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**Dimensions of Gender and Delinquent Behavior:
An Analysis of Qualitative Data
on Incarcerated Youths and Their Siblings
in Greater Sacramento**

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**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF THE YOUTH AUTHORITY
RESEARCH DIVISION
AUGUST 1993**

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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on Incarcerated Youths and Their Siblings
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Department of the Youth Authority
Research Division

August 1993

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SUMMARY

This report presents findings from a study designed to increase knowledge of the relation between gender and crime. The study was based on the assumption that an increased knowledge of how gender "works" to "produce" consistent differences in criminal involvement will improve understanding of the social circumstances that place any adolescent youth at greater risk of delinquent association and involvement.

The study methods were based on the expectation that the relation between gender and crime would be confirmed by the relative absence of crime by sisters of incarcerated males in the California Youth Authority (CYA) compared to brothers of incarcerated males. A group of incarcerated males with sisters and/or brothers of similar age, with the same mother, and from a common home background in the greater Sacramento area were identified from CYA records. These sibling pairs and groups were then interviewed individually and at some length about their adolescent life histories.

This report is based on 69 interviews (with 29 wards and 40 siblings, 25 of whom were sisters) from 29 different families. Using qualitative methods, the interview data were analyzed to isolate the life circumstances and characteristics that distinguished both the males from the females and the more delinquent youths from the less delinquent.

The analysis clearly confirmed the expectation that the brothers would be more delinquent than the sisters. All but one of the brothers (or 93%) had been arrested, for example, compared to less than half of the sisters (or 40%).

Five dimensions of gender--called range, timing, pace, definition, and focus--were isolated among these adolescents. Each of these dimensions is defined and illustrated with interview data in the report. Specifically, for example, the

males were found: (1) to live in a wider geographic arena; (2) to spend more hours each day outside the home, especially at night; (3) to have greater freedom of physical movement, greater speed of movement, and a greater amount of movement; (4) to reflect stereotypic male traits such as boldness, machismo, and flamboyance; and (5) to engage in less focused, planned, and adult role activity compared to the females.

The analysis further revealed a distinction between delinquents and nondelinquents that clearly paralleled the dimensions of gender. That is, the "dimensions of gender" were less gender-stereotypic for the delinquent sisters and for the nondelinquent brothers and more gender-stereotypic for the nondelinquent sisters and the delinquent males. Specifically, for example, the delinquent girls managed to acquire, or were permitted to have, more freedom to be away from home, to be out later at night, to hang around with other delinquent youths, and so forth.

Each of the dimensions of gender relates to the risk of delinquency in obvious, intuitive ways. For example, the risk of delinquent incident is likely increased by exposure to a larger arena and by greater freedom of physical movement, especially in a lower socioeconomic class setting. Conversely, the risk of delinquent incident is likely lowered by the assumption of parental responsibilities at a young age. Thus, this study has shown some, and perhaps most, of the ways by which gender "works" to lower the risk or probability of delinquency for females and to raise the risk or probability of delinquency for males among lower socioeconomic class youths. It is interesting, and quite possibly useful, to observe that in an era and culture of seemingly decreasing distinctions by gender, the gender-related conditions of life among lower socioeconomic class adolescents appear unusually salient.

Two mutually reinforcing policy implications are noted in the report's concluding section: (1) the community should support policies that foster greater attention and discipline for lower socioeconomic class boys, especially by their families--attention and control that are comparable to that which girls receive; and (2) the community should support policies that provide structured opportunities for self-development and recognition for all lower socioeconomic class youths--opportunities that more typically characterized the "nondelinquents" in this study.

The present study was limited by the focus on Youth Authority families, which are commonly from the lower socioeconomic class. Appropriate subsequent studies would address the questions of how race and social class mediate the effects of gender to prevent serious delinquency in males and to prevent welfare dependency in females. Such studies would provide more specific ideas about the kinds of attention and discipline that work best for boys and the types of opportunities that work best for both boys and girls.

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents findings on dimensions of gender and delinquent behavior from a qualitative study of lower socioeconomic class¹ adolescents in Greater Sacramento. The study was designed to document the gender-related conditions of life that place males at greater risk of delinquent association and involvement. It was based on extensive research literature in the area of crime and gender indicating: (1) there is more to differential crime rates by gender than can be explained by biological differences (Toby, 1957; Smith & Visher, 1980; Cohen & Machalek, 1988); (2) "general" theories of delinquency causation are applicable to both males and females, but, by no means, sufficiently explain why females are less involved in delinquency (Burkett & Jensen, 1975; Norland, Shover, Thornton & James, 1979; Canter, 1982; Smith & Paternoster, 1987); and (3) different social structures, with different social opportunities, are likely the key to a more comprehensive explanation of the relation between gender and crime (Steffensmeier, 1983; Campbell, 1984).

Research on gender. According to Carter (1987), it was Maccoby's (1966) review of the psychological literature on sex differences that drew attention to the malleability of the sex role socialization process. New theoretical perspectives have been developed since then (Roopnarine & Mounts, 1987) and a new field in the social sciences, now called gender studies, has blossomed. A prominent theme of

¹This class distinction was originally based on the well-established relation between social class and official delinquency (Hindelang, Hirschi & Weis, 1981). Subsequent observations of the neighborhoods and homes of the interviewees subjectively, but strongly, supported this distinction.

more recent reviews of this literature is the manner by which social factors produce and reinforce differences by sex (Stewart & Lykes, 1985; Eagly, 1987; Epstein, 1988). There is a growing consensus about biological sexual differences, but still considerable controversy about behavioral distinctions and their source or causation (Hood, Draper, Crockett & Petersen, 1987). And despite the vast literature on sex and gender, it provides only limited clues as to the behavioral patterns and situational contexts that lower socioeconomic class adolescent gender defines.

There are four topics found in gender studies that are suggested for this analysis: parental supervision, peers or friends, temperament, and risk. Studies have shown that girls are supervised more closely than boys (Fagot & Leinbach, 1987); peer groups tend to be segregated by sex until at least early adolescence; boys more often play in larger groups and girls more often have exclusive friendships (Stockard & Johnson, 1980; Carter, 1987). Considerable evidence indicates that males behave more aggressively (Eagly, 1987); and statistical analyses of suicide and accidents indicate that males have consistently higher rates of both (Veevers & Gee, 1986; Steffensmeier, 1989).

