female youth offenders has also changed. As a prosecutor, one of the judges I interviewed, who works in the Juvenile Court, was quick to note:

We used to think of serious violent crime as being committed by males. We see more girls than ever before. Some girls' homicides were of infants in the past. We are seeing more of a scope of violent crime. The way things are going to change for the future is that we're going to see more girls charged with serious charges that have been historically reserved for males. It's an important trend with respect to how it is dealt with.

With regard to the issue of prosecution, she said:

Charging youths as adults is a mistake. The current adult system. The mental health services are not what we have at our discretion. The old system was designed for a number of girls now who are coming into the system. There are not enough programs for the girls. The number of girls continues to rise. The system is not doing the system to catch up, and the girls who are charged that happens will bear the burden of the system. It's going to take us to learn the lessons from the current court system can do better for far more girls than we are doing.

In reality, over 85% of the youth charged in the adult court are transferred back to juvenile court. Yet applying the full weight of the law to girls has gone far toward institutionalizing a more aggressive and violent "breed" than their predecessors. As a result, the term "super-predator" to describe this "new

criminal justice system “constructs” girls in regard to the way in which girls are viewed. Over the course of the criminal justice system has dealt to markedly changed.⁷ As Judge Tes-

crime as being committed only by before. Mostly assaults. Before, bathrooms. But girls are committing more than before. I don't think that better any time soon. It's my sense coming into the system and with reserved for boys. We're witness-ect to delinquency in this country

ation, she continues:

take. Children don't belong in the side of the law is what we need to tem was better. You also have a lot the system, and there is little out em. I think that will change as the But it's going to take a while for girls that are in the system before of it. The question is how long is ssions that we need to learn? The families and kids than it is currently

cases that are filed directly to adult court after a dispositional hearing.⁸ w to certain acts of violence by youth g a view of youths as being of a differ- John DiIulio (1995) coined the term “new” type of juvenile who is highly

resistant to rehabilitation. Fraught with every that could easily be manipulated and embraced by the media in the mid-1990s, the term had racist connotations in the past and in situations where minority youths were involved in violent acts.

While the specter of youth-as-suspect associated with male youths, the effect of this was a decrease in the number of girls in the juvenile justice system. The zero-tolerance criminal justice system in response to violence in the late 1980s and early 1990s led to a change in attitude toward the processing of female youths. Garrett, who also sits on the bench in the courtroom, is in on this point:

My hands are tied in some ways [because of the [treatment] programs] for males than females. We're dealing with a lot of boys who are violent to girls. We're dealing with a lot of boys who are violent to these kids but doesn't forgive a kid who is violent because you've been shuffled around the system. It's you in the eyes of the law. Money is a factor. We're seeing a lot more girls than boys. In the truth, I don't think we know what we're doing. We did, we don't yet have the facilities to deal with them. It's a shame because these girls need help and they need help today.

Lana, a probation officer with several years of experience, says:

I've never seen a girl that was a violent offender. I've seen a girl in for aggravated assault. Girls, they're more extreme. They have more anger issues. They're more on their shoulder. I have a harder time dealing with boys. Not sure why. More issues with boys. More problems in the family—boys have more mental health issues. I've been dealing with them always been this way. We saw few girls when we saw them it was the same

with alarming implications and imagination to inspire fear, the term was quickly adopted in the 1990s. Many observers charged that the term was disproportionately invoked against those who were alleged to have committed seri-

ous crimes. The term super-predator was primarily associated with this revisionist view had great significance. It had historically been minimized by the more tolerant approach adopted by the courts. In response to the increased incidence of youth violence in the 1990s ushered in a less-chivalrous attitude toward juvenile delinquency cases.⁹ Judge Robert M. Wechsler of the Philadelphia Juvenile Court, weighs

in. There are more spots [in treatment programs] for males. Anything left over you give to females. Anything left over you give to females. Society has failed these kids. Society has failed for creating another victim. Just being in the system doesn't excuse this. It's green self-esteem for these kids. It's not what we ever did before. To tell you the truth, we don't know what to do with them, and even if we had the resources in place to direct them to. It's a long-term help now, not in a few years. They

After several years on the job, notes:

It's a big seller. Mostly they're brought in because they tend to take everything to an extreme. They're angry, anger at the world. A chip on their shoulder. More communicating with them than with boys. Issues, pregnancy, and promiscuity, but less family problems. Girls have been doing this for a while, and it's not just over girls in the system before, but in the same way.

She continues:

I would rather have ten boys than
 “You gonna give me my bus money
 more consuming. More issues to ta
 violence, girls are still feminine, st
 continue to be secondary to male
 have a lot more things going on
 complicated. That’s just the way it

One must wonder what causes La
 ing “more issues” than their male cou
 who holds this view. The notion tha
 “emotional,” even when they use gu
 tice personnel, just as it was with edu
 youths often inflict greater harm tha
 cally viewed as being less angry. And
 and consume drugs more often than
 toward weapon use, and typically h
 girls at once, they are still seen as h
 than girls. Nor are they characteriz
 moves from partner to partner woul
 ing fewer problems, even though m
 the same neighborhood in which po
 lives of both. Yet, while it is no doub
 attitude, the psychological factors th
 more complicated than is often ackn
 to the commonplace notion that “boy
 aggressive. Personal factors weigh he
 violence is concerned and need to be

The differential perception of m
 a paradoxical expression on the ben
 nal justice system. While the resort
 cally not perceived as being as serio
 female youths are viewed as being
 their male counterparts. In some ca
 more-treatment-oriented dispositio
 few treatment program slots for fema
 the help that she is deemed to need a

n one girl. Girls have an attitude: "I'm not like that or what" [*imitating a girl*]. They're talking about. Even when they commit violence, they're still attached to males . . . they still see violence as a male thing. You can't talk to a girl with a girl. It's always a lot more complicated than that is.

It is common for Lana to perceive female youths as having different counterparts, though it is not just Lana who holds this view. The notion that males who fight are "rational" not females, is pervasive among juvenile justice and education personnel. Even though male youths are often more violent than female youths, they still are typically perceived as more "rational" despite the fact that male youths sell drugs, are more violent than female youths, more readily gravitate toward violence, have relationships going with several girls, and are having fewer mental health problems than girls. They are perceived as being promiscuous, as a girl who is violent should be. Moreover, boys are seen as having more control over their lives than male and female youths are reared in poverty and its vicissitudes touch the lives of all. It is not true that girls present with a lot of mental health problems that drive boys to commit violence are not recognized. It is too simple to leave it at that. The notion that "boys will be boys" or that boys are more violent than girls is a reality in the lives of certain boys where it is not always factored in accordingly.

While male and female youth violence has been studied at such and in other levels of the criminal justice system, violence by female youths is typically perceived as less violent than male youths, at the same time, female youths are more psychologically unstable than male youths. As a result, this results in a girl receiving a sentence that is more lenient than a boy. However, since there are relatively few programs for girls, ironically, a girl often cannot get into a program and ends up in a program where she

receives limited services. Mental health programs are in serious short supply for crisis spots in treatment facilities (Chen). In a few, some studies provide evidence that specialized treatment programs with female youths, including a range of services to the community, would go a long way to reduce rates.¹⁰

The following excerpt by Judge Rutter, a bench, well illustrates this position:

It's different between girls and boys. A girl gets a free ride for a boy. He has to show respect for society. To protect her young ones, a mother that her daughter doesn't get her hands on a gun about that. You're not going to stop a girl from the street to protect her daughters. No one sees what she's doing as taking care of her daughter she has to risk to do that.

He continues:

There is a pecking order among girls. If a girl violates the pecking order, the other girls in a pack will assault the girl who violated. If a girl asserts her right, other girls will manipulate the situation and never fight. They are simply more cunning. Their assault is not a fight, it's a dispute, which is solvable. It's not a fight to do with who gets what permanent damage from males in this way. If you want to be a girl, you have to do it, and it has been what I've seen for many years, much in all these years.

No doubt, Judge Rutter is not entirely correct in the distinctions he makes with respect to girls. But the face on the streets of their neighborhoods is not as he makes them out to be—like boys. He has also called on at some point to show

health and chemical dependency programs for female youths, as are dual diagnosis programs (Sney-Lind et al., 2002). Though only a few programs exist that emphasize that increasing access to basic and mental health services is a special emphasis on the needs of girls, there is a need for such services when girls are released back into the community to reduce recidivism and re-arrest rates.

utter, who recently retired from the

boys. Girls can retreat. There is no honor in this mettle. Philly is a matriarchal society. A mother will go along to assure her son a face cut. Nothing a man can do will stop a mother from going out on the town. No matter what you say or do. She will risk the life of her kid, and she will risk what

these girls. That's everything. If a girl is going to be a problem. Every man who violates the pecking order. If a girl will support her choice. A girl can never get involved in a fight. Girls are more devious. Males are set-back. Females aren't. Their issue has to do with honesty. Females are just different from males. If honest, there is no getting around them from the bench and hasn't changed

entirely wrong about some of the descriptions of girls; however, the challenges that girls face in their neighborhoods are also not as simple to avoid as some might say, girls in Melrose Park and Lee are not immune to their mettle. What in actuality dis-

tinguishes the situation for boys and they fight—money and drugs for boys, girls—and the related weapon use by them. In addition to the fact, though, that not every case Park and Lee engages in is related to guns, she is immune to fighting over things that are not guns, blinded by their rage.

Incidents that threaten the reputation of a youth in a wide range of circumstances similar to those of the extremes that are the focus of interest in this study give a distinctive sense of a situation. However, despite the lack of immediate content, the issue of reputation is the primary driving force where the resort to violence is concerned.

It is no surprise that judges in the juvenile courts seem to be gradually changing their attitudes toward female youths as female cases have increased on their dockets. Almost every judge I interviewed expected the presence of girls in their courts to increase over the coming years. Most also agreed that the discretion of the case and their discretion on the sentencing of the girls would receive even stiffer penalties than boys.

Perhaps most important, the majority of judges did not feel that the judicial reform was necessary because of the rising rate of youth violence beginning in the late 1980s. The best interests of the child or, for that matter, the state, most perceived the Youth Violence Act as a reduction of discretion from the bench, as opposed to a belief in a rehabilitative approach and a more lenient and, over time, with changing the way the law is enforced and delivered in this country.

My discussions with judges left me with the impression that if it were up to them, greater discretion would be given. Some judges were even in favor of decriminalizing infractions that are only illegal for juveniles, such as truancy, curfew, and the system altogether; these offenses (for example, truancy, consuming alcohol) account for a significant portion that bring female youths into the courts. At the same time, in favor of prosecution and sentencing, judges at all levels were in favor of seeing new

girls most is the content over which
s and he-said, she-said situations for
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ry fight that a male youth in Melrose
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e Philadelphia juvenile justice system
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majority of judges who spoke with me
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t matter, the public. I would say that
act of 1994,¹¹ which took away a great
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of removing status offenses—minor
children—from the juvenile justice
r example, shoplifting, running away,
t for a large percentage of the charges
ourt system. In addition to being in
reform, criminal justice personnel at
models of services developed specifi-

cally for girls. While such changes have never a spike in the female youth arrest number of female youths processed significantly this time, the call for more will actually yield results. Indeed, in practice called for the compilation of a national delinquency to better understand it. The National Girls Study Group was Justice and Delinquency Prevention in an increase in female delinquency research prolific, the field shows important sophisticated ways of conceptualizing, extremely important for research in the

Law Enforcement

For police in Melrose Park and Lee is built around maintaining a greater these areas often do not feel that the police is meant to protect them. James Baldwin “occupied territory” where police keep being sure they stay in their place—in an army “shifting cultural taboos” (*Nation*). Melrose Park and Lee express a similar terms. They see the police as coming after a problem has already broken down the first place. They see policing as perpetuating structural inequalities that exerts control

For the police, the incidence of violence their presence momentarily checks the tension between police and residents—a moment trouble will boil up again. Elijah Anderson a clear sense of how they are perceived leads to a script of suspicion that often proposes to contain. Again, not much attitudes that police have toward female

In my ride-alongs with police, I gathered residents of Lee and a handful of officers

have been historically called for when the highest rate occurs, perhaps because the juvenile system has grown so large and more-specialized and better services are available. In 2003, the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention initiated a new generation of research on female delinquents' causes and trajectory. To this end, the Office created the Office of Juvenile Justice Research in 2004 (Zahn et al., 2008). While the research could in no way be seen as being the sign of growth and has put forth more questions about why girls fight. Needless to say, it is this area to be built on.

