

FACULTY OF LAW
DEANS OFFICE
TIENSESTRAAT 41
3000 LEUVEN
Academic year 2013 - 2014



Mareros and pandilleros in Honduras: the reintegration of youth gang members

Promoter: Prof. S. PARMENTIER
Co-promoter: dr. B. VAN WIJNENDAELE

Dissertation, presented by ELLEN VAN DAMME, for the final examination of the degree of MASTER OF CRIMINOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Abstract

The focus of this dissertation is on the reintegration of youth gang members in Honduras. The aim of this qualitative research is to broaden the knowledge of reintegration processes and programs in one specific country in Central America, namely, Honduras. A sample of fourteen interviews with stakeholders in the field of *maras* and *pandillas* is being investigated and the results revealed some similarities between the different methods of reintegration. Our data suggest that a comprehensive process, including the family, school, community, and governmental support via social politics is necessary to give the youngster a platform where he can reintegrate himself into society, and refrain from committing any criminal behavior. However, most respondents agreed upon the fact that leaving a gang is very difficult and includes high risks, the most infringing being assassination. Most stakeholders call for more investment in prevention at an early stage, i.e. before a youngster gets related to a gang.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation is made possible with the help of many people, which I would like to thank. First of all I want to thank my promoter, Prof. dr. Stephan Parmentier and co-promoter, dr. Barbara Van Wijnendaele, for their guidance and enthusiasm throughout this dissertation. I would also like to express my gratitude towards the University Arbitration Committee on Risk Destinations, which approved my research application. Furthermore, I would like to thank all respondents I interviewed in Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Guatemala. I am very grateful for their cooperation and friendliness. A special thanks to IUDPAS in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. The University institute facilitated me during most of my interviews in Honduras. I want to thank Dir. Migdonia Ayestas for welcoming me at IUDPAS and Ronny Barahona for facilitating the contacts with key figure respondents in Honduras. Finally, I would like to thank the family Macedo Hernandez who hosted me during my time in Tegucigalpa. I am very grateful for their hospitality and care.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	I
List of abbreviations	IV
List of annexes	VI
1. Introduction	1
2. Literature review	3
2.1 <i>Maras and Pandillas in Central America</i>	3
2.1.1 <i>The rise of maras and pandillas in Central America</i>	4
2.1.2 <i>The phenomenon of gangs in Central America</i>	5
2.2 <i>The situation in Honduras</i>	11
2.2.1 <i>The political situation in Honduras</i>	12
2.2.2 <i>The socio-economic situation in Honduras</i>	16
2.3 <i>Criminological theories of gangs</i>	17
2.3.1 <i>Socio-ecological theories</i>	17
2.3.2 <i>Anomie theories</i>	18
2.3.3 <i>Social process theories</i>	20
2.3.4 <i>Theories on risk factors</i>	23
2.4 <i>Rehabilitation – reintegration</i>	25
2.4.1 <i>Definitions</i>	25
2.4.2 <i>Criminological theories of rehabilitation/reintegration</i>	26
2.4.3 <i>Rehabilitation/reintegration in Honduras</i>	32
2.4.4 <i>Good and bad practices of rehabilitation/reintegration interventions</i>	36
3. Methodology	38
3.1 <i>Definition of the central problem</i>	38
3.1.1 <i>Research topic and objectives</i>	38
3.1.2 <i>Description of the research questions</i>	38
3.2 <i>Conceptual framework</i>	39
3.3 <i>Research design</i>	41

3.3.1 <i>Research method</i>	41
3.3.2 <i>Sampling process</i>	42
3.3.3 <i>Data collection</i>	43
3.3.4 <i>Data analysis</i>	44
3.3.5 <i>Quality of research</i>	45
4. Interview results	46
4.1 <i>Gang involvement</i>	47
4.2 <i>Leaving the gang</i>	51
4.2.1 <i>(Personal) reasons to leave the gang</i>	51
4.2.2 <i>Ways of leaving the gang</i>	54
4.2.3 <i>Difficulties of leaving the gang</i>	57
4.3 <i>Reintegration into society</i>	60
4.3.1 <i>Community based</i>	60
4.3.3 <i>Psychological treatment</i>	65
4.3.4 <i>Medical treatment</i>	67
4.3.5 <i>Vocational training and employment</i>	68
5. Discussion	70
5.1 <i>Discussion of results</i>	70
5.2 <i>Limitations of research and recommendations for further investigation</i>	76
6. Conclusion	78
Bibliography	80
Annexes	88
Annex 1: Principles of effective prevention and correctional treatment through direct service (Andrews, 1995)	88
Annex 2: Cuestionario de entrevista (original version topic list)	89
Annex 3: Topic list (English version).....	90
Annex 4: Coding tree	91
Annex 5: List of respondents	93
Annex 6: Completed conceptual framework	95

List of abbreviations

ADE	<i>Aide à la Décision Economique Belgium</i> (Analysis for Economic Decisions)
AJH-USAID	<i>Alianza Joven Honduras</i> (Youth Alliance Honduras) – United States Agency for International Development
AP	<i>Alianza Patriótica Hondureña</i> (Honduran Patriotic Alliance)
B18	<i>Barrio 18</i>
CAP	Chicago Area Project
COFADEH	<i>Comité de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos en Honduras</i> (Committee of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras)
COIPRODEN	<i>Coordinación de Instituciones Privadas por las Niñas, Niños, Adolescentes, Jóvenes y sus Derechos</i> (Coordination of Private Institutions for Girls, Boys, Adolescents, Youngsters and their Rights)
CPTRT	<i>Centro de Prevención Tratamiento y Rehabilitación de Víctimas de la Tortura y sus familiares</i> (Center for Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture and their Families)
DC	<i>Partido Demócrata Cristiano de Honduras</i> (Christian Democratic Party of Honduras)
FAPER	<i>Frente Amplio Político en Resistencia</i> (Broad Front in Political Resistance)
FUNDASALVA	<i>Fundación Antidrogas de El Salvador</i> (Antidrug Foundation of El Salvador)
G.R.E.A.T.	Gang Resistance Education and Training
IHNFA	<i>Instituto Hondureño de la Niñez y la Familia</i> (Honduran Institute for Family and Children)
ILANUD	<i>Instituto Latinoamericano de las Naciones Unidas para la Prevención del Delito y el Tratamiento del Delincuente</i> (United Nations Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders)
IUDPAS	<i>Instituto Universitario en Democracia, Paz y Seguridad</i> (University Institute on Democracy, Peace and Security)
JHA-JA	<i>Asociación Jóvenes Hondureños-Juntos Avancemos</i> (Honduran Youth Association-Together Moving Forward)

LIBRE	<i>Partido Libertad y Refundación</i> (Liberty and Refoundation)
M18	<i>Mara 18</i>
MS13	<i>Mara Salvatrucha 13</i>
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OAS	Organization of American States
PAC	<i>Partido Anti Corrupción</i> (Anti-Corruption Party)
PINU	<i>Partido Innovación y Unidad</i> (Innovation and Unity Party)
PL	<i>Partido Liberal de Honduras</i> (Liberal Party of Honduras)
PN	<i>Partido Nacional de Honduras</i> (National Party of Honduras)
PNPRRS	<i>Programa Nacional de Prevención Rehabilitación y Reinserción Social</i> (National Program for Prevention Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration)
PRB	Population Reference Bureau
UD	<i>Unificación Democrática</i> (Democratic Unification)
UNAH	<i>Universidad Naiconal Autónoma de Honduras</i> (National Autonomous University of Hondura)
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

List of annexes

Annex 1: Principles of effective prevention and correctional treatment through direct service (Andrews, 1995)

Annex 2: *Cuestionario de entrevista* (original version topic list)

Annex 3: Topic list (English version)

Annex 4: Coding tree

Annex 5: List of respondents

Annex 6: Completed conceptual framework

1. Introduction

Honduras and its neighboring countries El Salvador and Guatemala are highly affected by the violence of gangs and drug traffickers. With 90.4 murders per 100.000 citizens, Honduras has the highest homicide rate of the world. Gang related homicides have even increased the past years and Honduras currently accounts for most gang related murders (30 per 100.000 citizens).¹ In Honduras' neighboring country, El Salvador, the two rivaling gangs *Mara Salvatrucha 13* and *Barrio 18* agreed upon a truce, which caused an immediate decrease of homicides and other gang related violence. A similar truce was implemented in Honduras, but it did not result in a lower homicide rate (UNODC, 2013). Though according to Salvadoran citizens, the alleged truce has barely, if at all, reduced the delinquency rate in El Salvador (IUDOP, 2012).