The literature provides but limited clues about adolescent gender by race. For example, a recent historical presentation of important life course transitions from youth to adulthood (from the 1920s through 1975) noted the limited information available on blacks (Modell, 1989). Studies of lower socioeconomic class families and black families both indicate that adolescent experiences differ from those in white middle-class families. The topic is controversial indeed, but higher rates of premarital pregnancies, a more permissive premarital sex code, more female-headed

households, and more reliance on peer group socialization have been found among lower socioeconomic class, and particularly black lower socioeconomic class, families (Schneider & Smith, 1973; Staples, 1974). Information on distinctions by gender appear contradictory, however. Some scholars have found less differentiation and more egalitarianism between the sexes in black families (Stockard & Johnson, 1980) while others have found more differentiation between the sexes (Schneider & Smith, 1973). Modell (1989) suggests that gender roles have been diverging among blacks in the United States despite an overall trend towards more similar life patterns among young men and women.

Grant funding. This study was funded in part by the California Office of Criminal Justice Planning (OCJP), the agency that distributes federal monies allocated to California since the establishment of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974. OCJP's policy and funding decisions are made by the Juvenile Justice State Advisory Group (SAG) whose members are appointed by the Governor. SAG decided to set aside some funds for research that would "be helpful in implementing efforts to improve juvenile justice in this state" and issued a request for proposals to this effect in February 1990. This study was supported by one of the subsequent grant wards from June 1990 through September 1991 when most of the data were collected and analyzed.

DESIGN AND METHODS

The overall objectives of this study were: to document the gender-related conditions of life of adolescents from lower socioeconomic class families; and to relate these conditions to the formation of delinquent peer groups and to delinquent behavior. The objectives were based on the recognition that there are differences in lower socioeconomic class neighborhoods that insulate or protect some youths from delinquency and that these differences are, at least partly, defined by gender. The research was based on the assumption that an increased knowledge of how gender "works" to "produce" consistent differences in criminal involvement would improve understanding of the social circumstances that place any adolescent youth at greater risk of delinquent association and involvement. It was expected that policy implications would follow to the extent that any identified gender-related conditions of life could be changed or modified by the community.

The design of this study was based on the assumption that the relation between gender and crime would be confirmed by the relative absence of crime by sisters of incarcerated males in state correctional institutions (specifically, in the California Youth Authority or CYA) compared to brothers of incarcerated males. A group of incarcerated males with sisters and/or brothers of similar age, with the same mother, and from a common home background in the greater Sacramento area were to be identified from the CYA's Offender Based Information Tracking System (OBITS) and master files. These sibling pairs and groups were then to be interviewed individually at some length about their adolescent life histories. The original plan called for about 12 sibling pairs or groups from each of the three major ethnic groups (for a total of about 36 incarcerated

males and hopefully twice that many siblings, divided about evenly between brothers and sisters).

The data were to be analyzed by qualitative methods (Lofland & Lofland, 1984) to isolate the various life experiences and conditions that distinguish (1) the males from the females, (2) the "delinquents" from the "nondelinquents," and (3) the "delinquent" males from the "nondelinquent" females. Assuming the expected differences in criminal behavior by sibling gender, these analyses were expected to show similarities among the comparisons. That is, it was expected that certain conditions of life would be found that distinguished males from females and that also distinguished delinquents from nondelinquents.

A current computer list of all the young people from the greater Sacramento area (El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, and Yolo Counties; also the Sacramento Statistical Area) incarcerated in California Youth Authority institutions was generated on August 7, 1990. Certain of these youthful offenders (wards) were eliminated at the outset. These eliminations included: wards committed to the state prison system, but incarcerated in the CYA; female wards; and, as planned, all wards not classified black, white, or Hispanic. The latter decision was made to simplify comparisons of gender-related life conditions by cultural setting.

Master files were then searched for those wards whose siblings fit the established criteria. Initially, the plan was to focus on younger wards and their siblings--youths who were about 13 to 15 years of age--since those were the years of greatest interest. However, in the California Youth Authority, wards in that age range often have unusually serious social and legal problems compared with the more common, older wards. Further, when a cooperative, informative family was located, it seemed appropriate and

most expedient to interview all the siblings of reasonably similar age who were available. This decision introduced the limitations of retrospectively collected qualitative data because the older wards or siblings were asked about their life circumstances when they were 13 to 15 years of age. But it also could offer the advantages of having interviewees with more narrative skill and insight. In the end, the upper age limit was extended to 22 for four sibling interviews. A running tally of the ages, sex, and ethnicity of interviewees was maintained so that similar proportions of interviewees at each age were generated by ethnicity and sex. Therefore, it was possible to hold the number of interviewees in each ethnic group about the same.

To avoid unnecessary travel, the computer list was organized by institution, and the files of wards in northern institutions were searched first. This strategy provided a sufficient number of wards, but two trips were made to more distant institutions primarily for the purpose of interviewing siblings. Four wards, one of whom was selected as a sibling, were interviewed at the CYA's institution in Paso Robles; one ward, selected as a sibling, was interviewed at the CYA's institution in Ontario; and one sibling, a female, was interviewed at the Department of Corrections' institution in Norco.

During the file search, several other selection criteria were established. Seven families were eliminated because their current address was too far away from the Sacramento area; one family was eliminated because the siblings were described as seriously retarded; and three families were eliminated because they had only recently immigrated to the United States. About half of the families could not be included because the siblings were either too old or too young. A handful of wards showed up missing on

parole or had been discharged from the Youth Authority before their files were searched. All other family eliminations were in keeping with the original design of the study. For example, six files were eliminated due to apparent errors in ethnic classification. One hundred files were reviewed for the study. Only 7 families (of the 63 eliminated during the file searches) were rejected because the ward's mother had no other living children.

Once a ward and his family were earmarked for the study, the ward was usually interviewed before his siblings. This way it was often possible to update information on family addresses and circumstances and to alert the family to the study in a non-threatening manner. This strategy also curbed the natural tendency to give up on families who were hard to locate or who were less cooperative. Siblings were then contacted personally in their homes, and parental permission was requested for all siblings under the age of 18. Twenty-nine out of 37 selected families agreed to interviews. Two families did not participate because the mothers refused to grant permission for interviews; one mother said she only saw her son occasionally and did not know where he lived; one mother said she did not know or care where her daughter lived; one family had moved some distance from Sacramento; and three families could not be located.