Enforcement

Lee, the strategy for keeping order is a sense of dominance. Residents in the absence of police presence in their community often graphically described ghettos as "a place where the police keep an eye on the inhabitants, making sure they do not cause a problem, playing the role of the colonial administrator" (Lee, 1966). To a degree, residents of the ghetto have a similar conviction, though in their own minds they are going around only to haul someone in and out and not protecting the streets in their own right and parcel of the wider system of control over their lives on a daily basis. Violence is at best suppressed. Though the behavior, the unspoken understanding and often the spoken, as well—is that the police are often the ones who argue that Black males have been provoked by the police (1999). This attitude often can provoke the same violence it has been written to date about the ghetto where violence is concerned. I did not observe the exchange between the police and the residents, though most of my ride-alongs

were with one particular officer, Sergeant Palazzo, who also gave me the opportunity to witness domestic disputes between males and females. It was clear that the police disparagingly viewed the girls. They were made to understand the context of the situation to them. Although Sergeant Palazzo and I both know and understand that the “system” was not the fault of the families and that many youths grow up in a “hardcore” environment, it was clear that the disdain the police made it hard for them to sustain sympathy when they came in contact. In large part, it was a bootstrap mentality that asserted that the girls should take their hardship and take responsibility for it. The police viewed residents in Melrose Park as being desperate to pursue more immediate gratification. The girls’ difficult backgrounds as evidence that they had brushes with police were seen in a negative light. Expectations not only with respect to the girls but with respect to gender. Like education, the police I came in contact with typically were much more difficult to manage than what the girls reflected:

You can rationalize more with a male officer. They want to talk. Have their say. It’s easier to get a female officer to avoid having to argue with a male officer. Maybe she is going to say a male officer is wrong. It’s also the case that sometimes a male officer doesn’t have to go through the same process as a female officer, which can take a while. Like education, it depends. I’ve seen it all. There’s a lot of things people don’t know about, don’t want to believe if you told them about it.

Chief Harris brings up similar themes when discussing how disputes between females escalate:

Females are sneakier. They use what they can. The biggest street battles start with two

Sergeant Palazzio. These ride-alongs witness altercations between females or males and females. Just as residents sensed the police, on a nightly basis, I suspect that most residents felt toward the officers that I got to know. I went far to undermine the efforts of the police in Lee "did not have a fair chance" that the officers felt directed at them. I had sympathy for the people with whom I worked, but their sympathy was replaced by a sense of what individuals needed to overcome their situation for their lives. Police frequently viewed Lee as having taken the easy way out. Justifications, referencing their own difficulties, one made their own luck. Girls who were viewed in an even worse light, as they defied the police to personal responsibility but also the police and criminal justice personnel, were typically viewed female youths as being no different than male youths. As Sergeant Palazzio

male. Females are more hot-headed.

Male officers will often call for a female to arrest a girl. It's her foul mouth, or the officer made a sexual move on her. A male officer will let a girl pass so as to avoid the hassle of waiting for a female officer if it's at the end of his shift. It all seems like that goes on out here that most people don't want to know about, and wouldn't

know, as well as referring to how fights

that they have at their disposal. The police and two women. They bring out all the

stops. Get their friends, their fam
 a lot of people. For males, it's not
 They go through different females.
 females. It's really hard to talk the
 son with females. You just have to
 them feel like you understand what
 the way it is with anybody. When
 know how to get to that level with
 start to have a problem, and then
 more difficult to resolve.

Here again the theme of girls being
 the foreground. Girls' styles of provo
 is indeed different from male styles a
 some by officers. However, here again
 not operating from a base of emotio
 clude that girls cannot be reasoned w
 egos were less easily threatened coul
 up a fight in which a girl was involv
 lenged a girl or treated her in a dem
 not take a step back but would raise
 is what police officers and other prof
 at least in part, when they describe g
 Kia explains:

I'm not gonna let no fuckin' police
 care if he locks me up. If I didn't
 my mouth 'cause someone tells me
 because some police officer has a
 me. That doesn't make it right. I d
 someone ain't respecting me. The p
 more.

One can especially hear in Kia's w
 on not being wrongly blamed for so
 than losing her voice, as girls ofte
 "defends" herself. When devaluation
 girls seem more able to counter it. In
 they more often withdraw. But Allie s

family—in the end it comes down to
 it so much propriety over females.
 Females will try to disfigure other
 m down. It's not that you can't rea-
 o talk to them in a way that makes
 e's important to them. I guess that's
 you have officers who don't really
 a female, I think that's when you
 you have a situation that's much

ing “emotional” is quickly brought to
 ooking fights and keeping them going
 and are experienced as more burden-
 n, it seems inaccurate to cast males as
 n. Nor does it seem accurate to con-
 with. I found that those officers whose
 d intervene far better when breaking
 ved. If an officer provocatively chal-
 leaning way, typically, the girl would
 the stakes even higher. Perhaps this
 essionals in the community refer to,
 girls as far more intense than boys. As

officer treat me like a punk. I don't
 do something, I ain't gonna shut
 e to. I'm gonna defend myself. Just
 badge, that don't mean nothing to
 on't be needing to show respect if
 police should be respecting people

words the importance that she places
 something that she did not do. Rather
 n do in school, as she puts it, she
 occurs directly and in a physical way,
 a school where many feel inadequate,
 says:

If I did something wrong, I'm not that I don't like to be told I did something wrong. It happens a lot with police. They be [unclear] or something. They don't even [unclear] or nothing. Someone be minding [unclear] sudden they [the police] just make [unclear] why people get angry at them all the [unclear] your face, and that ain't right.

Allie reiterates the theme of being misunderstood. She suggests that she would be willing to challenge them. However, it was my sense that most girls challenge them in part because of their anger, because they generally experienced a lack of support rather than helping them.

Indeed, I found that officers would talk about girls among themselves about girls. Girls were referred to as “wild girls” and “bitches.” Anthony, an officer on the police force, described female aggression as not uncommon among both males and females, while police perceived girls to be “more aggressive.” They often characterized their actions as “wild.” Driscoll explains:

Young girls, their fighting is not usually directed at the aggressors. We usually get called out for things involving knives, bottles, boxes, etc. Most of the crimes by females are directed at themselves for anyone else's welfare. More callous. You wouldn't think that girls could be that aggressive. It was a new thing for me when I first started. It's only gotten to be more shocking since then.

Lieutenant Driscoll characterizes female aggression as not only for others than boys typically do, a common occurrence, but also all uncommon. Yet again, it is hard to understand why and possibly kills another male could be a common regard for his victim or of not being a common cast female youths who engage in violence.

gonna lie or make a fuss. It's just something when I didn't. And that coming at you like you're a criminal check to see what really happened their business, and then all of a lot of assumptions, and that's the time. They just come and get in

g wrongly blamed, though she suggest responsibility where indicated. girls were hypersensitive to the police how they were approached but also authority figures as humiliating them

d frequently comment disparagingly who fought were frequently referred to as "bitch fights." The term was used by male and female officers. Interestingly, female officers were "more emotional" in their responses, while male officers were "unfeeling." Lieutenant

usually self-defense. They're usually violent when there are dangerous weapons cutters, not often guns. Most of the violence is directed toward other females. No regard for gender. Their tolerance level is short. It can be so hard, but they can be. That's why they came onto the force, and it has nothing to do with violence. Girls can really be intense.

girls as manifesting a lesser regard for gender. This characterization I found to be not at all surprising. It's hard to reconcile how a male who shoots and kills can be thought of as having any more regard for gender, though the police typically view female violence—and not boys—in that light.

One can speculate that the police s
carried out by female youths is far m
violence is considered normative w
the violent girl seems more unfeeling
to be self-sacrificing, whereas this is

Lastly, it is well understood that t
ants in most of the street fights in M
a weapon is involved, or a large crow
to be called. On the occasions when
one another, or I entered a househol
among several females, I did in fact w
and often their female elders to “fight
“Being heard” and “not being wrong
tance to females. Dynamically, the tw
police perceive females to fight as int

While the typical narrative offe
range of areas reduces to the mess
more trouble to handle than boys,” it
characterization for a more dimens
into focus. For example, although w
indeed be hard to calm down, if the
they will show themselves to be qu
rationally about situations. Indeed,
trust, professionals uniformly repor
relationships with them than boys d
girl may at first pose a serious chall
course, there is a chance to genuinely
is especially significant in that it rep
intervention.

start from the position that violence is more out of control, given that male violence is more frequent and more severe while female violence is not. Perhaps female violence is more frequent and devious because she is expected to be more compliant. This is not the case for boys.

The police do not apprehend combatants in Melrose Park and Lee and that when they do gather, the police are more likely to apprehend boys. I saw a large group of females fight in a public place where a disturbance was reported. I witness the readiness of female youths to fight "to the end" if they were not stopped. This "to the end" seemed to be of ultimate importance. This, together with the fact that they do not fight together may help explain why they fight as intensely as they do.

As reported by professionals from a wide range of disciplines, "girls are naturally difficult and this requires moving beyond this initial impression and realistic picture to come to a more realistic picture. When girls engage in fights they may feel like their concerns are heard, and they are quite capable of speaking frankly and honestly. Once beyond the initial question of whether or not that girls tend to form more open relationships. Thus, while gaining the trust of a girl is a challenge, for professionals who stay the course they can connect with them. The distinction between boys and girls presents a window of opportunity for

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Concl

The stories of girls who resort to violence are new stories in the sense that violent behavior have historically been associated with the boys of the neighborhoods they live—and, in large measure, by society. Other motivations more palatable to the public have been used to explain the phenomenon of females engaging in violence, but they have been substituted. In this book, which is based on research with low-income girls, their friends, and their neighborhoods, and a wide range of other data, I have sought to uncover how social and cultural factors work together to explain why girls in some neighborhoods fight. Rather than simplifying the complex nature of the problem, I have purposely sought to maximize the complexity of the problem to be analyzed. Not surprisingly, I find that the phenomenon is more complex than the stereotypes that have been put forth to explain their aggression. The implications on the level of public policy and intervention are significant for girls and their families who live in high-risk neighborhoods and violence.

Historically, the consideration of violence in the social sciences has almost exclusively focused on females who engage in physical aggression. In the past century, the social sciences did not contribute to the mapping of the subject much beyond the fact that the harm were essentially relegated to the streets rather than being the subject of serious academic scholarship existed to guide treatment of delinquent female youths. A cursory review of the literature that it has taken many decades for female violence to be viewed as a legitimate area of scientific inquiry.