In a country where 20% of the youngsters are not studying and are likely to get involved in a gang (Floresi, Mejía, Mejía, SJ & Serrano, 2004), not very many financial efforts have been made to protect these vulnerable youngsters. Nearly 200 million dollar (4137.1 million Honduran Lempira) or 4.6% of the central administration expenses of Honduras, goes to security (i.e. the police forces), whereas only 308 thousand (6.4 million Lempira) or less than 0.01% of the central administration expenses is spent on the national program of prevention, rehabilitation and social reintegration (Secretaría de Finanzas, 2013).

Many studies have already been done on the origin, creation and activities of youth gangs as such, but not as many on the reintegration processes of youth gang members (Wood & Alleyne, 2010). Therefore the goal of this research is to focus mainly on the reintegration of youth gang members, by investigating which intervention methods are effective in helping gang members to reintegrate into society. In order to understand these processes of reintegration, attention will also go to the context of gang membership, i.e. reasons for youngsters to join a gang.

The main research question is: 'How can the reintegration of young gang members into society best be facilitated?' In order to respond this research question, following sub questions will be investigated:

1. For what reasons can young gang members leave the gang?

¹ Exact numbers of gang related crime are not available, as national crime statistics make no distinction between homicides committed by gang members or non-gang members (UNAH-IUDPAS, 2013).

2. which intervention methods can facilitate young gang members in their process of leaving the gang and reintegrate in society?

Qualitative methods are used to gather research data. In accordance with the guidelines of KU Leuven and for the safety of the researcher, gang member and local informant, gang members or ex-gang members as such are not interviewed. Rather, data are gathered by interviewing Honduran social workers who work with (ex-) gang members in a reintegration program or academics whom have studied the reintegration processes of youth gang members. The goal of this investigation is to find out which programs, focusing on the reintegration of (ex-) gang members, are available in Honduras, which intervention methods are used and which of these methods are effective when taking into account the specific setting of the intervention.

The content of this dissertation is divided into five sections: the literature review, the methodology section, the results, discussion, and conclusion.

The first section is the literature review, which is also subdivided into four parts. Firstly, in order to have a better view on the broader problem of gangs in the region of Central America, we will discuss the rise of youth gangs (*maras* and *pandillas*) in Central America, along with their specific characteristics. Secondly, we will elucidate the political and socio-economic situation in Honduras, which can be seen as a fertile ground for the formation of youth gangs across the country. Thirdly, we will outline criminological theories on gangs, in order to have a background to which the situation in Central America and Honduras can be related. This part is followed by a discussion on theories of rehabilitation and reintegration of young gang members. This last part will also focus on the specific situation in Honduras.

The second section is the methodology section, which is also subdivided into three parts. The first part defines the central problem and the main research questions. The second part contains the conceptual framework which is applied for the analysis of the data. The third part will highlight which research design is used; discussing the methods, sample, data collection and analysis, and the quality of the research.

The third section contains the main results from the data analysis. In the fourth section these results are compared to the findings of the literature review and open up the discussion between the literature and the field research. The last section contains a conclusion of the thesis, where final remarks and suggestions for further research are made.

2. Literature review

The literature review contains four main sections. The first section gives a general introduction of the phenomenon of *maras* and *pandillas* in Central America. The second section elucidates the political and socio-economic situation in Honduras. The third section gives an overview of the existing criminological theories of gangs. The fourth section focuses on theories of rehabilitation and reintegration of gang members.

The literature review starts from the perspective of local sources, in order to represent the perception of Central American investigators in the field of *maras* and *pandillas*. These perspectives are subsequently compared to other international studies and findings.

2.1 *Maras and Pandillas in Central America*

Maras and *pandillas* are present in all Central American countries, but most of all in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. There is no official definition of gangs upon which criminologists have agreed (Katz, 2004).² With the concepts *maras* and *pandillas* we refer to juvenile gangs in Central America. Though there is some disagreement regarding the meaning and difference between the terms *mara* and *pandilla*. According to Aplíciano Cubero (2012), the concepts of *mara* and *pandilla* are merely synonyms and thus refer to the same phenomenon.³ But according to Cruz (2010) and Rodgers, Muggah and Stevenson (2009), there certainly is a difference between *maras* and *pandillas*.⁴ In this dissertation we refer to *maras* and *pandillas* as synonyms for juvenile gangs.

² According to Eurogang “a street gang (or troublesome youth group corresponding to a street gang elsewhere) is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity” (Weerman, Maxson, Esbensen, Aldridge, Medina & van Gemert, 2009, p. 20).

³ Aplíciano Cubero (2012) states that the word *mara* is derived from “*marabunta*”, an African ant that attacks in group. The concept *pandilla* would refer to a group of people who have a close relation and share the same philosophy. As friends, they take action in group, which contains for example going out to party, but also committing crimes and even murder.

⁴ Rodgers, Muggah and Stevenson (2009, p. 6) state that *maras* “are a phenomenon with transnational roots” and can be found in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. This is closely related to Cruz’s definition of *maras*. In his opinion *maras* are “a vast network of groups of people associated with the identity franchises of two street gangs that had their origins in the city of Los Angeles in the United States, but whose development no longer depends upon the American dynamics: the *Mara Salvatrucha Thirteen (MS-13)* and the *Eighteenth Street Gang (also known as Barrio 18)*”. *MS13* emerged from a division of *Barrio 18* (Cruz, 2010, p. 382, 384). *Pandillas*, on the other hand, “are more localized, home-grown gangs that are the direct inheritors of the youth gangs that have been a historic feature of Central American societies. *Pandillas* were initially present throughout the region in the post-conflict period but are now only significantly visible in Nicaragua – and to a lesser extent in Costa Rica (where they are often called ‘chapulines’)” (Rodgers, Muggah & Stevenson, 2009, p. 6).

In this section we discuss the rise of *maras* and *pandillas* in Central America, along with their characteristics.

2.1.1 The rise of *maras* and *pandillas* in Central America

There is some disagreement regarding the origins of Central American *maras* and *pandillas*. Some say they migrated from the United States, others say they have always been present in Central America. In this section, both visions will be discussed.

Dr. José Miguel Cruz (2010) states that *maras* exist due to local conditions as well as transnational processes. With local conditions, Cruz points out the processes of marginalization and law enforcement strategies. With transnational processes, he means the migration flows and the spreading of Southern California gang identities. Via these migration flows, there was an exchange of norms and values between US and Central American gangs. Reisman (2006) confirms the fact that the *Mara Salvatrucha* (13) and *Barrio 18* have their roots in Los Angeles.

Between the 1970s and 1980s a lot of Central American citizens fled due to civil war, violence, extreme poverty and discrimination in their country. Many of them ended up in Los Angeles, where they were confronted with poverty, marginality and a language they barely spoke. They had the feeling they needed to defend themselves against the already existing Mexican and African-American gangs. These living circumstances were a facilitating factor to enter the *Pandilla 18* or *Mara Salvatrucha*. Several year later, in the late 1990s, the US reformed their migration legislation, which made it possible to deport both legal and illegal non-US citizens – who violated the law of their country of residence – to their countries of origin, after they served their sentence in a US prison. This caused an increase of *maras* and *pandillas* in Central America from the year 2000 onwards. During this expulsion flow, there was no sufficient communication between the US and Central America, concerning the US's deportation strategy. Furthermore, the authorities of these Central American countries were not given any warning about the criminal background of the people who were sent back, and thus could not react in an appropriate manner. They did not have adequate resources to respond to this sudden growth of, mainly young, citizens (Aplíciano Cubero, 2012; PNPRRS, 2011; Reisman, 2006).

These processes had a lot of impact on the deported migrants and their 'new' environment. Many of the expelled youngsters have had contacts with the *Pandilla 18* and *Mara Salvatrucha*. Once

these youngsters arrived in their native country, barely speaking Spanish, they rapidly got involved in the Central American gangs. These gangs often provided the youngsters with the things they needed, which the state could not always offer. They also gave them the opportunity to be part of a group and develop their social identity (PNPRRS, 2011; Reisman, 2006). According to Aplíciano Cubero (2012) most of these youngsters had to live in poor urban areas, which was an ideal breeding ground to put in practice the experiences they learned from the gangs in Miami and Los Angeles. These recently migrated youngsters had several characteristics in common: being a Latino, no access to education, healthcare or public services; highly discriminated and with a sense of social belonging.

According to the National Program for Prevention Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration/PNPRRS (2011) the phenomenon of *maras* and *pandillas* is not completely caused by the deportation flow of migrants from the US. As early as the fifties and sixties, there were youngsters who came together as a group to defend ‘their’ territory. The main difference with contemporary gangs is that they were not using firearms. In the seventies, when more gangs emerged, the use of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs also started to be incorporated in the gang life. Back then, those groups already had their own system of rules and sanctions, and initiation rites. Gangs came and went, but they never caused major national problems.