Of the 29 wards whose families subsequently agreed to participate in the study, 22 were interviewed in an office of the CYA institution where they were incarcerated. The remaining seven were interviewed after they had been paroled--five in a parole or research office setting and two in their homes. Forty siblings--15 brothers and 25 sisters were interviewed. Most siblings were interviewed in either their own homes (16 of 40) or in a parole or research office

(17 of 40). Four siblings were located and interviewed in an incarcerated setting and three were interviewed in the author's home. Forty-nine of the 69 interviews (29 wards plus 40 brothers and sisters) were taped and later transcribed. Interviews were not taped if the interviewees said they did not want it done, if the taping appeared to interfere with their responsiveness, or if the setting made taping awkward or impossible. The author conducted 56 of the 69 interviews and one of three student assistants conducted the remaining 13. All interviews handled by student assistants were taped.

As a CYA employee, the author found it particularly easy to arrange interviews with wards and parolees. In contrast, locating and arranging interviews with siblings sometimes proved to be challenging. In addition to the eight families that did not yield sibling interviewees, siblings from 12 families were initially less than cooperative or difficult to locate. In most cases, such problems emerged because the families deliberately refused to divulge enough information to make contact with the siblings possible. In two situations, both involving males, the siblings spent so much time away from home that it was hard to arrange their interviews. An unpleasant, contested divorce proceeding interfered with one interview for several months and one potential sibling interviewee ran away briefly, postponing another interview. Time solved most of these problems, as well as considerable assistance from the CYA parole office in Sacramento once a ward was paroled. For example, one parolee readily located his sister and willingly provided her address, although the family had not been willing to do so.

As a general statement, the interviewees seemed straightforward, cooperative, and engaged. Most found the

study interesting and provided a lot of pertinent information with very little probing. One female sibling presented a much less delinquent rendition of her life than did her brother in his references to her; several interviewees tightened up a bit on the discussion of their delinquent friends and on the self-report measure; and the younger interviewees were generally less informative and insightful. Only one interview lasted short of an hour and that was with a young man who appeared to be at least mildly retarded. He was not entirely without insight, but he was unable to provide much by way of elaboration. Most of the interviews were accomplished in one session, but 11 of the interviewees were seen twice, and one was seen on three separate occasions. The average length of the interviews was about two hours; the range was from just under one hour to just under five hours. All interviewees were paid \$20 for their time with grant funds.

Questions on the interview guide (presented in the Appendix) were based somewhat on the literature on crime and gender. The major emphasis, however, was to obtain a detailed account of each individual's adolescent life experiences and conditions. Interviewees were asked, for example, about their daily routines; the places where they spent most of their time; the people they spent time with; parental rules and restrictions; the things that consumed most of their energies and interest; who they relied on for support and companionship; how they established important relationships; the things they found easy and rewarding; places they avoided or would never go and why; their most dangerous or risky experiences; delinquent associations (including gang and group associations); and their delinquent experiences. Since the study was exploratory, questions were occasionally refined as gender distinctions emerged or became more apparent. For example, several

questions on heterosexual interests and relationships were added early in the study.

FINDINGS

As expected, brothers were found to be much more delinquent than their sisters by any standard measure. Table 1 presents several measures of crime and delinquency by sex--for all males (wards and brothers combined), for the brothers, and for the sisters. For the wards, of course, information on criminal behavior was readily available from their files. For the brothers and sisters, however, information on criminal involvement came mostly from their interviews. In some cases, it was also possible to "validate" the brothers' and sisters' responses to questions about crime using information from their incarcerated brother or other siblings.

Table 1 shows that all but one of the brothers (or 93%) had been arrested, compared to less than half of the sisters (or 40%). Further, Table 1 shows that 60% of the brothers had a probation record, compared to 20% of the sisters. Table 1 also presents figures on a subjective, dichotomous classification titled "Delinquent" (coded yes or no). If an interviewee had either no arrest record or a non-serious arrest record and presented himself or herself as a "nondelinquently" oriented individual, especially during the early teenage years, the interviewee was classified as a nondelinquent. Otherwise, the interviewee was classified as a delinquent. Using this rough, largely subjective classification, 67% of the brothers were found delinquent, compared to 40% of the sisters.

Table 1 presents other summary information on the 69 interviewees indicating that the brothers and sisters were quite comparable in other ways. Specifically, it shows that the brothers and sisters were roughly comparable in age, and

Table 1
 Characteristics of Interviewees by Sex (n=69)

Characteristics	All Males			Brothers			Sisters		
	<u>n</u>	mean	SD	<u>n</u>	mean	SD	<u>n</u>	mean	SD
<u>Age by Ethnicity</u>									
White	15	17.3		4	17.0		7	16.7	
Hispanic	15	18.0		5	17.4		7	16.6	
Black	14	16.5		6	16.2		11	17.3	
TOTAL	44	17.3	2.0	15	16.8	2.9	25	16.9	2.9
<u>Parental Care at 12 to 14 Years of Age</u>									
	<u>n</u>	%		<u>n</u>	%		<u>n</u>	%	
Natural parents	3	6.8					3	12.0	
Mother only	18	40.9		8	53.3		13	52.0	
Mother/stepdad	10	22.7		5	33.3		3	12.0	
Father only	3	6.8					2	8.0	
Father/stepmom	1	2.3					1	4.0	
Other relative	6	13.6		2	13.3		2	8.0	
Placement	3	6.8					1	4.0	
<u>Arrest Record</u>									
No	1	2.3		1	6.7		15	60.0	
Yes	43	97.7		14	93.3		10	40.0	
<u>"Delinquent"</u>									
No	5	11.4		5	33.3		15	60.0	
Yes	39	88.6		10	66.7		10	40.0	
<u>Probation Record</u>									
No	8	18.2		6	40.0		20	80.0	
Yes	36	81.8		9	60.0		5	20.0	
<u>Children</u>									
No	29	65.9		10	66.7		15	60.0	
Expecting	3	6.8					2	8.0	
Lost	2	4.5							
Yes	10	22.7		5	33.3		8	32.0	
(One)	(9)	(20.4)		(5)	(33.3)		(5)	(20.0)	
(Two)	(1)	(2.3)					(2)	(8.0)	
(Three)							(1)	(4.0)	

Note. The columns headed "All Males" include data on the 29 wards and the 15 brothers combined.

in age by ethnicity; that most of the brothers and sisters were cared for during the early teenage years by natural mothers and not by natural fathers; and that about the same proportions of brothers and sisters had become parents by the time of their interviews.