Conclusion

o violence in Melrose Park and Lee
at the motivations behind girls' vio-
obscured by the society within which
social science over the past 100 years.
o societies long uncomfortable with
ng in physical aggression have been
based on hundreds of conversations
, their families, the professionals in
ge of persons encountered along the
social, cultural, and individual factors
in some low-income neighborhoods
mense complexity of these girls' lives,
the number of extractable factors to
that girls fight for reasons that are far
and generalities that have typically
ssive behavior. I support intervention
stitutional reform, not just with the
high crime areas and who engage in

violence through the lens of gender
males as victims rather than as agents
Throughout much of the 20th cen-
tribute to a substantive exploration or
d this. Females who inflicted physical
e realm of sensationalized media cov-
of serious research. Little if any cred-
atment or policy decisions regarding
y glance at the literature will bear out
emales who engage in violence to be
ic inquiry worthy of government and

foundation funding. Fortunately, today's stories of girls who engage in violence are beginning to theorize their aggression, including their framing and expression.

Indeed, findings in the field have been mixed. Interventions at various levels, including in schools, are being implemented across the nation. A growing body of research suggests the effectiveness of gender-responsive programs. Yet the dollars spent for such programs lag far behind the dollars going into the system. Whereas the inaction is finally recognized—a meaningful victory—many of the root causes are still to be corrected. A new confidence field now exists where there once was not.

On an ironic and cautionary note, the focus on girls' violence that is not shared by their male counterparts to the inquiry into female youth violence is what sets the sexes apart to blind us. The attempt to bring needed attention to girls, by its very nature, has sometimes obscured violent behavior by males and females. This is not to say that finding it different causal explanations. There has been at times to imply that what is necessarily different and, by extension, that respectively underlie their behaviors. This illustrates the possibility of constructing a separate phenomenon with little if any connection. It suggests that females and males are not the same imperatives.

Nothing that I have discovered in the field makes that case. On the contrary, the data illustrate that there is great overlap between female youths and male youths to engage in violence. To be looked at simultaneously as boys and girls in the same story and, perhaps most fundamentally, as human beings.

Youth violence in low-income neighborhoods, whether by males or females, is in large part a response to a perceived threat, as well as a compensatory mechanism, both concretely and psychologically. This is not to say that, to its usual antisocial framing, violence

ay when social scientists listen to the
ce, they are typically more sensitive
ding the role that gender plays in its

egun to inform programming deci-
family court and criminal justice sys-
ody of research now documents the
programming for girls, although the
ar behind the numbers of girls enter-
dequacy of services for girls is at least
ctory in itself—the problem and its
Yet even with its oversights, a bona
e was none.

e, while asking what is unique about
e opposite sex has added great value
ence, it has also sometimes allowed
s to what is generic to both of them.
tion to the separate issues affecting
nes lent itself to conceptualizing vio-
differentially and mistakenly assign-
The inadvertent consequence of this
motivates violent females and males
nsion, to dichotomize the emotional
r will to commit violence. Such fram-
ing female youth violence as a sepa-
mmonality with male youth violence.
re fundamentally driven by different

n the course of my study, however,
he data on which this volume rests
in the factors that motivate female
a violence; in essence, violence needs
both a gendered and an ungendered
lly, a human one.

ghborhoods, whether carried out by
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ory attempt to increase one's security,
In this study, I found that, contrary
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to explain why males and females in
cal violence, it is more accurate to sa
similarities abound. Ideally, such a pe
device for the study of violence with
There is much to be gained by movi
tual framework that can at the sam
intravariation and intersimilarity of a
sion.

While it is no doubt true that th
lence, which has taken shape since t
improved growing body of empirica
arship preceding it, it is critical to em
largely unexamined. The twin issue
nificantly structure the life worlds o
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violence to be insufficiently context
poverty are frequently cited when re
female youths to violence. However, t
not mean that they have led to a me
operate on the ground to inform girls

On the contrary, the symbolic an
minority communities that is so imp
has not been adequately unpacked i
lence. Observers have often failed to
race, ethnicity, and class have on inn
styles, their behavior, and how they a
Notably absent are in-depth discussi
effects such as poverty, crime, moth
unemployment rates, underfunded s
shape the feelings and attitudes tha
engaging in physical aggression.

In part, this circumstance can be
majority of research on girls' violen
thus, even when measures of race
research designs, local meaning stru
violence do not get captured. It is w

ns in the absence of adequate proso-
sents an arena for bonding as well
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n low-income areas engage in physi-
y that, while differences distinguish,
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hout erasing important distinctions.
ng toward a more-dynamic concep-
ne time accommodate both greater
attitudes by the sexes toward aggres-

the still-embryonic field of girls' vio-
he mid 1980s, has produced a vastly
l research compared with the schol-
phasize that many key issues remain
es of race and poverty, which sig-
f the field's main subjects, have not
causing the inquiry into female youth
ualized. Certainly, culture, race, and
ferring to the variables that motivate
the existence of such references does
eaningful inquiry into how the three
s' use of violence.

nd social structure of impoverished
ortantly implicated in why girls fight
n most studies of female youth vio-
o consider the real implications that
er-city girls' identities, their learning
are perceived by mainstream society.
ions that include how neighborhood
er-headed households, chronic high
chools, and poor housing operate to
t girls develop about endorsing and

e attributed to the fact that the vast
nce has been quantitative in nature:
and poverty are incorporated into
ctures associated with female youth
ell accepted in the field that there is

a dearth of qualitative research on multi- and mixed-method designs (or within the same research project) that grained view together. Regrettably, have more than marginally comment violence are quite dated—and the handful, can only cover so much territory.

Beyond the methodological over above, another reason that race and unpacked with respect to girls engaged long-standing view of girls who aggressive and morally deviant—that it is some themselves, how they were raised by envelops their neighborhood, which socially acceptable female norms—are not be pursued. While for several decades been viewed as relevant to the study ies, it is only recently that the highly staple in explaining why girls committed framing power and no longer sets the linkages that exist between neighborhood must be included as part of any articulated understanding of the dynamics must consider how macro-level force relationships that are structural in neighborhoods youths and their families and then, in personal sphere. In essence, if we are means for girls to commit physical a row view of the subject and contextualized oughly than we have yet done.

When one does this contextualization violence has for girls in low-income clearer. While one would not want to or minimize the harm that embracing sor and victim, it is similarly impossible motivates girls to use violence so from recognizing the intrinsic value and them. As discussed throughout this hood that are characterized by high

the subject. There are relatively few quantitative and qualitative research that blend a coarse-grained and a fine-grained approach. The majority of ethnographies that have been conducted on female juveniles carrying out violence are more recent ones, which amount to a small literature.

The insights and incompleteness outlined above suggest that the low-class class likely have not been adequately studied. Engaging in violence is partly due to the girls' perception of progress as being both socially deviant and stigmatizing. Nothing either inherent about the girls or their families, or the subculture that surrounds them accounts for their deviation from the norm. And hence, a deeper explanation needs to be sought. In the decades now, poverty and race have become central to the study of male youth violence in inner cities. The patriarchal belief structure that has been a part of the study of violence has lost its legitimacy and is no longer the stage of inquiry as it once did. The intersection of neighborhood poverty and physical violence needs a more sophisticated analysis that hopes to reach a sophisticated understanding of the factors that underwrite girls' violence. One needs to understand the forces that produce social patterns and how they converge in the lives of female juveniles. In turn, come to be expressed in the literature. In order to adequately investigate what it is that leads to aggression, we must take a less-naturalized approach to their aggression far more thor-

oroughly. In addition, the instrumental function that violence serves in neighborhoods also becomes much more important. To condone girls engaging in violence and to understand how violence can have for both aggressive and non-aggressive girls is possible to genuinely understand what it is that leads to violence frequently in their daily lives without being able to understand the benefits that violence can have for them. In this book, girls in high-crime neighborhoods experience higher rates of exposure to interpersonal

violence commonly feel that they have been disrespected. Performing violence or threats on other girls as a way to minimize their risk of being disrespected is a protective role that violence or its threat plays. If the instrumental function of violence for girls is not credited, their violent behavior is viewed as a byproduct of psychopathology and sheer aggression. Behavior characterized as “violent” could only be viewed as “violent” in some way, and not as behavior that might be accurate, there are too many other reasons for violence for this to be the default explanation. It is a girl to engage in a physical fight at all, let alone the exception in Melrose Park and Leavenworth. They have keen observers of verbal signals, body language, and the environment of their environment.

Again, most of what has been written about girls focuses on their deficits and their risk factors rather than the actual underpinnings of their aggression.

Similarly, for boys, poverty and the lack of respect and devaluation communicated by mainstream culture and the emphasis on respect and increased status for girls. Limited opportunities for mobility and the need to acquire self-esteem, and a reputation for being tough offer youths a double benefit: it provides a sense of status at the same time that it serves as a kind of protection. In the same way that money and social status are valued in neighborhoods. Without a doubt, the issue of respect in defending one’s dignity and self-worth is a major factor in fighting. Despite the clear evidence for girls, respect has not been afforded anything close to the same level of attention for boys. It sometimes is discussed in passing but not in relation to its significance as a justification for engaging in a fight.

What constitutes disrespect for girls and boys is not always the same as for adults. The lines must be drawn along these lines. Getting disrespected in the form of personal insults or a lack of sensitivity about their physical desires is a common experience for opposite, both male and female youths.

ve no choice but to respond aggress-
 ening to do so is commonly seen by
 of physical threat, similar to the pro-
 pter has for male youths. When the
 r girls in high-crime neighborhoods
 or is simply viewed as being reflect-
 ruitousness. By definition, any girl
 y be considered anomalous or “devi-
 ving rationally. While in some cases
 many instances of girls’ engaging in
 explanation for why girls aggress—for
 some point was more the rule than
 ee. Lost is the fact that these girls are
 y language, and the power relations

ritten about violent girls has focused
 s for violent behavior, not the contex-
 n.

racial discrimination, as well as the
 stream society, result in an exagger-
 se the likelihood of confrontation for
 ility cash out as limited opportunities
 tion for “handling oneself” works to
 rides a measure of self-efficacy at the
 “capital” in relation to other youths,
 al status do in middle-class neigh-
 ue of fighting one’s own battles and
 th is central to the anatomy of girls’
 or this, the trope of “respect” has not
 same attention for girls as it has for
 assing, but not developed in propor-
 on and as a rallying point for entering

girls in low-income neighborhoods,
 it is for boys; therefore, distinctions
 Girls generally tend toward perceiv-
 al slights and demonstrate a special
 ability to the opposite sex. Quite the
 hs report that male youths fight over

things that are far more “serious” in money. For both sexes, one’s sense of the issues around which dignity norms vary. From these norms, concrete rules of order bound and contextually specific things. The role of humiliation, general violence, should be equally a matter studied.

Contrary to what is portrayed in tend to fight more than boys do in of the special dangers that surround are far more apt to be involved in do therefore they are far more likely to are actually less inclined to enter in given the increased chance that it are more likely to allow the he-said, physical altercation. Both male and case in Melrose Park and Lee. Rather suggests that the actual incidence of in impoverished urban neighborhood mated in official statistics. This under is to get a true picture of the phenomenon address it.

This said, common sense also engages in drug selling or carries a view to serious violence is not as neatly Such binary characterizations of the have toward violence are far too superficially little about everyday fighting butous injury or arrest, or how depression influence a boy’s resort to physical action is that both genders go to great lengths because the label almost certainly guarantees as such, both males and females have to stave off being viewed as an easy mark to say that, for adolescents, violence is shared by both genders. It is a strategy that is adopted by adolescents, though sometimes in different

n nature—typically street drugs and
f felt dignity is centrally at stake. It is
rms are constructed that sometimes
les of behavior flow, which are gen-
to shared neighborhood understand-
lly thought to be a precursor to male
of concern when females are being

he media and what many think, girls
a inner-city neighborhoods because
d boys fighting in those areas. Boys
drug-related business than girls, and
e carry weapons. Consequently, they
to a street fight over a small matter,
might turn deadly. Conversely, girls
she-said exchanges to escalate into
female youths report this to be the
r than being anomalous, my research
street fighting by female adolescents
ods has been significantly underesti-
rreporting must be considered if one
menon and what needs to be done to

suggests that, since not every boy
weapon, the linking of male violence
correlated as many assume it to be.
relationship that the different sexes
erficial. As with girls, we know rela-
y males that does not result in seri-
sion and other psychological factors
aggression. Again, what we do know
gths to avoid being labeled a “punk”
guarantees further victimization—and
e to retaliate in some form or fashion
mark or “enemy.” It would be accurate
as a prevention strategy cuts across
ted by both younger and older ado-
rent ways and to different degrees,

depending on a host of factors, of which is certainly not the only element.