Cruz (2010) agrees that there were already gangs in Central America, before the migration flow started in 1980, and the deportation of US immigrants to Central America in 1990. Notwithstanding the foregoing however, he says these migration flows did help to transfer the US gang culture and the solidarity to the gang. The *maras* in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras took over the habits, norms and values of the US gangs. However, the PNPRRS (2011) states there are still differences between the group dynamics of the Californian *Pandilla 18* and *Mara Salvatrucha*, who were much more violent than the former Honduran gangs. According to them the Californian gangs were characterized by violence, conflicts with the law and crime, detention sentences, hospitalizations and death. The gangs implemented strict rules and the punishment for leaving the gang was death.

2.1.2 The phenomenon of gangs in Central America

According to Reisman (2006) the presence of gangs in Central America has to do with several socio-economic reasons: “*armed conflicts, poverty, U.S. deportation policy, and a host of other*

explanatory factors” (Reisman, 2006, p. 150). Also, youngsters have limited access to education and job opportunities. A gang can provide often answers to the financial and other needs of these youngsters and give them a sense of belonging.

This section discusses the amount of gangs present in Honduras, their structural organization, activities and the reasons for youngsters to join a gang.

2.1.2.1 Structural organization of maras and pandillas

The two most common gangs in Honduras (*Pandilla 18* and *Mara Salvatrucha*) differ in their internal structure. According to Aplíciano Cubero (2012), the *Pandilla 18* is characterized by homogeneity and stability, which make it possible to create standardized rules, principles of organization and communication networks. The *Mara Salvatrucha* on the other hand, is characterized by diversity, independence and originality, which give the gang members the opportunity to distinguish them from the other subgroups or cliques.

According to several investigations (Aplíciano Cubero, 2012; PNPRRS, 2011; Proyecto Victoria, 2013), gangs are well structured and good organized groups, with a defined hierarchy, who form a brotherhood and respect the norms, rules and codes thereof. They perform by a certain code of conduct and their main goal is to maintain and dominate what they consider to be ‘their territory’. The *maras* and *pandillas* are organized according to the following hierarchy: every neighborhood (*barrio*) has his own clique (*clica*),⁵ which is led by chiefs and sub chiefs (*jefe* and *sub jefes*). Additionally, there are the members of the gang (*hommies* or *homeboys*),⁶ who are responsible for the implementation of the commands of the chiefs as well as a coordinator (*coordinador*), who is in charge of the facilitation of the relations between the other members and responsible for the supervision on the fulfillment of the rules inside the group. This hierarchy refers to a form of a closed organization, whereby there is little or no transparency toward the community. In order not to be identified, cliques perform their activities (e.g. drug and arm trafficking, assassinations, etc.) in neighborhoods other than where their own clique is located. The structure of the gang becomes explicit in their authority. *Maras* and *pandillas* operate via two forms of authority: individually and in group. The individual authority can be observed in

⁵ *Barrios* are slums or “socially disadvantaged neighborhoods”, where most of the *maras* flourish (Cruz, 2010, p.394).

⁶ *Hommie* comes from the English Word ‘homeboy’. It is used when referring to male gang members (Interpeace, 2013).

the clique, where the leader (*líder* or *cabecilla*) is in charge. Since a lot of gang leaders are locked up in prison, tasks are often delegated from prison, because the leaders are still in power and the members need to obey with their leaders' commands. The group authority consists of the *meetings*, where the leaders of the cliques take important decisions. The fulfillment of these decisions are mandatory, those who do not comply will be punished. A very severe breach of the rules such as, for example, betrayal can even be punished with death (Aplícano Cubero, 2012; PNPRRS, 2011).

Before a youngster is accepted in a gang, he needs to go through a social process of indoctrination and adaption of the behavior of the group. It can take some years before the youngster can obtain a certain level in the gang. The amount of participation one gets in a group depends on the amount of trust he has earned.

The report of the PNPRRS (2011) outlines the hierarchical structure of gangs. This structure is confirmed by other research (Proyecto Victoria, 2013). The structure of *maras* and *pandillas* consists of different hierarchical levels and a member need to go through the different stages before he can reach the top. Five levels of participation can be distinguished: the sympathizer (*el Simpatizante*), the aspirant (*el Aspirante*), the rookie (*el Novato*), the permanent gang member (*el Pandillero Permanente*) and the leader (*el Líder* or *Cabecilla*). *Simpatizantes* are youngsters, aged 10-16 years old, who live in the neighborhood where a certain gang is active and they admire these gang members for their power and way of living. *Simpatizantes* do not form part of the gang. Still on a low level, but closer to the gang, is the function of *el Aspirante*. *El Aspirante* is part of the gang, but does not participate in the local or national meetings. *Aspirantes* are mainly being used as *bandera*, which means that they have to guard the borders of their neighborhood and report to the gang who enters and leaves 'the gang's territory'. Their commitment to the group (and possibility to go to the next level) will be evaluated over a period of one to three years. When the *Aspirante* goes through the initiation process (*el bautizo*),⁷ he becomes *el Novato*. This means he forms part of the gang and there is no way back, but he still needs to earn the confidence of the group. The main activity of *el Novato* is collecting the *impuesto de guerra*. *El Novato* has one year to adapt himself to the lifestyle and rules of his new

⁷ The initiation process contains being beaten up for 13 (*MS13*) or 18 (*M18*) seconds. Women who want to enter the gang can chose between a 13 or 18 seconds of beating (*la paliza*) or 13 or 18 seconds having sex with several gang members (Interpeace, 2013; IUDOP, 2010).

family. As a *Novato* you can still have contact with your family, but once you are a *Pandillero Permanente*, you have to cut all family ties, because you are living with a new family now. *Pandilleros Permanentes* have to do more important (and also more dangerous) tasks. They are also willing to die for their fellow gang members. Finally, the *Líder* or *Cabecilla* is the one who is at the top of the gang. A gang member can get to this level by committing cruelties and being feared and respected by the other members.

2.1.2.2 Gangs in numbers

This section gives an overview of the total estimated amount of gang members in Honduras. It also discusses the average age to join a gang and the distribution of men and women within a gang.

Numbers of gang members differ across research, depending on statistical research implemented by governmental or non-governmental organizations. The PNPRRS, for example, applies a very low estimate of the amount of gang members in Honduras. According to them 4281 *maras* are out on the streets and 447 gang members are incarcerated. They state that the *Mara Salvatrucha* and *Pandilla 18* take 97% of all Honduran gang members for their account. More specifically, 49% belong to the *Mara Salvatrucha* and 48% belong to the *Pandilla 18*. Most of the gang members are located in San Pedro Sula (63-60%) and in Tegucigalpa (19-22%). Though PNPRRS admits these numbers are far from complete due to a lack of other investigations (PNPRRS, 2011). The statistics of the PNPRRS do not include the number of youngsters who sympathize with a gang (*simpatizantes*). Rubio (2002) states there are at least 30.000 *simpatizantes* in Honduras. According to UNODC (2012), 12.000 gang members (7000 of the MS13 and 5000 of the B18) are active in Honduras. USAID (2012) estimates that 35.000 gang members are located in Honduras.

Most research determines the common age to join a gang is between 12 and 25 years old. According to Merino's (2004) research, the average age to join a gang is between 13 and 16 years old. The PNPRRS (2011), on the other hand, claims that 77% of the youngsters enter a gang before the age of 15. Though, almost all gang members (97.8%) are in between 12 and 25

years old.⁸ Equally so, Eurogang focuses on youth between the age of 12 and 25 years old, in their Youth Survey on gang membership (Weerman, Maxson, Esbensen, Aldridge, Medina & van Gemert, 2009). In order to include a broad range of gang members, and taking into account the above measurements, we will maintain the age of 12 till 25 years old as indicator of this research.

According to Proyecto Victoria (2013) it is easier to work with young gang members or youngsters who have not been baptized yet. *Aspirantes* and *simpatizantes* have a 75% chance to leave the gang. After going through the initiation ritual, *novatos* only have a 50% chance to leave the gang, permanent members no more than 25% and leaders have almost no chance (5%) to leave the gang.

Research indicates men as well as women are active within a gang (Proyecto Victoria, 2013). According to the PNPRRS (2011) most gang members are male (80%), only a smaller part of the gang consists of females (20%). The role of female gang members differs in some aspects from that of male gang members. Female members are often violated via sexual abuse within the gang, but they are also violators towards others. For example, female gang members are often given the task to collect the ‘war tax’ or *impuesto de Guerra* (IUDOP, 2010).⁹

2.1.2.3 Gang activities

According to Merino (2004), the gang as such is not bad, but they often commit violent crimes. Fortunately, not every youngster who is part of a gang commits these crimes, which can be an important aspect regarding their rehabilitation process.