When information on the wards is combined with information on the brothers, the groups of males and females also appear generally comparable. Age is an exception here because most of the wards were selected at about the ages of 16 or 17. Thus, the brothers and sisters tended to be either older or younger than 16 or 17 and, thus, there was less variation in the ages of the wards than there was in the ages of the brothers and sisters. This is statistically reflected in the comparison between the standard deviation of age for "All Males" (2.0) and the standard deviation of age for just "Brothers" (2.9).

Having verified the typical relation between gender and crime among the interviewees, the data were then analyzed by sex and by delinquency (as roughly classified in Table 1). These analyses comprise the remainder of the Findings section below. To assure confidentiality, given names have not been used and some key facts have not been specifically identified.

Dimensions of Gender

The analysis revealed at least five dimensions of gender among lower socioeconomic class adolescents--range, timing, pace, definition, and focus. These dimensions can each be applied to several routine life experiences or conditions: range applies to variations in place or location of activity; timing refers to variations in daily schedule; pace refers to differences in physical movement; definition stands for the images and concepts of gender and for the

awareness of related social constraints; and focus distinguishes the amount and the type of activities and interests in daily life. Each dimension will be discussed, in turn.

Range. On a daily basis, the males operated in a wider arena. Generally speaking, they all liked home, but the boys touched in at home base less frequently by the time they were fourteen or so. Joanne said her brothers had more freedom to move about spontaneously. "You know," she said, "boys [have] always been able to go more places than girls." At nineteen, Shawna was looking forward to getting out on her own and raising her first child, due in just a few months. She saw her boyfriend, the father of the unborn child, almost every day. They got along well together. "No fights yet," she said. He had asked her to marry him, but she could not decide. Her grandparents were encouraging her to say yes and she thought she probably would, in time. But it was a difficult decision because she liked to stay at home and he did not.

Except for Robert, at 13 one of the two youngest boys, the males all said they spent a lot of time "on the streets" or "all over." But Robert got around quite a bit on his own and he could not think of any place he was not allowed to go. The issue "hasn't come up," he said. It was hard to get a reading on Jerry's most common locations. Asked where he would most likely be, Jerry said it would be best to page him (on his beeper). "I would be all over really, all over the south area....I'd be moving a lot."

The extent to which these males traveled over an extensive range of geography was brought out in questions regarding their typical Friday night. Reggie, for example, went in to extensive detail about an evening's activities that took place over miles of territory. "It was like riding around really," he said. He and his brother cruised

all over the Heights (an area north of downtown), stopping to pick up friends--sometimes a girlfriend, but usually other males--stopping at parks, liquor stores, clubs, theaters, parking lots, gas stations--all the popular places where "everyone" would be. They gravitated especially to the avenues noted for cruising, they checked out a favorite club downtown, then they headed to the south area. They were just going "somewhere, you know, ...to find something to get into." Eventually, they would head back to the Heights, stopping to get something to eat, "probably going to some girl's house and kicking back." It sounded like a composite picture of sorts, bits and pieces of all the Friday nights of a season. But, no, he said, "to be honest, we [usually] tried to do it all."

Timing. Generally, these males engaged in more of their out-of-home activities at night, especially their spontaneous or loosely scheduled activities. Actually, most of the youths stretched rules about being home at a certain hour. But, clearly, the girls were more closely monitored at night and they were typically home earlier. James called nighttime the "danger zone." It is dangerous for everyone, he said, but girls are not allowed to be out as late at night as the boys are.

By all accounts, drug dealing is a current, common phenomenon in lower socioeconomic class neighborhoods around the city. Some, but fewer, girls are involved. Tammy sold drugs for about two years, for example, but never at night. Her girlfriend Linda showed her what to do. She would stand outside in various locations, near where her friends or others congregated, but a little distance away, off by herself. Tammy had been pushing the limits since about eighth grade. She remembered coming home late on occasions, even as late as midnight. On further reflection, she said she had only been out that late once in the ninth grade and

on that occasion she was at a cousin's house not far from home.

Serena, now 18, remembers that her father had been a little stricter with his girls than with her brother.

Interviewer: ...did you notice any difference in the rules that your dad had for Danny or your dad had for Cecilia compared to you?

Serena: ...my dad was always more stricter for me and my sister because we were girls, I guess. My brother was always more mature. He had to take care of himself more, but, then, he started getting into trouble....And, finally, it got to where my dad was just like, hey, if you want to do that, then you do that....So, you know, for my brother, more or less, [the rules] were just, you know, do what you want.

Interviewer: ...what areas do you think he was a little more liberal with Danny?

Serena: What do you mean?

Interviewer: What I mean is, where he wasn't maybe quite as strict.

Serena: He, like my brother could be out later. You know, he can...like drink with his friends or something. Basically, you know, just that.

Typical of most of the girls, Patty said that her brother was less accountable to their parents. "He ran around all hours of the night," she said. "We never knew where he was at." In contrast, the girls rarely reported being out and about late at night themselves, especially without safe transportation and a specific destination. One evening about midnight, Shawna and her family learned just how dangerous things can be when girls are on their own at night and act spontaneously. Shawna was 15 at the time and she was staying overnight at Karen's home. The girls were taken to the movies by Karen's mother, but when the

movie was over, the mother forgot to pick the girls up. Realizing they had been forgotten, the girls set out on foot for the long walk home. A young man, an acquaintance of Shawna's, offered them a ride home and they accepted. He took them elsewhere, however, and the girls were raped. When the police were eventually summoned, the girls were placed in a children's receiving home for a month while the courts considered a charge of negligence against their parents.

In contrast, the males were much more likely to be out late at night. Angelo was supposed to be home by 10 p.m., but he started making excuses for coming in later in seventh grade. As he got deeper into drug dealing, he could be out until 2 or 3 in the morning, hanging out at one of many informally-established, drive-by drug "service" locations. A couple of nights a week, he would stay overnight at his girlfriend's house, but he always stopped to see his mother at home at least once during the day. He said he most typically socialized with his girlfriend during the day, as well.