The question is how to factor in gender, or too little by it. While the needs and aggressions often have shared origins (conditions like poverty and high unemployment often lead to confrontation to ensue), the gendered nature of these needs (how they are internalized and expressed) leads to different behavior options that a particular community offers each of the sexes. At bottom, what inhibits or encourages behavior becomes a community level phenomenon that may be highly related to how ready one's community is to support its expression. When prohibitions and social restraints are relaxed, this rather limited set of options is apt to increase. The immediate environment of inner cities are two places where relaxation of such prohibitions is likely to occur.

Moreover, to truly understand the behavior of youth in inner cities, the lack of an incentive structure is key. Youth in such neighborhoods have to stay out of trouble to survive. Mobility and prosocial structures open up opportunities for those youths who do not excel in school. The usual inducements to stay out of trouble—the possibility of a secure future—are often absent in such neighborhoods. For those youths who are “nowhere” and unlikely to escape the cycle of poverty, staying on the straight and narrow has little appeal.

While girls frequently speak of professional aspirations, it does not take much probing to see that these are built on little more than blind faith in the merit achievement narratives, despite having little chance they can realize their stated dreams. They are often bothered by the idea of starting adult life with a poor adult record. Rightly or wrongly, many girls see making a record as meaningfully changing their lives. They verbalize this. With the nationwide stagnation of the job sector over the past several decades, the paths out of poverty for young minorities are limited.

which gender is significant, though it is gender without explaining too much and desires that drive male and female (stressful community-based conditions set the stage for violence and organization of these shared origins) is closely linked to the range of community sanctions with regard to reality determines whether violent issue for males or females seems to immediate surroundings are to suppressions against females engaging in violence study suggests that its incidence is environment of Melrose Park and Lee are prohibitions exists.

The dynamics of girls' violence patterns give that girls in inner-city neighborhoods must also be considered. The lack of access to youths in inner cities, especially school, create a vacuum of opportunity. The trouble—a good job and the realistic goal out of reach for many of the youths youths who see themselves as “going through problems of persistent poverty, stay-far less real consequence and, often,

promising career prospects and aspirations to see that, for many, their visions with. While some girls espouse high-achieving little material reason to believe that, many other girls seem to not be adulthood with a juvenile or even an adult many female youths do not view having their life chances, or at least they sharp downsizing of the manufacturing eras, there are relatively few career opportunities youths. Changing the attitudes of

vulnerable youths in inner cities require special respects.

Unlike middle-class girls, inner-city girls have a history of fighting. In neighborhoods like Melrose Park, aggression becomes an acceptable and normal part of life. Fighting is something that girls are expected to do—at least there is no shame in fighting if you are a girl. In fact, quite the opposite. However, in mainstream society, fighting has been considered “healthy” and outside of inner cities, this has not been the case. Physical aggression has been commonly considered a harbinger of crime and maladjustment. For the residents of inner cities like Melrose Park, this is not necessarily true.

Reworking the Term

As underscored across many examples, there are differences among cultural understandings and practices of violence, and therefore one cannot simply generalize because of their demographic or geographic location. Even some generic trends we observe, however, are not a single phenomenon, even though they may appear to be. They cannot be merged into one stick figure, even within the same social setting. The term “violent girl” in inner-city neighborhoods has a particular meaning. The term “violent girl” suggests too many different things. The term, like many terms, functions to name and categorize, and, in so doing, is problematic.

Historically, the common assumption that “violent girls” have always been associated with inner-city communities. In such communities, females have been labeled either as victims or, more recently, as aggressors. Mainstream society has offered no way to understand violent girls without devaluing them.

Consequently, when the term “violent girl” is used in inner cities, it imposes a set of assumptions that do not correspond to the lives of

quires genuinely improving their pros-

ty girls grow up seeing the necessity
Melrose Park and Lee, physical aggres-
sive response for girls. Street fight-
ing is expected to show themselves to be good
if you are a girl in Melrose Park and Lee;
and, by mainstream standards, whereas
“tough” for growing boys, both within
has never been the case for girls—indeed,
it is only referred to as a significant har-
mful for girls. This, of course, is not what
Melrose Park and Lee know to be neces-

Form “Violent Girls”

Examples in this volume, girls choose
to engage in practices based on a range of fac-
tors and they anticipate how they will behave
based on geographic profiles. No doubt there are
differences: “female youth violence” is not
the same as it is often talked about as if it is. It
is a culture that represents all violent girls—
not just one. While the stories of girls fighting in
inner cities show a profound resemblance, unfortunately,
it is not as homogeneous a phenomenon. The
tendency to reduce symbolic and real complexity

to simple categories that underlie the term “violent
girls” is particularly evident with white, middle-class communi-
ties. These girls have been normatively conceptualized
as perpetrators of relational violence.
This is one way to conceptualize physically vio-

“Violent girls” is applied to girls in inner
cities, but it says nothing about proper behavior and roles
in the different social realities of girls like the ones

I followed. The term does not convey Park and Lee emphasizes the importance of the girls' agency and their agency over themselves. Rather, the discourse about girls' aggression is framed and viewed and via the lens of mainstream standards of femininity, control and dangerous.

Another way that the term "violent girls" is not a homogenous phenomenon is by the nature of the acts. Serious and more-serious acts of street fighting by girls that does not get on the radar of observation and is overall far less common, gratuitous attacks and violence by girls in gangs receives attention. For it is the non-gang-related acts that are often sensationalized. In essence, the term sensationalizes girls' aggression by focusing on the worst cases at the expense of the commonplaceness of less serious acts. What really means for a girl to use violence is lost. Sensationalism wins out over the term "violent girls" in the most basic sense. It is the girls who engage in physical aggression and violence that are the focus of the time. In sum, to be classified as "violent girls" is not a meaningful concept.

As argued throughout this book, the distinction between girls' aggression and violence should be preserved rather than paved over by the term "violent girl," it would probably be a disservice in the field, as, in reality, there is a range of girls' aggression. At the very least, attempt to use the term whenever employing it in its context.

The Double-Genre

Too little has been said about the reasons why parents push their daughters to engage in physical aggression, and this is due to a lack of awareness surrounding the issue. One of the reasons of scholars not wanting to appear that they are trivializing their daughters' aggression. It is understandable that scholars want to provide ammunition for a punitiv

that gender socialization in Melrose
 stance of a girl being able to defend
 girls' violence, especially in the media
 standards, centers on girls being out of
 "violent girls" has erroneously conveyed
 failing to distinguish between less-
 physical aggression. The everyday
 result in arrest typically falls below
 overshadowed by more-serious, though
 or homicide. The portrayal of vio-
 lence disproportionate to its num-
 ber of behavior that is far more prevalent.
 as the resort to violence by girls by
 same time that it significantly under-
 represents serious ones. In this way, what it
 represents in an inner-city neighborhood
 is often substance much of the time. The
 term "violent" is a misnomer, in that girls
 are "violent" only a small percentage
 of the time, as such is a rhetorical device, not a

to achieve a more-dimensional por-
 trayal of violence and differences among girls must
 be made. Instead of trying to rehabilitate the
 term, it may be best to limit its scholarly usage
 to a narrow range of scenarios in which girls use
 violence. Efforts should be made to "situate" the
 term in its context.

Generation Dynamic

the role that mothers play in socializing
 girls' aggression. While this likely is due
 to the dynamic, it also may be the result
 of the fact that they are blaming mothers for their
 daughters' behavior. It is understandable that scholars would not want
 to face the backlash against mothers, as there

is a long tradition of mothers being protective of their daughters' behavior, both in and outside of the home. The prevalence of youth violence in inner cities is apparent, and it is clear that why girls fight is firmly rooted in their environment and not simply their mother's errant behavior.

In this book, I argue for the complex role that mothers in inner cities play in their daughters' lives. It means to do so without faulting mothers for their actions. I criticize the stance that mothers and grandmothers take in teaching their daughters to fight in terms of the socioeconomic conditions and the structure of social networks in which they live. It takes a long view to see the role of mothers as re-created. Mothers—and grandmothers—like Melrose Park and Lee raise their daughters in everyday situations based on their own experiences, then those associated with being the mother of a girl in a war-torn neighborhood.

Mothers are realistically aware that having a strong female role model is a force in one's own right is a plus. And they teach their daughters from a young age not to be afraid to fight. Even mothers with a history of violence in their own personal circumstances are not just simply teaching their daughters to fight. Generally speaking, mothers try to protect their daughters from the harsh realities of life in their daughters both the important lessons and the know-how to do so. The messages that mothers convey about how to comport herself, and about when to fight, although it could be misconstrued as a message that many mothers convey to their daughters, is that violence has its place.

As mothers bring personal differences to the table, the educational task in more than one way. This study shows what contributes to the variability among mothers on a range of factors, including the role of mothers in teaching their daughters to take the offensive versus the defensive. This study provides a detailed look at how it informs the variation among mothers and how these differences have for their daughters, the

blamed for their children's problems of the social sciences. Yet, if female violence is approached in a contextualized manner, it is more deeply rooted in their harsh surroundings than in individual ways.

A close consideration of the role that mothers play in their daughters' use of violence and the process. I problematize the role of grandmothers typically take toward their granddaughters in the face of economic disadvantage of their neighborhoods and the relations that are strongly shaped by these conditions. The whole picture as it is created and lived by mothers—in inner-city neighborhoods—requires us to ask how their daughters to adequately manage their own experiences growing up and how they function as the head of a household in a crime-

environment. That, in such a setting, to be viewed as a problem. And, thus, mothers actively encourage their daughters not to withdraw when challenged to deal with the presence of antisocial or other troubling people. It is not simply passing down their problems to their daughters. Mothers see that the best way to protect their daughters from the realities of the street is by instilling in them a sense of protecting themselves and the importance of that. What a mother gives to a daughter about her future, are surely not limited to what is often construed that way. One important message that mothers give their daughters is that physical aggression

is not the answer. When they sit at the table and approach this issue, it becomes critical to investigate the differences among them. Mothers, indeed, differ in the degree to which they instruct their daughters about fighting only when challenged to do so. This is a preliminary understanding of what is at stake and the implications that such differences represent. Though it represents only a small step in

this direction. Research aimed at further exploring mothers play in their daughters' relationships may challenge our sense of the assumptions that govern girls' relationships and physical aggression.

For the most part, the mothers in this study were mothers in a world not so different from their daughters'. The streets today are even more dangerous than the streets the mothers fought when they were young. Mothers would, do so if it came down to protecting their daughters. In this book, a girl relies on her friends, not her mother, and female peers, to come to her aid if she is in trouble. It is "unfair." While a girl's support network is important, it is not to maintain a steadfast commitment to her mother. Certainly not every threat ends in a mother's intervention. Mothers use a wide range of strategies to help their daughters and move them toward independence. The role of mothers in girls' fighting is a key area for girls in their propensity toward fighting. The important role that mothers play in girls' fighting represents fertile ground for meaningful intervention.