The mutual fights between the different gangs are often to protect their territory (Merino, 2004). This implies that gang violence is limited to the area where the gang operates, i.e. the area which the gang arrogates. According to Cruz (2010), violence that extends beyond the boundaries of the barrio would be futile, because the violence is mainly used to protect the borders of the barrio.

The so-called ‘war taxes’ (*impuestos de guerra*) or ‘protection taxes’ are raised from small businesses, transportation units and even from people, in order to be able to fund the *maras*

⁸ Ley para la prevención, rehabilitación y reinserción social de personas integrantes de *maras* o *pandillas*, Exposición de Motivos, p. 3.

⁹ According to InSight Crime “*criminal organizations reportedly “tax” businesses according to how much profit they make. A small shop or market stall must pay around \$7.50 a week, larger ones \$10, and shop owners \$15*” (Wells, 2013).

expenses (Cruz, 2010). Interpeace (2013) states that mainly female gang members are used to collect the taxes, as they look more innocent than male *pandilleros* and thus raise less suspicion among bystanders. According to Cruz (2010), (international) drug dealing was not the main purpose of Central American *maras* and *pandillas*, but due to the *Mano Dura* pursuing of gangs, the *maras* felt the need to unite with drug cartels.

2.1.2.4 Reasons to join a gang

Several factors are related to the ingression of youngsters in juvenile gangs: armed conflicts and violence whereby youngsters have the feeling they need to be protected, weak family ties and domestic violence, poverty, and the exclusion from good formal education and the legal job market (Santacruz Giralt, Concha-Eastman & Homies Unidos, 2001). According to the research of Interpeace (2013), boys and girls share the same reasons to join a gang, though for girls sexual violence can also be a factor to seek for refuge within a gang.

According to Merino (2004) and confirmed by the research of Santacruz Giralt, Concha-Eastman and *Homies Unidos* (2001), youngsters get involved in a gang, because they consider the gang as a place where they can belong, because people understand how they feel and what they think. There is much solidarity between the members. If you are hungry or you don't have a place to stay, the other members will take care of you. "*Uno para todos y todos para uno*" (Merino, 2004, p.128-129). According to Aplíciano Cubero (2012), this feeling of solidarity and belonging to a group is attractive, because human beings are species who are used to live in groups. However, not all youngsters are seeking this sense of belonging in school or in a sports club, but rather in a gang. Because they can't fight justice in court, they go for street justice. As well as every youngster, they want to be wealthy, but instead of trying to achieve this by getting an education or a job, they rather take it from those who are already rich. This process is mainly enhanced by the consumption society in which these youngsters live,¹⁰ the weak educational system and the corruption in the distribution of public funds.

As indicated above, people are social human beings, who like to get together as a group. This is the same reason why youngsters get involved with *maras* and *pandillas*. *Maras* and *pandillas* can be identified as a group by: the feeling of brotherhood, respect for the group norms, and

¹⁰ For more information on the relation between crime and consumerism, read Keith Hayward's *City Limits: Crime, Consumer Culture and the Urban Experience*.

being moved by the same goals (e.g. defense of the territory). Other group characteristics are: creating personal relationships, sharing the same sympathies and antipathies towards other people or groups, loyalty and solidarity, which also refers to the feeling of responsibility and defense of the group. Children and youngsters admire *maras* and *pandillas* for several reasons: their social status, the maintenance in livelihood, a place to find refuge and shelter, access to food on a daily basis, the feeling of being proud, finding satisfaction and being accepted (PNPRRS, 2011).

According to Cruz (2010), the reasons to join a gang and the gang activities have changed over the years. In the 1980s and 1990s, youngsters who were in search for their identity, found a sense of belonging in a gang. At the beginning of the 21st century, *mareros* could find solidarity, respect and support in a gang, but more important to note is the increase of instrumental violence with a more economic purpose. In 2005 MS13 and B18 became actual criminal organizations, which main purpose was to preserve control on the criminal economy. In 2006, the gangs had completely developed their extortion practices. There is also a remarkable shift in the victim groups which suffer from the gang related crimes. In the 1990s the victims of gang violence were mainly opponent gang members. Nowadays the *maras* use violence towards everyone who is not willing to cooperate with their extortion practices.

The previous section describes the context of gang members in Central America in general; their structural organization, characteristics and reasons of existence. The next section focuses on the specific situation of *maras* and *pandillas* in Honduras.

2.2 The situation in Honduras

As discussed in the previous section, gangs were able to flourish in Central America due to several socio-economic factors, but also due to the political situation. According to Reisman (2006) and Rodgers, Muggah and Stevenson (2009), Central American countries share the same culture of machismo. There is a lot of social inequality and poverty. These countries suffered from regional, national and international wars, followed by relocation to other countries to solely being deported to their home countries again. There are a lot of weapons available and people cannot rely upon their state. Also, youngsters have limited access to education and job opportunities and a gang can often answer to the financial and other needs of these youngsters

and give them a sense of belonging to their group. The following section discusses the political and socio-economic situation in Honduras.

2.2.1 The political situation in Honduras

In this subsection we discuss the history of politics in Honduras, along with their legislation and gang prevention or intervention measurements, and the subsequent processes of stigmatization.

2.2.1.1 Honduran politics

Honduras was ‘discovered’ by Christopher Columbus in 1502 and colonized by Spain from 1522 until 1821. Since their independence on September 15th 1821, Honduras has suffered almost 300 internal rebellions, civil wars and governments’ changes. More than half of it took place in the 20th century (UNDP, n.d.).

Honduras was led by the military from 1963 until 1981, during which the Football War with El Salvador took place.¹¹ Since 1981, Honduras is in a transition from the military regime towards the establishment of a democratic regime (ADE, 2011). In 1981 a new law for general elections (*Ley Electoral y de las Organizaciones Políticas*) was passed, along with a new Constitution. During the 1980s and 1990s the military was reformed and submitted to the democratic elective power of the people. Since 1981 general elections for the presidency were held every four years and for more than 30 years the Liberal and alternately the National Party rules the country (Cruz & Macías, 2004). After almost three decades of uninterrupted democratic elections, a coup d’état in 2009 reminds the country of its fragile democracy. Though Manuel Zelaya, the former president until 2009, belonged to the Liberal Party, he implemented a different way of governing, which was frowned upon by the elite of the country. Zelaya was more concerned with the poor and marginalized people of the country, instead of favoring the wealthier strata in the country. For example, Zelaya lowered the fuel prices (which was in favor for the consumer, but not for the transnational companies) and raised the minimum wage. The Honduran elite saw their interests shrinking and subsequently implemented a coup against their President, which brought

¹¹ In July 1969, during the pre-elections of the 1970 FIFA World Cup, the military of El Salvador attacked Honduras on July 14th, for 100 hours. This war was not caused by the FIFA elections as such, but by a long lasting dispute of territory and migration. The population of El Salvador was growing and many Salvadorians, who were living on Honduran territory, were forced to return to their country of origin. The latter was an impulse for El Salvador to attack Honduras. The OAS mediated a ceasefire, which was implemented on July 20th (Posada & López, 1993).

Roberto Micheletti to Presidency, until Porfirio ‘Pepe’ Lobo Sosa (National Party) was elected in January 2010 (Cálix, 2010).¹²

Currently, there are nine political parties in Honduras (from left to right): FAPER (*Frente Amplio Político en Resistencia*), LIBRE (*Partido Libertad y Refundación*), UD (*Unificación Democrática*), PINU (*Partido Innovación y Unidad*), DC (*Partido Demócrata Cristiano de Honduras*), PAC (*Partido Anti Corrupción*), PL (*Partido Liberal de Honduras*), AP (*Alianza Patriótica Hondureña*) and PN (*Partido Nacional de Honduras*). In the 2013 elections, the UD and FAPER formed a coalition (<http://www.honduras.com/honduras-elections-2013-the-campaign-officially-begins/>). On Sunday the 24th of November Honduras elected their new President, Juan Orlando Hernández, of the National Party (J., 2013).

2.2.1.2 Honduran legislation and gang prevention or intervention measurements

As mentioned in the previous part, Honduras is alternately governed by the Liberal and National Party. The different administrations reflect a different way of dealing with the phenomenon of *maras* and *pandillas*.

From 1998 until 2002, Honduras was governed by President Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé. Carlos Flores (Liberal Party) was aware of the fact that repressive measurements are not effective in tackling the violence and crime generated by *maras* and *pandillas*. According to Flores, the problem needed to be handled by focusing on the underlying causes; this is why he implemented the Law for the prevention, rehabilitation and social reintegration of members from *maras* and *pandillas* (*Ley para la prevención, rehabilitación y reinserción social de personas integrantes de maras o pandillas*).¹³ This law also provided the country with the legal foundation of the National Program for Prevention Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration (*Programa Nacional de Prevención, Rehabilitación y Reinserción Social*, PNPRRS), which aims to prevent, rehabilitate and reintegrate members from *maras* and *pandillas*.¹⁴

¹² On June 28th 2009, President Manuel ‘Mel’ Zelaya Rosales was arrested by the military, under an arrest warrant of the Honduran Supreme Court of Justice, and expelled from the country. Most of the countries around the world condemned this coup d’état and didn’t acknowledge the President ad interim, Roberto Micheletti (also from the Liberal Party). This affected the country, because a lot of international organizations suspended their loans and aid programs for Honduras (Llanos & Marsteintredet, 2010).