Judging from their accounts, nighttime was every bit as dangerous for males. In fact, they had many more harrowing stories to tell, presumably because they were roaming around at night much more often. James, for example, carries a prominent scar on his neck from a gunshot wound that he sustained about 10 p.m. one night, not far from his own home. He and one of his friends got involved in a small-scale conflict with rival gang members that erupted in gunfire. On two occasions, Raymond was robbed at gunpoint while dealing drugs in the wee hours of the night. And Jerry himself shot, and seriously wounded, another young fellow late one night, after hours of cruising and carousing with his male friends.

Pace. At top speed, the males move faster. Were the full picture available, they might be found to put in just as much genuine downtime, but when routine daily activities are considered, the males move more freely, more speedily, and--as has already been mentioned--much farther. They obtain greater access to cars, they engage in more sexual activity, they spend time with more people, they cover more ground.

It was not that the females presented a lower energy level. Becky, for example, had one of the longest, most consistent work records among the interviewees and she had already completed a year of college at the time of her interview at sixteen. Shawna participated in an award-winning drill team for about six years. She had been on the team when they won second place in a competitive event on the East Coast one summer. Hers was the most concentrated, long-term effort on any social or sports activity mentioned among the group.

The difference was that the boys diffused their energies in more activities. To some extent, the girls were held back by the regulations of their homes. Then, too, their activities were circumscribed by steady boyfriends, more exclusive friendships, pregnancies, and child care. Explaining the lack of females in drug dealing, James probably summarized a lot of what has so far been said: "Girls can't do as much as boys can."

Definition. The interviewees were remarkably diverse--considered as a group, as well as considered by gender. Further, neither the males nor the females consistently fit the stereotypic images of their gender. In response to several specific questions about differences by gender--about variations in their home rules, about activities that distinguished males and females in their homes or neighborhoods, and about non-physical differences in their

friendships with males and females--there was a tendency for many of the youths to say they did not see much difference or to emphasize equality. Yet, indirectly, in responses to other questions, and in response to the final interview question--how do you explain less female crime?--the interviewees repeatedly emphasized the bold, hard-headed, macho nature of males and the weak, vulnerable, cautious nature of females. Crime itself was described as a distinctly male phenomenon. As Desmond, a brother who had spent much of his early teenage life running the streets, said, "GTAs, shootings, selling dope,...that's just not what girls [are] about."

Of the sisters, Angie was probably the toughest. She had a fairly lengthy criminal record dating back to the age of 11 and she was on parole from the CYA at the time of her interview. Asked why there are more males arrested and more males in prison, Angie had a ready answer:

Because men have this big old ego they have to live up to....They like to show everybody that they're about something. You know what I'm saying?...They're trying to get things like cars and jewelry and stuff like that....That's how it is and females look at it like this. They would rather have a man support them. The majority of females in Sacramento is not independent.....They want to find them a dope dealer with a fresh car so they can take all his money....That's why there is more males in jail than females....If you go to Oak Park, all you see is a gang of females and all of them want to get with dope dealers....They'll see a car pass by with loud music in it and they be like--hey!....

Both males and females described the males as more flamboyant, more responsive to peer pressure, more anxious to show off. They also said that the greater running speed and physical strength of males made it easier for them to commit crimes and to help their friends commit crimes. Some males and females noted ways by which the images and

concepts of gender are given social support, too. They saw how cops let girls "slide" and how the cops watched boys more closely. Asked about why he thought boys were more likely to be arrested, Jimmy replied with a question:

Jimmy: Boys, you know, say you got a girl, she's in the store and she's stealing. You got a boy and he's in the store stealing. Which one would you think was stealing?

Interviewer: Well, you might be inclined to think it was the boy.

Jimmy: The boy. Exactly. So that's why I think...[it's] mostly boys. And then, they feel that they have to live up to it, you know.

Interviewer: Do you think that actually girls do quite a bit of that and just don't get caught?

Jimmy: Yeah. I know a lot of girls that do. This one girl, she has a big old red purse. She goes inside of the stores and fills it up with everything and then just walks out. If I was to go in there and try to steal a candy bar...I would get caught. But she got a big old bag full of hair products, lipstick, anything she wants, shirts, everything. She did it a couple of times. She stole phones. And I got caught trying to get a little allen wrench.

More female interviewees noted that parents were stricter with daughters, especially due to the risk of early pregnancy. And both males and females mentioned the protective role that brothers and boyfriends play with their sisters and girlfriends. But the irony of all that protection was particularly noted by the girls. A drug addicted and mentally unstable mother had forced Patricia to assume a maternal role with her younger siblings from a very early age. Eventually as a young teenager, she was able to move to the home of her father, who did not want her to date until at least the age of sixteen. Pursued by an older boyfriend, she managed a secret relationship with him for a year or so. But the boyfriend was heavily involved in drugs

and he eventually moved to the out-of-state home of relatives for the purpose of treatment. Patricia said that girls have to be particularly careful about everything they do. When asked what was the special vulnerability of girls, she put it this way:

...for one thing just society says so. And for another, girls get pregnant, of course, you know. Girls are weaker and guys seem to want to protect us and stuff like that. But when we get out on our own and we don't have that guy to protect us, we realize...they think they're protecting us, but really they're not protecting us because they're making us weaker and more vulnerable in the long run....Because they sit there and protect you from everything, but then when you get out on your own, that's...when you got to watch out more carefully and look out for yourself.

Focus. Among these adolescents, female activity--particularly social activity--is more sharply focused. The males move about in somewhat larger groups, looking for girls sometimes, looking for action, looking for fun, feeling freer, seeing things at a wider angle. The females, in contrast, are more likely to rely on a single best girlfriend or a smaller circle of friends, to focus attention on a single boyfriend, to plan activities, to be cautious, to concentrate on things closer to home.

A good example of this is Kisha, who at twenty-one thought her teenage years were unusual compared to other kids. At fourteen, she met and fell in love with her first boyfriend and her life has focused around him ever since. "My life is based on Cedric," she said. "I didn't do what a normal person would have done."

Kisha soon lost interest in school and spent most of her time at her home or at Cedric's home. A couple of years later, she got pregnant and, after her first baby was born, she moved out of her mother's apartment. Since then, she

has lived briefly with friends and relatives, but mostly on her own. Meanwhile, Cedric comes in and out of her life, never moving in permanently, never giving her and their two children his full attention or financial support for long.