It is noteworthy that this double-edged sword of mother and daughter fight alongside the role of fathers in the anatomy of girls' fighting with no parallel role for girls and their fathers. Although fathers' role in girls' fighting is less engaging in violence if necessary, it is a key process. This said, it would be valuable to explore the role that fathers play, as, no doubt, in girls' lives. An important factor in how girls come to fight is the role of fathers.

It is important to underscore that the role of fathers in physical aggression because they themselves were physically abused by one or both of their parents. The role of fathers in physical aggression play a significant role in girls' lives. In crime-ridden areas have to physical aggression. The shared life circumstances that must be considered by both those who have and those who do not. It is important to understand why violence is so prevalent in girls' lives to this contextual backdrop of violence and also their interventions.

ther realizing the important role that relationship to aggression would expand girls operate on when they engage in

Melrose Park and Lee have grown up their daughters, except for the fact that dangerous than they once were. Most of the younger, and many continue to, or protecting their family. As laid out earlier, mother, along with her relatives and she is outnumbered or a fight becomes Melrose Park can be fluid, mothers are expected to defending their daughters. Certainly rolling up her sleeves to fight. tries to ensure their daughters' safety. Similar to the variation among Melrose Park, there is a variation among mothers play on many levels with regard to Melrose Park and not only for exploration but also

inter-generational dynamic, whereby Melrose Park one another, is an integral part of the Melrose Park parallel among boys and their fathers or Melrose Park mothers tend to approve of their daughters' Melrose Park, they play a far smaller role in the Melrose Park role to inquire more carefully into the Melrose Park in many cases, their contribution is an Melrose Park to view aggression.

Melrose Park some female youths gravitate toward Melrose Park themselves have been physically or sexually Melrose Park parents. However, neighborhood-level Melrose Park in the relationship that youths in Melrose Park violence. It is the social and cultural Melrose Park be taken into account for all girls— Melrose Park to have not been abused—to help us Melrose Park talent in certain neighborhoods. It is Melrose Park ce that mothers direct their concern

The Institutional Response

Girls in Melrose Park and Lee perceive their lives—their teachers, potential police—as viewing them as having limited options. They see themselves as having limited horizons in their world and therefore invest their energy in what they can. They often go from feeling inadequate to giving up where they have fallen behind in school. When learning is devalued, the odds are against them. Since many girls feel that they have little incentive to limit their aggression, they do not get sent to placement. They do not get into further trouble, so they do not get into further trouble with the system.

Without changes on a systemic level, the system is not worth protecting for girls in places like Melrose Park and Lee. As an institution, the system has a duty to address societal ills, especially when they affect a young environment from a young age. The statistics show the United States to be guilty of neglecting school districts and, in essence, offering different citizenships to different citizens. While in the 1990s, the focus was on outcome-based education, so-called “standards” were introduced to improve the quality of education in the poorest neighborhoods. Girls encounter violence despite the inadequacy of their learning environment. They fight for educational promise, typically fought for in vain.

Personnel in a range of neighborhoods in Melrose Park and Lee perceive girls who fight as being more violent than boys. They see them as having more presenting problems. This perception is the case, even though male youth use weapons more readily, and become violent more often. Despite all this, police and criminal justice systems justify mental health issues as driving girls to violence. The fact that boys' psychological issues are poorly understood. Male youth violence, especially violent behavior, is more apt to be framed in terms of mental health issues.

Access to Girls' Violent Behavior

perceive most of the authorities in their neighborhood employers, and the little personal value. They typically have low horizons in school and in the work world, and expend their energies accordingly. They all too easily give up. Once girls get to the point where they are in school in a cultural context where they are against them getting the help that they need, they learn "nothing" in school, they have no positive behavior in school other than so-called "compliance." Girls frequently attend school only when required by family or the juvenile justice system.

At the level of education, there is less reason to expect that Lee to feel like they have a future. The system of education is in the greatest position to fail when children are afforded a rich learning environment. Readily available statistics, however, show a high degree of inequality in the economics of education, leading to "different" public education systems. In most states adopted some form of "standards," but increased standards did not mean that the system was better for children in the nation's poorest areas. In the course of this study who, when in high-risk environments, showed the most negative outcomes.

Good institutions in Melrose Park and Chicago are both more difficult to manage and more expensive than their male counterparts. This is because girls often inflict more harm, fight with more intensity, and are more involved with selling drugs. Indeed, juvenile justice personnel more readily identify girls' violence. In part, this is due to the fact that conditions such as depression and anxiety are more common in girls, despite its often antisocial characteristics of instrumental reasoning. While

girls are viewed as fighting over less, more frequently and often more viciously.

The police are far less prepared to deal with girls at a number of levels. With far fewer female officers, apprehending, searching, and transport of girls is a greater challenge, as in many cases male officers are called for assistance. The non-gang-related teaching of girls is sometimes as many as 30 in one altercation, which is a problem for police. The additional factor is the sense of annoyance toward girls.

Broadly speaking, male and female officers have different perceptions about girls' fighting than not. Male officers are typically more tolerant about female youths who fight. There are also Chauvinistic assumptions about girls' fighting attributed to male officers. Within police culture, girls are often derided for violating gender norms. Their behavior is regarded as not being a true violent act and is not taken seriously by the police and courts. Police typically have less understanding of girls' fighting compared with boys. The attitudes of police officers with regard to girls' fighting is studied. The intersection of policing and policy implications.

This differential perception of male and female youths' physical expression on the bench and in the courtroom, as well. Although in the courtroom, girls' fighting is not perceived to be as serious as male youths' fighting—nuisance—at the same time, female youths are perceived as psychologically unstable than their male counterparts. The greater willingness to incarcerate female youths is that the presence of female youths in the courtroom will continue to grow. As it does, charges of child abuse will no doubt follow, and they will be more frequent.

Right now, judges in the juvenile court are more likely to give girls who are processed through their courts less opportunity to exercise discretion than they once did. Within the confines of bail and sentencing, good decisions. They are frequently asked to make that they must make under the law.

they are seen as doing so more vociferously.

To deal with female youth violence on the force, the apprehension of female youths presents a manpower problem: officers must call for a female officer for the apprehension of females to fight—somehow—represents another management difficulty often translates into a felt need for more female officers.

Male police have more similar perceptions of female youths. Both commonly speak more derogatorily about female youths who do so. Female youths and aggression are not just limited to the culture, the violent girl is simultaneously a threat—being hyperaggressive—and a victim in her own right. She is both not constructed as a “handful” all at once. Understanding of the dynamics that influence the subjective experiences and attitudes toward girls who aggress should be closely examined and gender has important practice implications.

The treatment of male and female youths has a paradoxical quality. At higher levels of the criminal justice system, the perception of female juvenile crime is typically less severe than male juvenile crime—rather more of a “handful” than male counterparts. Given society’s changing attitudes toward females these days, however, it is likely that in all areas of the correctional system there will be changes in perception of female juvenile crime that have already begun.

The current system have too few options to offer in sentencing matters. To start with, they have far more discretion in sentencing matters than they do in the criminal law, it is hard for judges to make decisions that are not left frustrated by the very decisions they must make. Indeed, in important measure, juvenile justice is a

nile courts have taken on the character of being more toward punishment than support to children and their families. The systems across the country are in decline. The alarmingly high recidivism rate tells us we are failing our youths and ultimately the national level.

The limited power of judges to discipline female youths, since girls often come before male counterparts. Permitting judges greater license to step out of the role of a way toward improving the disposition of a stand, lack of judicial discretion inhibits the care a girl receives.

Judges are also hamstrung by the limited options to which they can refer a girl once sentenced. The system for girls in custody has lagged way behind the rest of the system. Evidence-based practice approaches, such as assessment and treatment interventions, are not widely used. The most restrictive facilities are typically those that provide mental health and substance abuse treatment services. The good news is that, in recent years, specific programming and research is a more active part of the conversation. Fortunately, equity in discipline between male and female youths has become a more active part of justice circles. The bad news is that, in many cases, programming becomes a truly integrated part of the system. The world of juvenile detention has become more focused on youths and, for all intents and purposes, on the care of youths.

As a rule, girls who are remanded in the juvenile justice system face multiple risks with their care. One of the risks is a girl being victimized sexually while in custody. The statistics of such exploitation are all too common for adolescents confined to the juvenile justice system. Teen mothers in the juvenile justice system have access to parenting education. The quality of care is typically substandard. Administrative systems should develop best practices for the care of girls in their care. Juvenile justice systems should have health and mental health guidelines for

er of the adult court system, gravitat-
rehabilitation and providing less sup-
The family court and juvenile justice
perate need of far-reaching reform.
among juvenile offenders tells us that
ely our nation on a most fundamen-

divert youths, in particular, has hurt
mit less-serious offenses than their
s more discretion and allowing them
le of neutral arbiter could go a long
n of female juvenile cases. As things
bits the coordination of services that

lack of adequate treatment programs
she enters the system. Programming
behind their increased entry into the
proaches that guide the provision of
ions are particularly in short supply.
cally least equipped to provide treat-
these days, the need for gender-spe-
recognized part of the juvenile justice
developing programs and facilities for
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it will likely take years before girls'
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d to the juvenile justice or criminal
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common. Level of care for pregnant
justice system is also uneven among
nile justice system do not uniformly
Prenatal care for juveniles in deten-
strative personnel in the juvenile jus-
ices and recommendations for work-
le justice facilities should be held to
for female adolescents from the Cen-

ter for Disease Control and Preventive care must become an integral assumption of the state; otherwise, our right to remove them from their homes is deeply subject to question.

Sensitization of detention and correctional facilities with supervising female youths must be a priority. Thinking about raising the standards of care for girls placed out of the home. Even well-meaning programs require trained personnel for these purposes. Doing so would go a long way toward ensuring that detention centers may meet minimal standards. Unfortunately, this does not necessarily equate to meeting the needs of their charges.

Moreover, when girls leave the system, transitional programs to help them return to their homes, say, transitional services are necessary. Anything more than temporary custodial care or referral services are central to the system. Residential or institutional care afterward. Residential or institutional care can help them feel valued and less stigmatized. Female juveniles on probation has risen significantly, but again, the access to gender-specific services that help them turn their lives around and stabilize themselves is deficient. While no doubt there are examples of success, the signs are troubling.

There is a strong case to be made for investing in the context of the deficits and flaws of the current community-based programs, including residential care centers, seems a better choice than institutionalism for girls placed out of the home. Learning to do something woefully wrong. Learning to do something right on the policy level, as well as with respect to personal attitudes toward girls who are in the system. Discretionary decisions, charging practices—also the intersection of race in the system is of immense importance, not only for the girls themselves but also for society as a whole. The current system, policies, and decision-making processes should be a public health priority.

on. The promise of safety and ethical protection for all youths in the custody of juvenile justice, no matter the offense, is a goal that should be pursued, no matter the cost.

Correction personnel who are charged with the care of girls receive once they are in custody. Well-designed gender-specific programs to be administered successfully to improve facility practices. While existing operational standards, this unfortunately does not satisfactorily address the

system, there are also too-few transitions to their communities. Needless to say, if residential placement is to be a successful alternative to residential care. Discharge planning and support services that female youths will have access to can only be of use to girls if they are based on mutual respect. The number of girls who are released since the early 1980s, and the specific services that they need to help them get out of trouble is typically insufficient. Examples that do not fit the generaliza-

tion that, except for the most violent girls, the majority of the current system, referral to community-based social service agencies and attention to the needs of girls. High rates of recidivism are a robust indicator that we are not doing enough. Much work needs to be done regarding shaping cultural, social, and economic conditions. How gender plays a role in sentencing practices, and sentencing recommendations—regarding those decisions—are areas that need to be addressed for the specific girls who enter the system. An overview of the juvenile justice system as it operates with regard to girls

*Advancing the Understanding of
Violence through Intersectionality*

To deepen our understanding of the field would be greatly served by studying observation into their analysis: that is, as address the variation that exists among them. While low-income girls who experience violence deserve considerably more attention and research, the literature, to date, falls short in capturing the reality of girls' lives shapes their relationships. Traditional methodology important to the study of youth violence. The field would significantly advance by moving outside the box of traditional research methods and embracing the dynamic reality of social behavior as revealed through qualitative ethnographic studies that investigate the experiences of youths in low-income neighborhoods. Such an approach that is invaluable to advancing our understanding of this end. Unfortunately, only a handful of studies on female youth violence have been published. The need for the inclusion of both individual and social factors, in essence, is calling for a social science that is interdisciplinary in nature.