¹³ *Ley Octubre 31 2001 para la prevención, rehabilitación y reinserción social de personas integrantes de maras o pandillas, Exposición de Motivos*, p. 2, <http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Security/citizenssecurity/honduras/leyes/8.pdf>

¹⁴ Art. 2, *Ley Octubre 31 2001 para la prevención, rehabilitación y reinserción social de personas integrantes de maras o pandillas*.

From 2002 until 2006, President Ricardo Rodolfo Maduro Joest (National Party) governed the republic. Maduro implemented a harsher strategy towards the *maras* and *pandillas* in his country, which was known as a ‘Zero Tolerance’ (*Cero Tolerancia*) policy. In 2003 he changed the article 332 of the Criminal Code of Honduras,¹⁵ making it possible for the police to arrest and detain people who they suspected to form part of a gang (Carranza, 2006). The reformation of article 332 of the Criminal Code was soon referred to as the law *Mano Dura* (‘Hard Hand’) or Anti-gang law (*Ley Antimaras*).

According to Aplíciano Cubero (2012) and Samayoa (2011), the implementation of the *Mano Dura* law was the start of a severe ‘war against crime’. They argue that instead of reducing the crime rates, Maduro fostered processes of stigmatization by focusing on youngsters from marginalized and poor neighborhoods, who were suspected to form part of a gang due to their looks and language. According to Reisman (2006), the failure of Maduro’s Zero Tolerance campaign caused the loss of the National Party during the elections in 2006. President Manuel Zelaya (Liberal Party) won the 2006 elections and, just like Carlos Flores, he implemented a less repressive, but more balanced approach in dealing with the problem of youth gangs.

Porfirio ‘Pepe’ Lobo Sosa (National Party) was elected in 2010. In 2012 he implemented the ‘Honduras for life’ (*Honduras por la vida*) project, which aimed at reducing the violence and murders in Honduras, by focusing on social inequalities, injustice and the lack of solidarity between citizens. Porfirio Lobo also declared he wanted to tackle the corruption in the country (*El Herald*, 2012). In 2013 Porfirio Lobo praised the efforts of Bishop Rómulo Emiliani and OAS ambassador Adam Blackwell, regarding the so-called truce between the *Mara Salvatrucha* and *Calle 18*. Lobo stated that the government would assist in this process, but that it is not a permanent solution to reduce the culture of violence in Honduras (Centinela Económico, 2013).

The current president, Juan Orlando Hernández, which was elected in November 2013, focuses on the strengthening of investigation methods and installed more supervision cameras. He also focuses on the insecurity of public transport, by targeting at the elimination of the ‘war taxes’ (*impuestos de guerra*), which are raised by the gangs. In line with Lobo’s ‘Honduras for life’ project, Juan Orlanda implemented in January 2014 the ‘Everyone for a Better Life Plan’ program (*Plan de Todos para una Vida Mejor*), which includes the ‘Better Living with Chambas’ (*Con Chambas Vivís Mejor*). The ‘Better Living with Chambas’ program aims to

¹⁵ Art. 332, *Código Penal de Honduras*, http://www.oas.org/dil/esp/Codigo_Penal_Honduras.pdf

generate 800.000 jobs, equally so for those youngsters who are unemployed, in order to give them a better prospect for the future, and at the same time reduce delinquency in the country (*Gobierno de la República de Honduras*, 2014).

Despite these good intentions, Durán Chavarría (2012) states there is a general lack of preventive measurements in dealing with juvenile delinquency and he emphasizes the importance of preventive projects to prevent children and youngsters from committing a crime and enrolling into the juvenile justice system.

2.2.1.3 Processes of stigmatization

As mentioned in the previous part, the *Mano Dura* law fostered processes of stigmatization of youngsters living in deprived areas. Aplíciano Cubero (2012) argues that due to the Anti-gang Law a lot of youngsters have been (and still are) highly discriminated. Youngsters could be labeled as a gang member for trivial reasons: their physical appearance and way of clothing; the use of graffiti, symbols and body language; and being tattooed. The focus on these elements created a severe repression by the police, which affected (alleged) gang members as well as other (innocent) children and youngsters. According to Aplíciano Cubero (2012) this is the reason why gang members stopped tattooing themselves. They do not want to be identified as a *marero* or *pandillero* and prefer to operate more in secrecy.

Extrajudicial executions are a consequence of these processes of stigmatization. According to Samayoa (2011), extrajudicial executions are not a new phenomenon in Honduras. During the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, when the country was still in the transition from a military towards a democratic regime (ADE, 2011), public security forces (*Fuerza de Seguridad Pública*) committed human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions. The national forces were preoccupied with organized crime and street violence, whereby they targeted youngsters who were often been accused for allegedly belonging to a gang. As from the 1990s onwards and with the creation of the *Mano Dura* law, the police put into operation the war against crime. As already mentioned, due to the reformation of article 332 of the Criminal Code of Honduras, many youngsters who were accused of forming part of a gang, just because of their looks, were extrajudicially been arrested, detained and sometimes even executed. Also civilian militias, who took the power in their hands, were found guilty of extrajudicial executions of young so-called gang members.

2.2.2 The socio-economic situation in Honduras

With more or less 8.4 million people, Honduras is a small republic (112.492 km²) in Central America, with El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua as neighboring countries. The country has a population growth rate of 2.03% (in 2012). More than half (66.5%) of the Honduran households are living in poverty, of which more than 40% live in extreme poverty, and 54.1% of the people are underemployed (UNDP, n.d.). In 2011, 36% of the Honduran population had to live with less than \$2 a day (PRB, n.d.) and the country's Gross National Income (GNI), based on the Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), was \$3.820 in 2012 (The World Bank, n.d.).

Honduras consists of a young population. Almost 50% of the Honduran population has not even reached the age of 20 years. According to the PNPRRS (2011), 14.3% of these minors are involved in child labor and 25.4%, or 700 000 Honduran adolescents, remain without any form of formal education.¹⁶ According to Aplíciano Cubero (2012), this makes them vulnerable for alternative lifestyles, like joining a *mara* or *pandilla*. Moreover, this vulnerability increases due to the fact that families suffer from the impact of poverty, marginality, migration and violence, and not to forget, a lot of children are being raised in families without a father and/or mother.¹⁷

The assassination rates in Honduras have increased over the past ten years. In 2005, there were 37 murders per 100 000 citizens and in 2012 this amount has increased to 85.5 murders per 100 000 citizens. By contrast, the assassination rates on Latin American level are much lower: 18 murders per 100 000 citizens (Aplíciano Cubero; IUDPAS, 2013). According to UNODC's (2013) Global Study on Homicide, the assassination rate in Honduras has raised to 90 per 100 000 during the past year.

The previous two sections describe the situation of *maras* and *pandillas* in the political and socio-economic context of Honduras. In the next section we discuss criminological theories, related to the subject of gangs and gang membership.

¹⁶ In 2010 24% of the young primary school-age children in Honduras dropped out of school before completing primary school. Though Honduras was able to reduce this number, as in 2004, more than 45% dropped out of school before finishing their primary grade (UNESCO, 2012). In 2009 the number of youngsters graduating from lower secondary school was very low in Honduras (not more than 40%), comparing to the other countries in Latin America (at least 80%) (UNESCO, 2011).

¹⁷ According to an investigation of UNICEF (2003), regarding children living in the streets, 60% had contact with their mother, while only 18% had contact with their father.

2.3 Criminological theories of gangs

Although many general theories on gang formation and reasons to join a gang are available, not as many discuss the reintegration or rehabilitation process of gang members. Criminological theories on gangs can help us understand why a youngster gets involved with a gang. Subsequently, we can better comprehend the reintegration processes of these youngsters, along with its difficulties.

In the words of Wood and Alleyne (2010, p. 100): *“our knowledge on gangs is still limited and rather muddy”* In their research on the existing knowledge of street gangs, they compare different theories and elucidate what is still missing regarding the subject of gangs. This chapter is mainly based upon their overview of criminological theories of gangs and completed with other resources. The following criminological theories are discussed: socio-ecological theories, anomie theories, social process theories, control theories and social reintegration theories. Theories of risk factors are also discussed, in order to understand which factors are important when discussing theories on rehabilitation and reintegration of gang members.