The females often told of one best friend, sometimes of a tight group of three or four. Before Kisha met Cedric, for example, her best friend was Tina. They walked to the skating rink together, went to parties together, went swimming, went to each other's homes, walked to school together, visited other friends' homes together. Basically, she said, "It was just me and her."

Another good example of this is Patty who met her best friend, Marie, when she was 14 and her family had moved to a different neighborhood. Marie had an older sister, who also had a best friend, so the girls "became like a foursome." From then until she met her boyfriend at sixteen, Patty's life centered around school, work, and these three friends. "We were like best friends," she said, "and school was fun for me, at first. We were so close, and then, like I said, we skipped school sometimes. We drove to San Francisco, we did some crazy stuff, but otherwise I basically spent all my time with them. Even after school, even on weekends, we'd go out." By the tenth grade, Patty said that she was also beginning to focus on her future, "trying to figure out what I was going to do."

Shawna has led a more active life than many of the other girls, likely because she is part of a much larger extended family. But she focuses in on things, as well--on one boyfriend, on one best friend, and now on specific plans for the birth and care of her child. Asked why her brother had been involved in crimes and she hadn't, Shawna said that he took more risks in life. "I'm scarier" [that is, scared more easily], she said. "I think ahead."

Angelo talked about special friends at different points in his life, too, but he has a wide circle of friends. Most recently, his activities centered especially on a group of five friends. He has been chasing girls since third grade, he said, but his main girlfriend from eighth grade on has been Cherish. Angelo had quite a few other girlfriends in junior high (he readily named 24) and, despite his special attachment to Cherish, he has had other girlfriends since their relationship was established. Cherish has talked with Angelo about staying together a long time, about things "neither of us are ready to deal with."

At 14, Steve is the father of a baby girl, but he broke up with the baby's mother sometime during her pregnancy. Asked about his plans for the future, Steve included the idea of "taking care of my little girl." But the child is being raised by the mother and Steve has no concrete plans to share in the child's upbringing. He has four current girlfriends, one of whom is a favorite. Steve's life appears without center just now, and his sister said, [He] "isn't doing anything." Since his family moved to a new part of town, Steve has gotten back to his old neighborhood about three times a week. If anything, that neighborhood is the focus of his activities. He said he has 15 or 20 friends there, but he did not isolate any special, close male friends among them.

Among the summary data in Table 1, there were some figures on how many of the interviewees had children (based mostly on what they said). Table 2 presents some information on the parental responsibilities of these youths at the time of their interviews. It shows that most of the responsibility for child care was being assumed by the young mothers.

Males are "allowed" to avoid parental responsibilities, whereas females are not. Danny, for example, was one of the

males who had tried, but failed to be a daddy to his child. He lived with his girlfriend until after the child was born, but he was not ready to settle down. He was still focused on his gang of friends on the streets. At the time of the interview, Danny was on parole again and had another steady girlfriend. Asked why he thought males more often do crimes, Danny thought of an analogy with underwear. Just as boys wear boxers and girls wear panties, he said, boys do crimes and girls aren't supposed to. "Pregnancy is their jacket," he said. "That's what they have to do. They have a criminal jacket, but in freedom. They're prisoners in their own selves, whether they realize it or not."

Table 2
Parental Responsibilities by Sex
For Interviewees with Children (n=18)

Parental Responsibilities	All Males		Brothers		Sisters	
	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%
Both parents live with and care for child	2	20.0	1	20.0	3	37.5
Mother lives with and cares for child alone	8	80.0	4	80.0	4	50.0
None; grandparent lives with and cares for child					1	12.5

Note. The columns headed "All Males" include data on 5 wards and 5 brothers combined.

"Delinquents" and "Nondelinquents"

In the second analysis, youths were classified--albeit roughly--by delinquent orientation, especially during the early teenage years. Those with a relatively serious arrest

record and inclined to delinquent activity were termed "delinquent" while the rest were termed "nondelinquent." This classification yielded 49 delinquents (of whom 39 were males and 10 were females) and 20 nondelinquents (of whom 5 were males and 15 were females). (See Table 1 on page 12.) Then, the delinquents were compared with the nondelinquents in general, by sex, and in terms of the five "dimensions of gender" isolated above.

This analysis revealed a distinction between the delinquents and the nondelinquents that clearly paralleled the distinctions by gender already outlined. That is, the "dimensions of gender" were less gender-stereotypic for the delinquent sisters and for the nondelinquent brothers and more gender-stereotypic for the nondelinquent sisters and the delinquent males. Specifically, for example, the delinquent girls managed to acquire, or were permitted to have, more freedom to be away from home, to be out later at night, to hang around with other delinquent youths, to run with a boyfriend, and the like. In contrast, the few nondelinquent boys tended by temperament and by home environment to be more socially constrained in their daily lives.

Robert, for example, was one of the nondelinquent brothers. He was a husky fellow at 13, a talented athlete in several team sports, a dark-skinned version of an all-American boy in stylish tennis shoes and jeans and Starter jacket. There was nothing stereotypically feminine about Robert at all, yet in terms of the "dimensions of gender," he was not the best exemplar of the male pattern. His mother and stepfather knew where he was when he was away from home, for example. His school and sports activities were sharply focused and he tended to spend his evenings at home with his family. Asked about why his older brother was heavily involved in delinquent activities and currently

incarcerated and why he was not, Robert said it was because "his mom got better," referring to her decision to give up a drug and alcohol-oriented lifestyle.

The contrast in life circumstances at age 13 between Robert and his older brother, Jerry, was striking. Currently incarcerated for attempted murder, Jerry grew up "on the streets," according to his mother. She was divorced from the boys' father (who had not assumed much by way of parental responsibilities either), she had been heavily involved in drugs, and she had been away from home much of the time. But by the time that Robert was 11 or so, his mother had married again, had established her own legitimate business, and had assumed parental responsibilities for Robert. The stepfather shared in Robert's parental care, as well. He had a genuine interest in Robert and an affection for him. The couple had given up drugs and alcohol. The family, which now included a stepbrother, too, shared sports and other activities. On the evening the author visited the home (for an informal meeting arranged with the stepfather only hours before), the boys were both doing homework and the parents were sharing some household chores. The family was notably at ease with one another, congenial and nondefensive with the author, more than willing to cooperate with this research study. In short, Robert was entering his teenage years with a "drug-free" blend of parental attention, love, and discipline.

