**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

**Background**

Previous studies performed over a span of 15 years on gang membership had explained the phenomena through two theoretical models, the selection theory and the socialization theory. The selection theory establishes that youths join gangs because birds of the same feather flock together. Wherein, youths with inclinations for antisocial behavior would naturally gravitate to other youths with similar attributes and band together to form gangs. (Staub, 1996). On the other side of the spectrum, socialization theory relies on the process of enculturation or socialization of the youth to antisocial behavior.

**Theoretical Context**

For the effects of this study, the contention is that not all youths who join gangs are antisocial to begin with, but had been socialized into behaving antisocially (Winfree, Backstrom, Mays, 1994). At the same time, both selection and socialization theories further interact to explain gang membership and antisocial behavior in the sense that selection theory may explain gang admission, while socialization theory explains why and how gangs exhibit antisocial behavior.

Both the selection and socialization theories will be examined within this study.

It is hypothesized that the typical gang member will be male, between the ages of 12 - 16, youngest or only child, belonging to a well-defined race profile, with problematic academic records or on the verge of expulsion, and with strong interests in firearms, cars, and women.

It is also hypothesized that gang members are recruited from inside their own neighborhoods, and that juvenile gangs follow initiation rites to test new members' willingness to join the gang. Moreover, it is also hypothesized that socio-economic factors, lack of interpersonal skills, dysfunctional family backgrounds, as well as poor academic performance would predispose youths to join gangs. Lastly, is it hypothesized that psychological factors and socio-economic factors lead the youth to join gangs.

**Definition of terms**

**Gang:** (Romero, 1994) Any affiliation of five or more individuals of a clearly defined profile and social status with activities directed towards causing social instability and protest, with inclinations to criminal activity and disregard for authority figures or correctional consequences of their actions. At times identified by the use of a well-defined attire or colors, as well as the use of names or symbols to distinguish them from other similar groups.

**Youth:** (Romero, 1994) Male or female individuals ranging from ages 12 to 19.