2.3.1 Socio-ecological theories

The Chicago School has done much research regarding socio-ecological aspects of criminology. Among these researchers, Thrasher (1963), Burgess (1926) and Shaw and McKay (1969) investigated and applied the theory of social disorganization in Chicago. On the basis of Burgess' (1926) model of concentric zones,¹⁸ Shaw and McKay (1969) discovered most juvenile delinquency is committed in the central business district (zone I) and in the zone in transition (zone II). Already in 1927, with his study on 1313 gang in Chicago, Thrasher (1927) stated the zone in transition is the most disordered area, where most of Chicago's gangs could be found. Shaw and McKay (1969), as well as Thrasher (1927), agree upon the fact that youngsters who grow up in these socially disorganized areas, where there is a lack of opportunities regarding good schooling and jobs, are more likely to be attracted by gangs, which can provide them with economic goods, a certain status and group company.

¹⁸ According to Burgess's (1926) theory of Concentric Zones, Chicago can be divided into five concentric zones: Zone I is the *“central business and industrial district”*; Zone II is the *“zone in transition, or slum areas, in the throes of change from residence to business and industry”*; Zone III is the *“zone of workingmen's homes”*; Zone IV is the *“residential zone”*; and Zone V is the *“outer commuters' zone, beyond the city limits”* (Shaw & McKay, 1969, p. 78).

Though the urban and economic developments in Chicago differ from the developments in cities like San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, some underlying factors, which stimulated youngsters to join a gang, can be attributed to both contexts. For example, a child who grows up in a family which neglects him, who goes to a school that is not able to trigger the individual in a positive sense or provide him/her with after school activities to keep him occupied and away from the street, will be more likely to get in contact with a gang. Thrasher (1963) emphasizes that these factors do not directly push youngsters to join a gang, but gangs rather flourish in areas with weak institutions thus providing young boys,¹⁹ living in these kinds of areas, with an alternative way of living.

2.3.2 Anomie theories

Within the scope of anomie theories, several theories can be distinguished: the theories of strain, subculture, and differential opportunities.

Both Merton (1938) and Agnew (1992) implemented a theory of strain. According to Merton (1938), crime is a normal phenomenon, which can occur when there is a gap between the goals one wants to achieve and the legal means he has within his reach to accomplish his goal. This gap causes stress (strain), which the person wants to reduce, by achieving his goal. Though, whether or not a person will use illegal means (and thus commit a crime) in order to reach his goal, depends on the influence of social structures.

Agnew's (1992) theory of strain, on the other hand, focuses on one's negative relationships with other people. According to Agnew (1992), a person can experience strain when he or she is being impeded from achieving a "*positively valued goal*" (Agnew, 1992, p. 74). Also when the person is confronted with negative stimuli or deprived from positive stimuli. In accordance with Merton's (1938) theory, whether or not a person will commit a crime, depends on the ability and means one has to handle a certain form of strain in a legal way.

Within the theories of subculture, we discuss Matza's (1964) drift theory, as well as Cohen's (1955) subculture theory. Cohen's (1955) subculture theory can also be seen as a strain theory, as he starts from the premise that all social classes in America are marked by the same aspiration of

¹⁹ Most literature focuses on male gang members, while female gang members often grow up in the same environment. Subsequently, throughout the literature review we focus on male gang members, while keeping in mind the same factors could also be applied to female gang members; but more research upon the distinction between male and female gang members is necessary to confirm this assumption.

reaching a high social status (via the possession of economic goods), though the legal means to achieve this goal are not equally distributed, which subsequently can lead to strain. This unequal distribution of means causes a status frustration among youngsters who grow up in lower income classes and might push them to reach their goals by using illegal means. This opens the way for delinquent subcultures, as these subcultures can answer to the status frustration some youngsters encounter. Cohen (1955) uses Whyte's (1937) distinction between a *corner boy* and a *college boy*, and completes it with the category of the *delinquent subculture*,²⁰ to distinguish between those who are more likely to be involved with a gang and those who are less likely to become involved with a delinquent subculture.

According to Matza's (1964) drift theory, a delinquent person "*drifts between criminal and conventional action*" (Matza, 1964, p. 28). A person, in Matza's opinion, is not completely in control of his own decisions, but rather responds to external and internal drifts. Although the deviant person is involved in criminal activities, this does not mean he cannot be involved in conformist business at the same time. He drifts between the two possibilities of conformist and non-conformist behavior, without taking any dedication or responsibility. The delinquent in Matza's view finds himself in a less tied social structure, which gives space to the creation of (delinquent) subcultures. According to Matza, most juvenile delinquents deter from delinquency when they mature. A youngster will probably leave the delinquent subculture when confronted with a judicial penalty or simply because he finds himself a job or starts a relationship (Matza, 1964). Regarding the situation of gang members in Honduras, we can state that youngsters are indeed influenced by internal (e.g. the desire for economic goods and friendship), as well as external (e.g. a gang who can provide the youngster with a place to belong) factors to join a gang.

Cloward and Ohlin (1960) situate their theory of differential opportunities partially in line with and partially in extension of Merton's (1938) anomie theory and Sutherland's (1947) differential

²⁰ According to Cohen (1955), the corner boy cherishes working-class values, but while the college boy also comes from a working-class family, he does cherish middle-class values. As stated above, both boys want to achieve the same goals, but do not have the same means to do so. Cohen argues, they can respond to this problem in three ways. The first one is "*to desert the corner-boy for the college-boy way of life*" (Cohen, 1955, p. 128), by trying to fit into the middle-class system. The second one is the "*stable corner-boy response*" (Cohen, 1955, p. 128), in which the person accepts his life and tries to find comfort in the company of people from the same class. The third one is the "*delinquent response*" (Cohen, 1955, p. 129), which means that the youngster rejects the middle-class values and looks for an alternative status within a delinquent subculture (i.e. a gang). One of the main differences with the college-boy and corner-boy is that the delinquent subculture authorizes violence.

association theory. The main difference is that, according to Cloward and Ohlin, the legal means to achieve a certain goal are not only predisposed by social class (as stated by Merton, 1938). Conform with Sutherland's (1947) theory, the youngster must be exposed to a certain setting, where he can learn either legitimate or illegitimate norms and rules, and this acquired behavior must be encouraged and maintained by the peer group from which he adapted this attitude (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). Cloward and Ohlin (1960, p. 240) state that the appearance of a delinquent subculture depends on whether or not violence and illegal activities form part of the social structure of a certain area. In other words, the formation of a delinquent subculture depends on the spread of legitimate as opposed to illegitimate means available to achieve a particular goal in society. When the availability of illegitimate means (e.g. weapons) transcends the availability of legitimate means, there will be more potential for delinquency to occur.

2.3.3 Social process theories

Within the theories of social processes, three subdivisions can be distinguished (Siegel, 2000). The first subdivision contains the theories of social learning. According to these theories criminal behavior is learned in the same way, by using the same learning mechanisms to learn conventional behavior. The second subdivision contains theories of social control. According to these theories whether or not a person commits a crime depends on his or her bond with society. The third subdivision contains theories of social reaction or labeling. According to these theories delinquent behavior is fostered by the negative reactions of society to one's behavior.

Within the social learning theories we discuss Sutherland's (1947) differential association theory, Sykes' and Matza's (1957) neutralizing theory and Burgess' and Akers' (1966) differential reinforcement theory.

According to Sutherland's (1947) differential association theory, deviant behavior is learned through several processes of association.²¹ By saying that criminal behavior is learned, Sutherland states that young delinquents learn their deviant behavior within a gang. Hence, it can be derived that it is not the case that a gang attracts individual criminals. Sutherland emphasizes upon the fact that it depends on the social group with which a youngster interacts, whether he will perform delinquent behavior or not. In this case he also refers to the social disorganization

²¹ For example: "When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes (a) techniques of committing the crime; (b) the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes" (Sutherland, 1947, p. 226).

theory (see for example Burgess, 1926; Thrasher, 1963; Shaw & McKay, 1969), but according to Sutherland it is better to speak of “*differential social organization*” (Sutherland, 1947, p. 227). With differential association Sutherland states that “*a person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of law*” (Sutherland, 1947, p. 226). This means that it depends on the social structure of a certain neighborhood whether crime will occur or not. If criminal behavior forms part of the social structure, then it is more likely that a youngster will find himself confronted with (group) delinquency within a socially disorganized community.