The handful of other nondelinquent males were also more favorably situated than their delinquent brothers. Sometimes their situations appeared to the author at least partially determined by temperament. Three of the five, for example, appeared notably gentle and unaggressive. In all cases, the gender-related conditions of their lives as teenagers were less prominent than those of the delinquent males as indicated on the "dimensions of gender."

Conversely, the 10 "delinquent" girls presented teenage life patterns that were less characteristically "female" than the life patterns of the nondelinquent females on the "dimensions of gender." These girls did not appear to have much else in common, however. They were spunky to be sure, but then so were many of the nondelinquent girls. If anything, it was the unusually difficult or undisciplined nature of their homes that differentiated them.

Brenda, for example, was raised by her grandmother because her mother abused drugs and was otherwise neglectful of the children and because her father lived a long distance away and did not assume any parental responsibilities. The grandmother was genuinely concerned about the three grandchildren she was raising, but she had already raised 13 children of her own and she apparently found it difficult to be much of a disciplinarian with any of the grandchildren. Brenda said her grandmother spoiled her as a child.

In short, Brenda assumed a great deal of freedom as a young teenager and she got into a fair amount of trouble. She got into drugs and drinking, shoplifting, and a lot of fighting, and eventually she was incarcerated for about five months in a county institution. When barely 15, Brenda left the state with a boyfriend who ended up getting into drugs and who did not treat her well. Fortunately, a relative of the boyfriend came to her aid and sent her home. Shortly afterwards, Brenda met another boyfriend, a more conscientious, hard-working young man, who was--at the time of her interview--her husband and the father of her 11-month old child. They had been together for two and a half years, since the end of her 15th year.

Brenda said she had long since given up drugs and all other delinquent activity. "I'm married," she said, and I got a baby to think of. I can't go around being crazy and wild." Interestingly, among both the delinquent and

nondelinquent females, the focus on a single boyfriend--at any one time, at least--or on child care appeared to be protections against delinquency.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the study of crime and delinquency, causal effects are typically conceptualized in terms of probabilities. Rarely does one single social or individual characteristic or condition appear critical in a causal sense. Yet, in general, gender is clearly associated with the probability of criminal involvement, as is lower socioeconomic class status. This study has revealed five gender-related conditions of life among lower socioeconomic class youths that help explain how gender "works" to lower the risk or probability of delinquency for females and to raise the risk or probability for males.

The first gender-related condition or "dimension" is range--defined here as the geographic arena in which youths live, the physical places or locations frequented in daily life. The males were found to have a wider range, in general, compared to the females. In any arena, perhaps, but certainly in a lower socioeconomic class setting, the risk of delinquent incident is likely increased by exposure to a larger arena. This likelihood is especially due to the unplanned nature of much delinquency, the tendency for youths to get involved in crimes almost by accident (Matza, 1964; Bottcher, 1986).

The second dimension of gender is timing, referring here to the hourly sequencing of daily activities, especially of activities outside the home. Females were found to start their daily activities earlier in the day and to conclude their daily activities outside the home earlier in the evening compared to males. Further, males spent more hours each day outside the home. Again, the risks of delinquent involvement were heightened for the males because

they tended to be exposed to more time, especially to more nighttime, outside the home on a daily basis.

The third gender-related condition is pace--defined here as variations in physical movement, for example, speed and freedom of movement. In general, the males were found to have greater freedom of physical movement, greater speed of movement, and a greater amount of movement. This is likely one of the more important dimensions of gender in lower socioeconomic class settings in terms of delinquent involvement. It increases the probability of spontaneous delinquent incidents in any arena at any time of day or night.

The fourth dimension of gender among these lower socioeconomic class teenagers is definition, that is, their definition of gender, their images and concepts of gender, and their awareness of its related social constraints. In other words, definition refers to what gender seemed to mean to the respondents in this study. There was a virtual consensus among both males and females on important aspects of gender. The characteristics pertinent to the risk of delinquency that were used to describe males included boldness, hard-headedness, machismo, flamboyance, egotism, physical strength, stupidity, and delinquency. In contrast, the characteristic concepts for females included vulnerability, physical and emotional weakness, cautiousness, smartness, sneakiness, capacity to become pregnant, and dependence. Taken together, the characteristics suggest that these males, compared to the females, would have greater ability and interest in delinquent activity.

The fifth and last dimension of gender is focus--defined here as the amount and the type of activities and interests in daily life, what the youths attend to and find important on a daily basis. In general, female activity was

found to be more sharply focused--on smaller groups of friends or on single best friends and boyfriends, on planned activities, on activities at or nearer home, and on an earlier assumption of adult roles. Specifically, for example, females tended to be more interested in having, and certainly in caring for, children at a younger age and they were more eager to be attached to a single male, especially at a younger age. In contrast, male activity appeared more random, less structured, and more diffuse. The narrower focus of females often seemed to reduce their risks of delinquent involvement, particularly when they assumed maternal responsibilities.

In summary, gender organized these adolescents in ways that provided different and limited opportunities for each group. Females, for example, had the opportunity for more concentrated efforts with fewer distractions. Judging from comments by the older females, a major limitation was the risk of caring for children on one's own at a relatively young age. Males had the opportunities that more freedom provides--a wider range of activity, of association, and of movement. An obvious limitation was the risk of accident or conflict or peer pressure before "mature" judgments could be made.

Gender organized these adolescents in notably stereotypic ways, as well. The dimensions of gender call forth psychological scales of "masculinity" and "femininity" based on traits found typically distinguished and desirable by gender (Richardson, 1981), for these dimensions would surely reinforce such stereotypic traits in males as active and adventurous, or in females as home-oriented and unaggressive. In an era and culture of decreasing distinction by gender (Modell, 1989), then, the organization of gender among these lower socioeconomic class adolescents appears unusually salient. Further, its organization

clearly insulates the females, compared to the males, from delinquent interest and involvement.

When this study was proposed, it was expected that policy implications would emerge from the findings to the extent that pertinent gender-related conditions of life could be modified by the community. One pertinent finding clearly stands out--juvenile delinquency is restrained or prevented by attentive, disciplined, watchful families. All things being equal, as it were, girls attracted greater watchfulness and discipline, greater social constraints, from the homes in this study. The obvious implication is that the community should support policies and programs that foster greater attention and discipline for lower socioeconomic class boys--attention that is comparable to that received by girls.