Most research methods, including quantitative and qualitative, privilege either shared experiences and social structures in explaining social phenomena. As such, they tend to suppress; both kinds of knowledge are often treated as if they exist free of an environment, and it is difficult to understand how mental influences receive expression in the real world. Theories that introduce separate concerns and experiences—further alter behavior. The research by Melrose Park and Lee help to produce a more nuanced understanding of why girls fight does not explain why girls experience violence in ways in which variations in this area exist. The variation among female youths with respect to violence toward consensus about definitions of violence. In our analysis and, ultimately, the conclusions drawn from

Understanding of Female Urban Interdisciplinary Study

what it means when girls fight, the studies that incorporate a dual level of analysis, attend to collective themes, as well as those among individuals within the same setting. Those who engage in violence have received considerably more funding than ever before, especially within the juvenile or criminal court system, but capturing how the intrinsic day-to-day relationship to violence and street fighting is often what most significantly limits the inquiry into female violence. We significantly benefit from thinking out loud and using methodology that cannot capture the full complexity of what it manifests on the ground. Descriptive and investigative different aspects of how female violence is thought about and lived is one way to advance our present knowledge to a new level. A handful of studies with a primary focus on the individual have been undertaken in this genre. By calling on both individual and collective factors into an analysis, we can advance a science that is socially relevant and

grounded. Relying on ethnography, however, privileging individual sensitivities or individual ones when the data end up being overlooked or dismissed are necessary as individuals never exist in a vacuum. Only through people that environmental factors influence. Family and individual-level factors and motivations—different life histories and experiences—shape behavior. That social and cultural forces influence and inform the proclivity of girls to engage in violence and that tendency differentially or the individual factors coexist. How as a field we address the needs of those who engage in violence and yet move forward will determine the sophistication of the conclusions that we draw.

None of the social sciences can furnish accounts of human experience without giving individual subjectivity their due. Constructed through interaction in a social context, the individual psyche and the forces that shape it cannot be seen as an alternative to the social, nor can the privileging of collective experience provide insight into the individual. Both levels are essential in what it means to be human and to live in a social world. It is precisely within this analysis that the most fertile sites for social science lie.

To create these fertile spaces and new models of analysis, we need a dynamic interplay between the social world and psychological development. We need to understand how psychic structures, conscious and unconscious, and personality traits that interact to make up the individual systematically consider a person in context. We need to recognize their internal world, placing it on a continuum with the institutional framework that shapes it. We need to find meaning inherent in a psychological development that is a departure from traditional research that separates the inner world from the outer world, the individual from the social, and the subject from the observer, and, often, eliminates context. It requires developing new models and to conceptualize how individual psychological development and structure, and it rests on a realization that the individual and the social are together.

Through presenting the views and findings in my own words, I attempt in this book to provide a synthesis of a product of a confluence of sociocultural and psychological factors that are both tied to and go beyond the individual (i.e., enhancing security, strengthening personal aggressiveness, and considering the individual). I attempt to show how the interplay of individual factors results in the production of a social world. I try to underscore that the study of gender is not just one academic discipline. Rather than being a discipline capable and willing to inflict pain in the name of science, as a society, we must be willing to provide a space for the study of gender.

fulfill their potential to offer sensitive but giving both social processes and unconsciousness and behavior are structured world, in effect linking the processes of the social field. Reflection on the to addressing society or social relative representation offer sufficient of analysis are mutually implicated what it means to engage in the social analytic tension that the most exciting

bridge the divide between these levels—concept of the interaction between development and functioning—those unconscious mental processes, and maintain psychic equilibrium. To systematize context requires that we contextualize in the cultural landscape and within shapes it. Yet, unpacking the dense and cultural story requires a critical research methodology, which splits the takes the subject out of relationship and isolates the relational and sociocultural methodology and new theories that psychology is shaped by culture and social interaction that the disciplines must work

and experiences of several girls in their show that girls' street fighting is the result of cultural and more-individualized factors in the immediate performance of fighting (looking at peer ties, looking at the degree of family problems). I argue that the intersection of social and cultural forces with individual experiences of violent behavior and events. I argue that girls' violence cannot be neatly fit into a framework that minimize the fact that girls are both participants in the course of a physical altercation, but aside our time-worn beliefs about

violence being the province of males, the role that fighting plays for girls in

In sum, like every age, ours has its own questions about what the study of human nature becomes, how it is expressed to decide what we want our society to be, to serve, and to what ends. Considerations about gender are deeply embedded in culture, as is the question of who makes those decisions and who has the authority. As scientists as a group become more reflective about their study, one would expect the answers to these questions to reflect a wider range of interests than in the past. In a complex and rapidly changing social world, we as researchers and educators need to be more vocal in conceptualizing the psychological state of our students. The turn of the 21st century bears special

s and commit to also understanding
inner cities and elsewhere.

s own unique needs that will inform
omes. Like scholars before us, we are
social science to be, whom it should
tions that influence this choice are
he matter of who has the power to
e power to carry them out. As social
representative of the populations they
ers to these important questions to
n in the past. Given our increasingly
ocultural world, and the diversity of
ors seek to accurately represent, con-
of individuals in relation to culture at
ecial relevance.

All names of persons and schools are pseudonyms.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. Anderson (1999) takes up the issue of violence with the main emphasis being on the meaning of the issue, the preoccupation with “being that one is due is closely associated with race and the sense of alienation that goes with that.” The research reported in this volume is heavily informed by Anderson. I size the similarities to his conclusions where appropriate and the distinctions when appropriate.

2. Historically, the term “violent girls” has been used to describe various and otherwise “deviant” girls. Early classifications include aggressive and sexually promiscuous girls, as described by Lombroso and Ferraro, *The Female Offender* (1905) and *Some Psychological Consequences of Crime in the Sexes* (1925); and Pollak, *The Criminality of Women* (1950).

3. While Irwin and Chesney-Lind’s 2000 work, *Female Delinquency: Serious and Violent Masculinity* underscores the need for a “contextualized examination” of girls’ violence in this piece is primarily viewed through the variables of race and class effectively fading into the background. The importance of gender as an organizing principle that determine female actions or experience are not the focus in the article—that the context surrounding the girls’ violence is a worthy one. As a second example, see *Played: African American Girls, Urban Inequality, and the Cultural Imagination* (2008) is a “contextualized examination” (2008: 153) of the “cultural dynamics.” Some exceptions where context is the focus include Bina et al. (2008), Molnar et al. (2005), and

4. One such exception is Nikki Jones (2009), a more recent work, continues to explore the relationship between violence and the social world in which it occurs. Jones (2008) argue that researchers need to pay more attention to their focus remains on gender primarily.

tes

isms.

f respect in inner-city neighborhoods, ing it has for males. In Anderson's analysis "treated right" or receiving the deference and respect, the humiliations of chronic poverty, and the violence against them. See also Anderson (1990). The study is informed by Anderson's work on males; I emphasize the concerns of girls, as well as draw out

has been equated with sexually promiscuous behavior. Classic books and articles on the control of female sexuality, commonly cited together in this vein, are Kinsey et al. (1895); Freud, *Three Essays on Sexual Theory* (1905); and Freud, *The Anatomical Distinction between the Male and the Female* (1950).

8 article "Girls' Violence: Beyond Danger" does not take context into account, in the end, viewed through the lens of gender with the violence of girls pushed into the background. Although the argument that girls' violence is not to be minimized, neither does it ignore the context. Nonetheless, the argument advanced here is that girls' violence must receive greater attention. For example, in Jody Miller's recent book *Getting to the Heart of the Matter: Gender, Violence, and Gendered Violence*, the author's argument is basically an inquiry into "gendered power and violence." The issues more systematically dealt with are Coble and Miller (2004); Kroneman et al. (2004).

004). Jones's *Between Good and Ghetto* explores the instrumental aspects of girls' violence in the context of the girls live. Irwin and Chesney-Lind also address the issue, but give more attention to race in their analysis, but

5. Miller has written extensively on the (Miller and Brunson, 2000). Although her work is fighting that this book takes as its focus, many of the ones that the girls discussed here grapple with are the ones that the girls discussed here grapple with, edited by Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn (1999) on gangs.

6. Female youth homicide has historical precedents. In 2005, females age 15–19 were nine times more likely to be involved in homicide-related deaths than male youths of the same age (Anderson et al., 2003). For example, primarily of research on the topic of female youth homicide (2003).

7. For instance, Maher (1997, 2004).

8. For example, Rajah (2006).

9. As might be expected given its disciplinary focus, the book's job of implicating context in a more-systemic way (2008). From more of a public health perspective, see Anderson et al. (2008).

10. Anderson's work (1990, 1999), which is built around this kind of an analysis. Jones (2008) is also where girls are concerned.

11. According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's national survey conducted in the late 1980s, 10% of girls said they had carried a handgun to school. In 1997, 10% of 1000 boys brought that gun to school every year, and 15% of fifteen 11th-grade boys had carried a handgun to school (1997: ch. 2).

12. African American girls are three times more likely to be involved with the criminal justice system than white girls. This is no surprise, given that poverty and lack of access to social, and cultural resources with which to cope often translates into multiple risk factors, many of the causes of violence.

13. It is noteworthy as well that African American girls are often presented as perpetrators in the media while white girls are often presented, especially in comparison with white girls.

14. For a contemporary in-depth discussion of "the girl," see Chesney-Lind and Irwin (2007). This book also pays to the views of educators and criminal justice professionals.

15. Indeed, in the comparatively rare instances in which girls are in its custody over the first 75 years of the 20th century, they were often in institutions charged with improving girls, such as reformatory schools to which most girls were sent.

16. Valuable works on female arrest rates include Chesney-Lind and Irwin (2000), and Steffensmeier and Haynie (2000), and Steffensmeier and Haynie (2000).

17. Unless otherwise noted, data in this chapter are from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

subject of girls in gangs (e.g., 1998, 2001; work does not address the kind of street any dynamics she writes about resemble ple with. As well, *Female Gangs in America*, 1999) is a useful volume on the topic of

lly accounted for a small fraction of mur- times less likely to be involved in firearm- e age (Child Trends Data Bank, 2005). An of women who go on to kill is Morrissey

olinary focus, sociology has done a better natic way. For example, Wallace et al. eptive, see Yonas et al. (2007).

h primarily looks at male youth violence, es's work (2004, 2009) follows in this vein

Justice and Delinquency Prevention, in "a 's, one of every thirty-six 10th-grade boys in the past year. One in every one hun- y day. In one U.S. city, one out of every gun to school at some point" (OJJDP,

nes as likely to be poor and three times as ce system than white girls (OJJDP, 2000). race afford substantially different material, o negotiate one's life, a scenario that transm associated with the increased incidence

a American youth are typically overrepre- their victimization is typically underrepre- e victims (Dorfman and Schiraldi, 2001). sion of the characterization of the "bad he book is unusual in the attention that it l justice personnel.

stances when the state placed girls in h century, it almost exclusively detained g their moral character and not the penal- st boys were sent to.

e trends include Zahn et al. (2008), Stef- meier and Schwartz (2009).

s paragraph from Office of Juvenile Justice

18. It is unclear whether the percentage is a true increase in offending or whether it was due to changing arrest and sentencing practices.