Sykes’ and Matza’s (1957) theory of neutralization can be seen as an extension of Sutherland’s (1947) concept of differential association. According to Sykes and Matza (1957), young delinquents try to justify their behavior, when confronted with an accusation of deviant behavior, by using techniques of neutralization. Five techniques of neutralization can be distinguished: *denial of responsibility*,²² *denial of injury*,²³ *denial of the victim*,²⁴ *condemnation of the condemners*,²⁵ and *appeal to higher loyalties*.²⁶

Twenty years after Sutherland (1947) introduced his differential association theory; Burgess and Akers (1966) revised Sutherland’s theory and added the component of social reinforcement to Sutherland’s processes of association. According to Burgess and Akers (1966), it is not enough to learn certain behavior within a group. Rather, behavior must be reinforced in order to maintain the learned behavior. Thus, a person can become delinquent when he finds himself in a context where “*criminal behavior is a function of norms which are discriminative for criminal behavior, the learning which takes place when such behavior is more highly reinforced than noncriminal behavior*” (Burgess & Akers, 1966, p. 146).

²² Denial of responsibility means that the person does not take any responsibility for his acts and states that he was led by external forces, which he could not resist, when committing the crime (Sykes & Matza, 1957).

²³ Denial of injury means that the person who committed a crime is not convinced of the fact that his act might have harmful consequences for others (Sykes & Matza, 1957).

²⁴ Denial of the victim means that the person does not agree with the fact that his delinquency entails a victim. Rather, he perceives his act as one of heroism towards a person or institution which needs to be acted upon (Sykes & Matza, 1957).

²⁵ Condemnation of the condemners means that while the deviant person does not necessarily deny his wrongness, he switches the focus of the case to the ones who try to accuse him for his act. In other words, the accused one accuses his accusers for things they have done wrong (Sykes & Matza, 1957).

²⁶ Appeal to higher loyalties means that the person justifies his act as a sacrifice for someone else. This technique of neutralization will be used often when a youngster, who is part of a gang, commits a crime, as he will state that he did it for the group (Sykes & Matza, 1957).

Within the social control theories we discuss Reckless' (1967) containment theory and Hirschi's (1969) social bond theory.

According to Hirschi (1969, p. 16) "*control theories assume that delinquent acts result when an individual's bond to society is weak or broken*". Hirschi distinguishes four elements of the bond: attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. The first element of the bond, attachment, means that people are sensitive to someone else's opinion. This implies that if a person does not incorporate this feeling of attachment, he will not be inhibited by moral values and norms, and subsequently this can lead to breaching the rules. The second element of the bond, commitment, means that people conform to the rule of law because they are afraid of the consequences when breaking the law. When people are committed to a certain activity (e.g. a job or school), they are aware of the investment they have put in these activities, which they can lose when committing a crime. The third element of the bond, involvement, means that people are involved in conformist activities. People who are involved in conformist activities are just too occupied to even think about committing a crime. The fourth element of the bond, belief, means that people believe in the social rules and norms within their society. According to Hirschi (1969), when a person breaches the rules, it does not necessarily mean that he does not believe in the rules. However, it is more likely that a person, whose belief in the rules is weakened or who puts his belief aside, will commit a crime.

Reckless' (1967) containment theory is based on the concepts of outer and inner containment. With outer containment, Reckless refers to external factors (e.g. the society, local neighborhood, family, etc.) which are in the position of exerting power over a young person, in order to keep him or her on the right track and away from nonconformist behavior. Inner containment, on the other hand, refers to the internal ability of a person to keep himself on the track of conformist behavior. The latter will depend on the amount of self-control one has. According to Reckless (1967), individuals that are both influenced by a high level of outer as well as inner containment, have lower chances to get involved with delinquent behavior and vice versa. As is the case in Hirschi's (1969) social bond theory, also Reckless' (1967) containment theory suggests that strong bonds with for example one's school is of importance; especially if the school is able to let their students adopt the appropriate rules and norms, which protects them from committing a crime.

Within the social reaction or labeling theories we discuss Tannenbaum's (1938) dramatization of evil theory, Lemert's (1951) theory on primary and secondary deviation and Becker's (1963) theory of outsiders.

Tannenbaum (1938) was one of the first criminologists to talk about labeling a certain person, who performs a certain behavior, as being criminal. In his opinion, some forms of deviant behavior are being overreacted to (cf. 'dramatization of the evil'), which stimulates the person to perform the same acts again, as he already is being perceived as a criminal.

Lemert's (1951) theory can be regarded as a continuation of Tannenbaum's theory, as he makes a distinction between primary and secondary deviation. Also according to Lemert (1951) deviant behavior (primary deviance) is perceived to be delinquent behavior after processes of stigmatization by society, which sanctions a person's deviant behavior and by doing so label the person as a deviant person. This fosters the process whereby the person starts to perceive himself as being deviant and reacts upon the intervention of society, by committing more deviant behavior (secondary deviance).

With the term *outsiders* Becker refers to "*those people who are judged by others to be deviant and thus to stand outside the circle of 'normal' members of the group*" (Becker, 1963, p. 246). According to Becker (1963), a certain group within society takes the power to decide which behavior is acceptable and which is not acceptable, and subsequently to label certain people as deviant. Though the rules this group within society imposes to other people are not agreed upon by the society as a whole.

2.3.4 Theories on risk factors

Before making the step from general theories on youth delinquency and gang membership towards theories and practices of rehabilitation/reintegration of youth delinquents or gang members, we discuss some of the risk factors for joining a gang, which Thornberry (1998) highlights in his review of youth violence and gang membership. Thornberry differentiates between male and female gang members and distinguishes six levels of risk factors: the level of the community, family, school, peers, individual, and problematic behavior.

Firstly, on the level of the community, Thornberry (1998) states that male gang members are more likely to occur in neighborhoods that are not very well integrated. Female gang members, on the other hand, are more likely to occur within neighborhoods which are integrated, but

disorganized and where violence takes place. Also the *availability of drugs* has an influence on joining a gang at a young age (between seven and seventeen years old).

Secondly, at the level of the family, Thornberry (1998) argues that boys who do not live with both parents, and grow up without much supervision or parents, who are attached to him, have an increased chance to become a gang member. Equally so, girls, who grow up in a family that is not really involved with their daughter, have higher chances to become a gang member. Some other family factors can be a stimulant for youngsters to join a gang at an early age. For example: 'extreme economic deprivation', 'parent proviolent attitudes', 'family instability', 'family management problems', and 'sibling antisocial behavior'. On the other hand youngsters who are attached to their mother, according to Thornberry (1998), are less likely to join a gang at a young age.

Thirdly, at the level of the school, Thornberry (1998) states that boys and girls are less likely to join a gang when they are committed to school, attached to their teachers, and when their parents and they have expectations for their school. Children, who demonstrate antisocial behavior at school, achieve low results and have little to no educational aspiration, are more likely to join a gang at a young age.

Fourthly, at the level of the peer group, Thornberry (1998) argues that factors as *association with delinquent peers* and *unsupervised time spent with friends* have an influence on male gang membership. Children who are involved with "bad" peers and who are not attached to *conventional peers* are more likely to join a gang at an early age.

Fifthly, at the level of the individual, Thornberry (1998) discusses that boys have higher odds to become a gang member when they have experienced *negative life events*, a negative *self-esteem* and *depression*. Boys as well as girls who share *positive values about drugs* and have *access to drugs* are more likely to get involved with a gang. Other individual factors, such as having weak *social competences*, being a boy or being hyperactive, increase the probability to join a gang.

Lastly, at the level of problematic behavior, Thornberry (1998) says that delinquent boys and girls, and boys who have committed a violent crime before or used drugs are more likely to join a gang. Other factors regarding problematic behavior, like having first time sexual relationships at a young age and drinking, influence joining a gang at a young age.

The previous section discusses several criminological theories related to gangs and gang membership in general. The next section focuses more specifically on theories of rehabilitation and reintegration of gang members.

2.4 Rehabilitation – reintegration

This section focuses on theories of rehabilitation and reintegration of gang members in general and also related to the specific context of Honduras. To conclude, we discuss some good and bad practices of rehabilitation and reintegration interventions in Honduras. In order to have a good understanding of the difference between prevention, rehabilitation and social reintegration, we first of all define the different concepts.

2.4.1 Definitions

In this dissertation we use the definitions of the concepts prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration, as defined by the Law for prevention, rehabilitation and social reintegration of members of *maras* and *pandillas*.²⁷

Prevention is defined by the aforementioned law as “*actions in the family, community and in society as a whole, seeking for spaces of socialization and participation, as well as early identification and the reversal of attitudes and risk factors that can lead to gang membership, as well as interventions that reduce the consequences of gang membership, and especially criminal behavior*”.²⁸

Rehabilitation is defined by the law as “*educational, habilitation, and therapeutic action, directed at members of maras and pandillas who benefit from programs that aim to change attitudes, de practice of values and skills development*”.²⁹

²⁷ Ley Octubre 31 2001 para la prevención, rehabilitación y reinserción social de personas integrantes de maras o pandillas.