Another pertinent finding is that the girls more commonly anticipated and assumed adult roles at a younger age. For both males and females, but much more commonly for females, the focus on a single romantic attachment or on child care inhibited or prevented delinquency. This pattern, of course, also revealed the social problems that more commonly typify females from troubled lower socioeconomic class homes, most especially welfare dependency. A less obvious implication is that the community should support policies and programs that encourage the assumption of more responsibility from both lower socioeconomic class boys and girls during their teenage years. Based on the interviews with young mothers in this study and based on the recurring patterns of welfare dependency in families in this study, however, lower socioeconomic class boys and girls do not benefit in the long run from early parenthood. Rather, they benefit from structured opportunities for learning, self-development, recognition, and the like--the opportunities that more

typically characterized the "nondelinquents" in this study. The community needs to support policies and programs that provide such structured opportunities for both adolescent boys and girls.

One of the distinct limitations of this study was its exclusive focus on the families of Youth Authority wards. This virtually eliminated the possibility of including comparative data on gender by social class. As is often the case, the findings of this study suggest additional questions. Among the most pressing are questions about how race and social class mediate the effects of "gender-related conditions of life" to prevent serious delinquency, as well as other critical social problems (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992).

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide
(Revised 7/30/91)

Name _____

Date of birth _____ Age _____

Date of interview _____

Time of interview

Start _____ Finish _____

Location of interview _____

File notes:

1. Begin by documenting **home locations** chronologically. For each home location, indicate how old the interviewee was when he/she lived there and who the parental figures were at that time. Then, for interviewees aged 15 and younger, focus subsequent questions on their current life. For older interviewees, focus first on their current life and second on their life from about 13 to 15 (or vice versa). For incarcerated males, it will often be best to ask about the period before their first YA incarceration.

2. Tell me a little about your **life at home**.

a. Who lives in your home (by relationship to you)?

b. What are your routine jobs at home? (If applicable, are routine jobs in your home determined in any way by gender?)

c. What rules and restrictions do your parents (or parental figures) have for you at home? Do you obey these rules? (If applicable, are rules and restrictions in your home determined in any way by gender?)

d. Are there any rules at your home about staying elsewhere overnight?

e. Describe your daily routines on a school day. What time do you have to be at home on a school night?

f. Describe your routines on Friday nights and all day on Saturdays. What time do you have to be home on Friday and Saturday nights?

g. What is different about your daily routines during the summer months?

3. Now, would you describe each of your **friends** and associates (including both males and females). For each friend, tell: (a) age and sex, (b) when and how you became acquainted, (c) what you do together, (d) how well you know the friend's family, and (e) his/her "delinquent tendencies."

4. Apart from obvious physiological differences, how are your male friends different from your female friends? And/or, apart from sexual activity, how are your friendships with males different from your friendships with females?

5. Typically, when you are not at home, where do you spend most of your time? Take each **location**, one by one, and describe it. (Are any of these locations exclusively or predominantly for males/females?) Possible probes: any other areas of Sacramento where you have spent time; ever go to the Bay Area; ever travel to other parts of the state.

6. (a) Do you belong to any organizations; groups; a gang; even a very loose association, such as a regular group of friends? Describe each **group** indicating its activities, how you got involved, and its "delinquent activities". (b) Have you ever been asked to join a group and decided not to? Explain the circumstances.

7. Have you ever had a job(s) for pay? If so, describe the job(s) indicating reasons for taking and leaving the job, how you got the job, and job location. Apart from any jobs, how do you get your spending money?

8. Describe your **school** experiences, briefly. List schools chronologically and indicate for each: attendance record, what you liked and didn't like, major activities, how you got there and with whom. If you are no longer attending school, why not?

9. (a) What are your **major interests** in life (or what were they at ages 13 to 15)? When you have the choice, how do you spend your time?

10. Have you ever had a car? If yes, how did you get it?
11. (a) In your neighborhood or in your family, are there any **activities** (jobs, entertainments, sports, etc.) that are only for boys? Only for girls?
12. Who are (or have been) the most important adults in your life? (Describe your relationship to them, how you happen to know them, and how much time you spend with them.)
13. Of all the people you know--friends and adults, including relatives--who do you rely on most for support and companionship?
14. (a) What do you think your parents (or parent figures) want for your life? (Take each parent separately, if more than one parent is significant in the person's life.) (b) What do you want for your life?
15. Can you think of any places, situations, activities, or individuals that make you feel uncomfortable or that you go out of your way to avoid? (What is it about these things that make you feel uncomfortable or what is it that you are trying to avoid?)
16. Now, conversely, what are the places and situations that you most enjoy? That is, where do you like to be the most and what do you like to be doing the most, whenever you have the choice.
17. Are there any places that your parents (or parent figures) do not permit you to go to?
18. Indicate extent of involvement in the following activities: (a) stealing from a store; (b) theft of any other sort; (c) fighting; (d) breaking into a house; (e) using drugs or alcohol; (f) taking someone's car; (g) threatening or hurting another person (without a weapon); (h) threatening or hurting another person with a weapon; (i) selling drugs; (j) vandalism.

19. (For siblings only) Have you ever been arrested for any reason? If not, why not?

20. Regarding relationships with the opposite sex:

a. At this point in your life, how important are boyfriends/girlfriends?

b. Do you have any children? Whether yes or no, ideally speaking, at what age and under what circumstances do you think it is best to raise children?

c. Do you have any goals regarding children, family life, or marriage at this point in your life? If not, when, if ever, do you think you will want to have a family of your own? (If marriage is not a goal, why not?)

d. By your own standards, at what point and under what circumstances should a relationship become sexual?

21. (a) Thinking back on your life so far, what is the most dangerous or risky situation you have ever been in? What happened? (b) Can you think of any other real dangers you have encountered or risked? What are they?

22. (Skip this question if it has already been answered, directly or indirectly.) Looking ahead now, what do you expect to be doing in the coming year (or during the first year after you are released from the institution)? Do you expect your life in the coming year to be different in any way from what you have described about your life so far? How so?

23. The purpose of this study is to learn more about why boys more commonly do crimes or get arrested and locked up for crimes. Based on your own experiences in life, what is your answer to this question?