19. Girls ages 12–19 currently make up 17% of the population.

20. With reference to girls in gangs, Anderson (1990) is an example of discerning how culture transmits repression to both males and females, of different degrees.

21. The experience of growing up black is often more realistically outside of the social sciences. In literature, see Toni Morrison, *Sula* (1967). In music, see Lauryn Hill's album *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (1998). From a cultural criticism perspective, see K. A. Powell (2003).

22. For an in-depth discussion of how the structure of inner-city neighborhoods places a premium on violence, see Anderson (1990).

23. Artz (1998), L. Brown (2003), and M. Brown (2003) others, have put forth the gender-inequality perspective against girls because they are safer targets than boys to threats to them. This perspective does not take into account the fight in order to protect themselves from the threats.

24. Feshbach and Feshbach (1969) might be cited as a recent and more complex interest in this area. Feshbach's aggression several decades earlier, though viewed as an established area of study, however, or Feshbach (1998). For a recent consideration of the topic, see Feshbach (2003).

25. This is not to say that quantitative research is not available. Two examples of recent compilations offering quantitative research are Putallaz and Bierman (2004) and Moretti et al. (2004).

26. There are few ethnographic studies of girls in gangs. Examples of book-length treatments of the topic are Anderson (1990). More recent ethnographic fieldwork on the topic is presented in Jones (2004, 2009).

27. Public discomfort with the idea of gang membership made available for programs and remediation.

28. In contradistinction, observations of gang membership, alienation, and violence have long existed in the literature (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Valentine, 1968; Devine, 1996; Gilligan, 1996). Nikki Jones's (2004) respect to its in-depth exploration of race, class, and gender.

29. This was in keeping with both a naturalistic perspective conjoined with their environment and with the idea of the 1725, that framed human nature as being hierarchical. For background, see Vico, 1948 [1725]).

30. The basic epistemological challenge is the "dual existence of individuality and regularity" (Heilbrun et al., 1998: 119).

the increase of violent arrest rates reflected was mainly if not entirely a function of

roughly 25% of juvenile violent crime.

John Campbell (1984) notes the importance of applications of everyday theories of aggression to ethnic groups and classes.

Black and female in America has been taken up in various sciences in prose, poetry, and cultural studies. See *The Bluest Eye* (1970); for a contemporary example, see *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (1998). See also *Killing Rage* by bell hooks (1996).

The social organization of impoverished urban areas, see Anderson (1999).

For example, see Corash and Chesney-Lind (2009), among others, from a feminist perspective and suggest that girls fight differently than the males who in reality are the greatest threat. We should take into account the need for females to understand the social vicissitudes of their neighborhoods. This work should be considered a precursor to more research in that they wrote about psychological issues with regard to boys and not girls. The field of girls' studies only came into its own since the late 1990s. See Underwood (2003).

Qualitative research has no role to play in the field. Quantitative and mixed-method studies via this method are more common (see et al. (2004).

Research on female youth violence. For two recent works on the subject, see Artz (1998) and Miller (2001). The subject, as mentioned earlier, is pre-

viously, the study of girls as offenders also limited the resources available for research on.

Research regarding the association between race, class, and violence in various literatures pertaining to males and females. See Anderson, 1990, 1999; Bourgois, 1995; and Corash and Chesney-Lind (2004, 2009) is an exception with regard to race, class, alienation, and girls' violence.

The natural science view of organisms being determined by a line of thinking, beginning with Vico in the 18th century, historically and culturally determined (for

example, see the new science was to preserve the social order, without collapsing one upon the

31. While Enlightenment science did not explore the relationship among man, nature, and society, the approach characterizing the “new science” was being asked.

32. Sociocultural in considering how the social experiences and perceptions, which is itself sociological in its focus on how individuals make an approach this nexus armed with a psychological approach which to pursue a broader and deeper understanding into meaning.

33. J. M. Baldwin’s work stands as the first stage theory as a bridge between the study of social function (e.g., Baldwin, 2001). He attempted to address issues of social development and social organization. Stage theorists such as Erikson (1950) and Vygotsky (1978) later systematically lay out the dual genesis—social and individual experience. Freud was first to offer an actual stage theory, logically internalized and then in turn regulated. Piaget systematically outline a stage theory of psychological development of the entire human life cycle from the perspective of the individual with the culture’s general aim and system.

34. Edward Sapir’s work in this area spanned a lifetime. His work was unfortunately cut short by his death in 1939.

35. Sapir viewed culture to be continuous and evolving through human interactions and not a finished product. Because of the fact that anthropology and psychology were both concerned with respect to the same phenomena, he argued that the two could lead to a more accurate rendering of the human condition. That anthropologists would have to get beyond the material or ritual, to fully understand the symbolism of culture (Sapir, 1949: 201). The distinction was a matter of perspective. In psychoanalysis and anthropology had considered culture as determinative of personality.

36. Sapir thought this reciprocal influence was associated with the history and environmental conditions. Symbolic systems resting on symbols served to socialize individuals. Modes of conduct attributed to society, rather than to the individual.

37. His collaboration with Harry Stack Sullivan and other psychoanalysts of the day—Clara Thompson—was a conscious attempt to formulate an interdisciplinary approach to bridge the gap between social and psychological sciences.

38. Again, regrettably, Sapir died before he could complete his methodology to document his formulations, which were a part of his theory. Thus, while the overarching concept of the theory is primarily debt to him, I look to other theories for the development in some way the problem of moving from one

not present a single unified vision of what society was, or should be, the integrative strongly influenced the kinds of questions

the surrounding social world shapes human of a human construction, and psychological and internalize meaning. Freud was first to psychological theory of mind—a framework within understanding of how experience is translated

first systematic use of developmental social institutions and the study of individual and to extend cognitive stage psychology to organization. In this way, he anticipated other Vygotsky (1978), who attempted to systematize individual—of personality, cognition, and social blueprint of how culture was psychologically related social life. Erikson was the first to psychological development that viewed the role of ego development in dynamic interplay

from the early 1910s to the late 1930s. his early death in 1939.

initially under construction in the course of Sapir (1932). While Sapir never lost sight of how psychology represented different analytical stances and argued that bringing them together would illuminate human condition. He specifically argued beyond superficial categories, such as kinship and implicit in patterns of culture (Man's major contribution at a time when both constructed culture, though in different ways,

experience was channeled through symbols associated with conditions of a particular group. Cultural psychology utilize the group's members to generalized social rather than to individuals.

Sullivan, as well as with other prominent psychologists, Karen Horney, and Eric Fromm—was a multidisciplinary social science that would bridge different systems.

He was able to develop a systematic methodology which left his ideas largely stuck in the realm of conceptual orientation of my study owes its prior help with narrative analysis or to address the realm of observation to another.

39. For a full description of the Listening Post (see ch. 9).

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. Of late, several neighborhoods in North City, to Center City, have undergone a measure of gentrification that usually accompanies such transformation. In space to this, as it has not been a major factor.

2. The Delaware River, which separates the State of New Jersey, borders Philadelphia, winding its way through the city and eventually emptying into Delaware Bay.

3. “The downtown was bordered on the north and south by the major road corridors that attracted dense concentrations of manufacturing, machine tools, scientific instruments, chemical plants, clothing, apparel, cigars, and dozens of other products. The city was bounded by two rivers, where shipping and commerce, slaughterhouses, shipyards, and iron works were concentrated. The city of railroads” (Vitiello, 2004).

4. Row houses were introduced into the city in the 18th century and have shared walls with other residential structures in working-class Philadelphia.

5. Although railroad and factory workers lived in the city, their grounds often self-segregated in different ways. It is uncommon to find neighborhoods where they lived.

6. In chapter 5, I address the views of gentrification.

7. On industry in Philadelphia, especially in the 19th century, see *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* (2009), at <http://www.britannica.com/topic/455799/Philadelphia> (accessed October 2009).

8. In 1900, Philadelphia was the third largest city in the United States with 1.2 million residents; it grew to some 2.2 million by 1950, but then lost half of its residents and dropped to fifth place among the largest cities in the United States (Vitiello, 2004).

9. Through the 1970s, the populations of the city grew as a result of industrial development and jobs (as well as the suburbanization of the middle class). Mirroring broader economic trends, the city moved to a service-oriented economy in the late 20th century.

10. The book by William Julius Wilson, *The Decline of the Middle Class*, was set in motion by rapid industrialization and the loss of jobs. It is inherently flawed and, in truth, very far from the truth. The book talked about differed significantly from the reality of the city in previous decades (W. Wilson, 1987: 58; R. Vitiello, 2004). The exodus of middle-income and upper-income residents removed an important social buffer that could have helped absorb the joblessness and industrial transformation (Vitiello, 2004).

ing Guide Method, see Camic et al. (2003:

orth Philadelphia, especially those closest
of redevelopment and have seen the gen-
transition. I do not devote a great deal of
tor in Melrose Park and Lee.

the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania from
ia on the east, with the Schuylkill River
ually joining the Delaware River in the

e north and south sides by major rail-
trations of factories making locomotives,
nicals and pharmaceuticals, textiles and
ts. On the east and west, the downtown
g piers, lumberyards and coal depots,
s likewise linked up with the region's web

e country via Philadelphia. These struc-
s. They are one of the most common
adelphia.

rs of different racial and ethnic back-
working-class neighborhoods, it was not
different groups lived side by side, as well.
randmothers and mothers in more detail.
ly textiles, see "Philadelphia," in *Ency-*
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/>
er 2, 2009).

argest U.S. city, with nearly 1.3 million
52, but then lost more than one-quarter
among U.S. cities by the end of the century

of Philadelphia lived primarily off indus-
ervice sector jobs that supported industri-
nds, the city then shifted toward a more
century (Vitiello, 2004).

captured the social transformation that
n and driven by a free market that was
m truly being free. The social milieu being
environment that existed in inner cities
Rose and McClain, 1990). In particular,
come black families from the inner city
uld deflect the full impact of prolonged
see also Hagedorn, 1988). Wilson's (1987:

56) thesis is based on the assumption that the churches, schools, stores, recreational facilities, and other community-based organizations that form the base of their support came from more economically advantaged neighborhoods (i.e., those with vertical social mobility).

11. The increase in the arrest rate for female youths mirrored national statistics. As indicated in the text, the dramatic nature of the increase was a result of more arrests for violence to start with, the shift to the police and in the criminal justice system, even though the number of female youths engaging some form of violence. The higher arrest rates of female youth for violence in the criminal justice and correctional system by surprise.

12. Meda Chesney-Lind has written about the importance of gender-responsive programs for girls in the justice system. She has been on shedding light on the need for such programs. The importance of funding beds rather than targeting individual persons who occupies the bed. In particular, she has written about the importance of funding beds rather than targeting individual persons who occupies the bed.

13. To read the judges' decision regarding the case, see *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Miriam*, 2000 WL 11111111, November 2, 2000.

14. West Philadelphia is comprised of 20 ZIP codes.

15. Two of the African American girls who were interviewed, Tamika, go to school in Lee but live in West Philadelphia.

16. In order to spend time with girls at the schools in Philadelphia, I sought general permission from the principals at the particular schools. After the schools were suggested to me by personnel in the community, by personnel in the schools that I made contact with.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. Kruttschnitt and Giordano (2009) offer a comprehensive literature of family impact on girls' offending. The normative aspect of families supporting girls' offending, neighborhood effects and other sociocultural factors. They address the issue of family support somewhat.

2. Leschied et al. (2001) emphasize what factors lead to aggression. This study does not account for the instrumental reasons noted earlier. The study is more logical and not the alternative cultural perspective.

3. See Margaret Zahn's discussion in *The Developmental Literature on Girls' Violence with Offenders* (Levanthal and Brooks-Gunn, 2000; and O'Leary).

4. For a discussion of the importance of self-defense for protecting oneself, see Laidler and Hunt.

the basic institutions of an area (e.g., cities) would remain viable if much of the economically stable families in inner-city (social class integration).

female youth violence in Philadelphia in the section on statistics in chapter 1, reflection of the low base rates of female to zero-tolerance policies for violence by even where females were concerned, and somewhat more frequently in violence. The most interpersonal offenses took the crime-rise.

about the chronic underfunding nationwide of the juvenile system. Her emphasis has been on programming and the misguided practice of intervention to the specific needs of the girls, see Chesney-Lind et al. (2002).

regarding decertification of White's case in 2000, see *White, Ruling of Judge Legrome Davis*,

2 neighborhoods encompassing five zip

whom I followed most closely, Lakeesha and her friends in Philadelphia.

mainstream and alternative schools in Philadelphia from the superintendent's office and then after revealing the purpose of my study, I was in the superintendent's office, as well as in contact with.

offer a comprehensive review of the literature, but it does not go too deeply into the girls' offending in inner cities because of several factors. Tapper and Boulton (2000) argue that more thoroughly.

that is wrong within the family as the driver of the cultural approval of girls fighting. Again, the research emphasizes the pathological perception of violence.

see *Delinquent Girl* (2009) of the developmental citations (i.e., Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997; Abdallah et al., 2004).

of presenting a tough exterior as a strategy for survival (2001).

5. With regard to violence as “capital” in males, see Anderson (1999).

6. While Anderson speaks mostly about violence for male youths, there is also evidence for female youths, as well.

7. Apart from the different levels of physical aggression in different neighborhoods as compared with middle-class neighborhoods, there are also cultural differences that largely control the expression of aggression. There is a clear distinction between physical and social/relational aggression. For example, in one instance, although Rachel Simmons suggests that physical aggression by girls reaches its peak between the ages of 10 and 12, in Melrose Park physical aggression by girls is negotiated until age 16.

8. While it is certain that there are some girls in Melrose Park and Lee who have had contact with admitted to not ever fighting or perhaps willing to direct me to a girl who had fought with every girl or woman I came in contact with who had a fight, a clear pattern of responses among females was indeed widespread.

9. Based on data from the District’s Office of Community Development (*Notebook*, 2004).

10. Jones (2004) writes about the way girls fight and the reasons for this, and Morash and Chesney-Lind (2000) discuss the role of girls in the

11. Female drug use, arrest, and incarceration are also a result of the proliferation of drug networks and drug busts, which have led to most drug-related arrests, were not for violent crimes. For more on this, see Miller (2001), especially in relation to girls.

12. Miller and Mullins (2005), Ness (2005) discuss the role of girls in violence, with exceptions in their discussion of status.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. For a useful meta-analysis of the neighborhood effects on violence, see Sampson (2002). For a more recent and excellent corroborating neighborhood effects, see Sampson (2004). For a valuable overview of the different kinds of neighborhood-level theory and which need to be analyzed, see Sampson (2004).

2. See also Zahn’s recent discussion of the role of girls in violence (2009), as well as Simons et al. (1996), Greenberg et al. (1999), and Howell (2003).

3. For a discussion of peer influences in violence, see Giordano (2009).

4. The vulnerability to be rolled on is not only a tactic to intimidate and humiliate their male counterparts, but also a way to

5. Little has been written about this, especially about the role of female family members play in a girl’s security.

in inner cities, especially as it relates to

t males, his ideas also have much rel-

ysical danger that exist in inner cities
oods and the different norms and values
ession by girls, many other distinctions
ession require further investigation. For
ts that social and relational aggression by
o and 14 (2002: 4), I found that the use of
k and Lee was an important issue to be

e girls who have never had a fight in Mel-
their entire childhood, none of the girls I
ing, nor were they or their mothers able
o had never fought. While I did not ask
a to introduce me to someone who never
erged and convinced me that fighting by

ice of Transition and Alternative Educa-

rls will set each other off and the underlying
ind (2009) write about the “look,” per se.
eration rose in connection with the pro-
though the majority of these arrests, like
lent offenses (Maher and Daly, 1996). Also
girls in gangs.

04), and Laidler and Hunt (2001) are a few

ghborhood effects literature, see Sampson
nsideration of competing theories regard-
08). Together, these reports provide a
questions often being posed by neighbor-
alytically separated out.

he differential effects of neighborhood
5), Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1998),

a inner cities associated with girls’ using

ot limited to girls. Male youths use the
le opponents, as well.

pecially the role that mothers and other
rity network.

6. There is a fairly extensive literature on this topic. For a good overview on current debates in the area, see *Decker et al. (2009)*.

7. Bourgois (1995) talks about the culture of poverty associated with the drug trade, mostly as it pertains to males. The concept of respect for respect is best thought of as a conglomerate of factors, including age, gender, and individual characteristics.

8. Burman (2004) writes about how girls' violence is often linked to their reputation on the street. This subject has not been fully explored in the literature.

9. Morash and Chesney-Lind (2009) compare boys' and girls' resorting to violence.

10. As noted by Sunday et al. (2007), which is a good overview, to lead to case documentation, its occurrence is often underreported. An important discussion regarding the differences in the types of abuse associated with gender, see Obsuth et al. (2009). For mothers was not related to any form of aggression, but for physical abuse by fathers was linked to girls' violence.

11. One can quickly arrive at this conclusion. For males, references to violence. For females, sexual abuse is characteristic. For males, references to sexual victimization, while references to physical abuse are more common.

12. Whereas most of the literature on female-perpetrated violence focuses on predators, in recent years, more research on female-perpetrated violence has been done. For a discussion of female-perpetrated violence, see Crawford (1997).

13. For a discussion about meanings related to violence, see Leschied and Cummings (2002).

14. Before the subject of girls' violence was widely discussed, it was largely explained away as associated with "delinquency." Little appreciation was evident of the larger context of girls' violence or of the economic importance of the street.

15. For a discussion of girls' weapon possession, see *Decker et al. (2009)*. At least 25% of the girls interviewed in Philadelphia who were involved in an attack said that they carried a knife. My own research suggests that what a "knife" is. Moreover, frequency of carrying a knife is always, with many scenarios in between.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. In the literature on female aggression, mothers are often seen as playing a role in socializing their daughters away from violence (Underwood, 2003). Here I actually suggest that the protective aspect of mothers socializing for aggression is often overlooked.

2. Way (1996) reported the style of communication in relationships with parents, their teachers, and their friends, and with boys.

on self-esteem and aggression. For an overview, see *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 88(1) (2005).

er struggle for respect in the context of relationships. For both males and females, the quest for respect is a central issue in relationship to a hostile environment—often a hostile environment—rather than a single issue. Girls defend their mothers against male aggression, often in response to perceived slight against their mother's honor. This issue has not been taken up in any significant way in the literature.

comment about rage as it relates to girls' aggression.

While physical abuse by mothers is less likely than by fathers, it may be as frequent as with fathers. For example, see *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 21(1) (2006), who find that physical abuse by mothers is more frequent than by fathers in adolescents but that exposure to physical abuse predicts exhibiting aggression toward fathers. This is also supported by looking at the indexes of books on physical abuse, which are characteristically listed with numerous references to physical abuse by mothers. Physical abuse are rarely if ever present. Female child sexual abuse focuses on male child sexual abuse. Mother-daughter sexual abuse is being discussed in the literature. For more on mother-daughter sexual abuse, see Denov (2004) and Denov (2005).

related to Canadian girls fighting over boys, see Denov (2005).

gained some credibility, girls' fighting was often described as "bad girls" or as "girls fighting over boys." This is a reflection of the sociocultural structure that underwrites the value of a boyfriend that a girl has.

For more on this, see Erickson et al. (2006). At the University of Pennsylvania who reported previous violent behavior, a study suggests that girls loosely define "fighting over boys" and carrying the object ranges from once to several times.

In general, mothers are typically described as playing a role in aggression, not toward it (e.g., see Denov (2005) for the opposite and underscore the norm of non-aggression).

Communication to be prevalent in their relationships with their female friends, although typically not with their male friends.

3. See also Stevens (2005) and her book (2002).

4. Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" campaign was part of her husband's "V" campaign in the 1980s and 1990s. "Just Say No" was later expanded to include abstinence regarding sexual abstention.

5. Over the past few years, it appears that Philadelphia, although they still do not have the same level of violence as the 1970s. The question has been raised whether the violence is gang-driven, although there is disagreement.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. It is well accepted that schools in inner-city areas are more likely to be compared with schools in more-affluent communities. Children from economically often send their children to private schools or to other areas altogether.

2. Little has been written about the causes of violence in inner-city schools, especially when it comes to girls. Where girls have been discussed, it has usually been in the context of considering both males and females. Payne et al. (2001) is one such study.

3. One might productively consider the role of the society that one lives in as an act of "symbolic violence" that is considered the internalized sense of oppression. This is often considered a major factor influencing black men to put on a "tough" act. The internalization of oppression in terms of "symbolic violence" is discussed in Kelly (1993).

4. For more on the effect of teacher/student ratios, see Muller (2001) and Knesting and Waldron (2001).

5. For a substantive analysis of urban economic conditions and racial isolation, see Anyon (1997). For a historical analysis of poor outcomes from minority youths, see D. Kelly (1993). For an analysis of specific reasons and timing of female delinquency in schools, see Kelly (1993).

6. Shirley Ann Hill in *African American Families* (1999) makes the argument that the educational outcomes of African American students are explained by characteristics of the educational system (e.g., inadequate classroom resources) than by individual characteristics of the students.

7. An early consideration is McCord et al. (1993) on changing arrest patterns for girls. See also Kelly (1993).

8. For a good analysis of the issue of transition from the juvenile to the adult system in the state of Pennsylvania, see Kelly (1993).

9. The penalties for so-called status offenses are often more severe than the penalties that boys received for similar offenses.

10. The Texas Youth Commission (2007) is one such study that supports the claim that girls who receive gender-appropriate and culturally sensitive services are more likely to be successful.

k-length treatment of the subject, Stevens

ign was a public service announcement
 “War on Drugs” and was prevalent in the
 expanded to the “War on Violence” and with
 that there has been a resurgence of gangs in
 the foothold they had in the city in the
 er the uptick in recent youth violence is
 at as to the answer.

er cities are notoriously underfunded
 mmunities. Families who are doing better
 private schools or move out of the area

ses and management of female youth
 here girls are the primarily research focus.
 ally been in the context of studies that
 al. (2009) is one exception.

effect of being collectively devalued by
 mbolic violence.” William Oliver (1994) has
 ssion generated by mainstream culture as a
 each other down. No one has yet taken up
 of females in any systematic way.

dent relationships on performance, see
 (2006).

ducation in the contexts of poverty and
 torically contextualized understanding of
 Neckerman (2007). For a gender-based
 female youths disengaging from alternative

Children: Socialization and Development

children in ghetto schools were better
 onal system (i.e., poor teacher training and
 individual factors.

al. (2001), which offers a good overview of
 Chesney-Lind and Pasko (2003).

nsferring violent youthful offenders into
 ia, see Myers (2003).

enses by girls has historically been harsher
 milar acts (e.g., Moyer, 1992).

7), *Review of Agency Treatment Effectiveness*,
 f reduced re-arrest rates of female youths
 ally competent services.

11. Among other things, judicial discretion being a great disparity in sentences for similar cases, parole boards ruled too inconsistently when the decision was left in their hands.

tion was criticized on the basis of there
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n sentence determination was completely

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