²⁸ “*las acciones desarrolladas en la familia, comunidad y en toda la sociedad, en procura de espacios de socialización y participación, así como la identificación temprana y reversión de actitudes y factores de riesgo que induzcan a la agrupación en pandillas o maras, al igual que las intervenciones que permitan reducir las consecuencias de dicha pertenencia, en especial las conductas delictivas.*” (Art. 2, Ley Octubre 31 2001 para la prevención, rehabilitación y reinserción social de personas integrantes de maras o pandillas).

²⁹ “*acción educativa, habilitatoria y terapéutica, dirigida a las personas, pandillas o maras que sean beneficiados por programas que tengan por objetivo el cambio de actitudes, práctica de valores y desarrollo de aptitudes*” (Idem).

Social reintegration is defined by the law as *“the process by which the persons who are in rehabilitation or who are rehabilitated start or retake their study activities, job, recreation, construction of family relationships and other networks, for their personal and social development, in conditions which are safe and with full respect for their rights”*.³⁰

2.4.2 Criminological theories of rehabilitation/reintegration

In this section we discuss the reintegration of gang members within society, prevention and treatment measurements in urban areas, prevention and intervention programs, and the ‘What Works’-principles.

2.4.2.1 Giving the gang a place in the community

Thrasher (1963) does not focus on eliminating the gang and pushing them to the borders of our society. Rather, he argues that the gang must be given a place in their community. According to Thrasher, two institutions need to take care of this: those who advocate for the interests of the youngsters in the gang, and those who represent the law.

Firstly, with regard of the legal powers in our society, Thrasher (1963) considers that there is no sympathy for the situation of young gang members. Policemen have the feeling they need to suppress the gang and address them in a harsh way, without providing any suitable leisure alternative.

Secondly, Thrasher (1963) argues that most treatment programs were not successful, because they isolated the boy from his gang and did not take the group factor into account. The delinquent’s group plays an important role in the individual’s life when he is constructing his own identity. Thrasher argues that, when developing a program for the treatment of gang members, attention must go to all groups in society to which the boy is affiliated. In other words, attention must be given to *“not merely the gang alone, but the family, the neighborhood, the school, the church, the occupational group, and so on”* (Thrasher, 1963, p. 345). It is of importance to adapt the program to the person concerned; i.e. the role the youngster had in his gang needs to be replaced by another meaningful role within society.

³⁰ *“proceso por el cual las personas en rehabilitación o rehabilitadas inician o retoman actividades de estudio, trabajo, recreación, construcción de redes de relaciones familiares y otras para su desarrollo personal y social, en condiciones de seguridad y respeto pleno a sus derechos”* (Idem).

Thirdly, according to Thrasher (1963) there are only two ways for a gang member to be reintegrated into society: complete removal from the gang and the associated social structure, or reformation of the gang. According to Thrasher's (1963) investigation, the first option has shown negative results. One of the methods to withdraw a gang member from his gang is to isolate him in an institution outside his community, where he will receive a reeducation program. Although this method might lead to deterrence in the first place, it is very unlikely that the boy will continue his new behavior, which he learned in an artificial setup, when going back to his community and friends. In fact, the delinquent that goes back to his community, after following an institutional program, might acquire an even higher status in the gang, as the boy now has a proven criminal history. The same applies for moving the family of a delinquent boy to another neighborhood, as most of these families do not have the money to improve their living circumstances and thus will end up in similar areas. Thrasher concludes by saying that "*sending a gang boy away to an institution turns out to be little more than one method of evading the real problem – that of adjusting him in his actual social world*" (Thrasher, 1963, p. 350). The second option, reformation of the gang, has more potential. The typical example to which Thrasher refers is turning a gang into a Boy Scouts. The roles the boys had in the gang are subsequently turned into taking positive responsibility for their community (e.g. instead of terrorizing a playground, making them responsible for the safety of the playground). Thrasher concludes by saying that there is a "*need to develop a program into which the activities of the gang and its members can be incorporated and through which they can be given significance in a larger plan of life*" (Thrasher, 1963, p. 359).

2.4.2.2 Prevention and treatment in urban areas

Shaw and McKay (1969) draw some conclusions from their research on juvenile delinquency in Chicago. Firstly, they state that no major decrease of criminality in certain areas will happen, as long as the socio-economic lifestyles of the people who live in these areas do not change. Secondly, instead of individual treatments, Shaw and McKay opt for large-scale community-based treatment projects. In order to raise solidarity, responsibility and awareness of the problems in the community, the projects need to be organized and led by local citizens and not by external people. These local citizens include "*members of churches, societies, labor unions, trades and professions, business groups, athletic clubs, and a miscellany of other groups and*

organizations” (Shaw & McKay, 1969, p. 323). These types of programs also try to work with the local instances, like churches, schools, sport and recreation centers, and other social groups. Along with these groups the community workers organize activities, excursions, boy scouts, creative workshops, etc. Delinquency, from this perspective, must be seen as a problem of the community as a whole and not as an individual problem of the delinquent boys themselves.

With the aim of reducing juvenile delinquency at the level of the neighborhood, by improving people’s life within their community, Clifford Shaw founded the Chicago Area Project (CAP) in 1934. In accordance with Shaw’s and McKay’s (1969) research, the CAP is based on the cooperation of local residents, as they are perceived to be most aware of the problems and potential solutions within their community. The CAP aims at reducing delinquency in urban neighborhoods in Chicago, by basing their projects on three principles: *Community Organizing*,³¹ *Direct Services*,³² and *Advocacy*.³³ According to the organizers of the CAP, the project has shown to be effective in reducing juvenile delinquency and its principles are used as an example for other community projects (CAP, n.d.). Kobrin (1959) agrees the CAP raised more responsibility among residents, living in areas affected by delinquency, who are now organizing themselves to address the welfare of the youngsters within their neighborhood. The CAP was also the first US program which was able to get in contact with individual gang members and guide them towards more positive norms and values. In addition it states that cooperation with the family and peers is an important asset.

Shaw’s and McKay’s research and the Chicago Area Project focus on individual delinquents as well as on delinquents within a gang, whereby they also take into account the community context.

2.4.2.3 Prevention and intervention programs

According to Howell’s (1998) meta-analysis of 21 youth gang prevention and intervention programs, following aspects seemed to be necessary to achieve positive results. Firstly, most

³¹ “*Community Organizing involves identifying local leaders and supporting their efforts in mobilizing residents to take responsibility for guiding young people. Working together, community leaders, residents, and youth prioritize neighborhood-specific issues, seek effective solutions, and identify available resources to address them*” (CAP, n.d.).

³² “*Direct Services occur through CAP’s network of more than 40 affiliates offering educational, cultural, and recreational programs*” (CAP, n.d.).

³³ “*CAP Advocates with neighborhood groups on behalf of their youth for improvements in schools, juvenile court systems, and employment opportunities*” (CAP, n.d.).

effective are multimodal programs which incorporate “*prevention, social intervention, treatment, suppression, and community mobilization approaches*” (Howell, 1998, p. 311). All these methods need to interact with each other in a holistic setting, which includes coordination and follow-up. Secondly, in order to engage the community in the process of gang reintegration, the following actors need to be involved: “*police, prosecutors, judges, probation and parole officers, corrections officers, schools, employers, community-based agencies, and a range of grassroots organizations*” (Howell, 1998, p. 311). Thirdly, in order to reduce gang related violence and delinquency, the focus needs to go to social development, risk- and protective factors, and the needs of the youngster.

One example of youth gang violence prevention and intervention is the G.R.E.A.T. program. Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) is an American school-based program which aims to prevent young middle school students, aged 11-14 years old, from joining a gang. The G.R.E.A.T. program targets a young age in order to create awareness of the negative aspects of gang life, before children have reached the age to be able to participate in a gang. The program organizes classes and workshops, teaching the students, via discussions and role playing, how to stay out of gangsterism,³⁴ and to be a responsible citizen (Reed & Decker, 2002). According to Reed and Decker (2002), in the short run (after a one year follow-up) the program resulted in less delinquency, more positive attitudes regarding the police, one’s self-esteem, one’s relationship with their family and school. Equally so, in the long run (after a four year follow-up) the program achieved the same results. It also encouraged youngsters to be involved with friends in positive leisure activities and to show their disapproval regarding gangs. After reviewing the G.R.E.A.T. program, the G.R.E.A.T. Review Workgroup listed three goals and five objectives for the program. The goals of the program are “*to reduce gang membership, to prevent violence and criminal activity, and to develop positive relationships with law enforcement*” (p. 158). The objectives of the program are “*to improve social competency skills³⁵ [...], to foster empathy for victims, to encourage positive social affiliations, to alter perceptions about gangs, and to increase social responsibility*” (Reed & Decker, 2002, p. 158-159).

³⁴ “the culture of belonging to organized gangs of criminals, especially involving violence”, retrieved April 8, 2014, from <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/gangsterism>

³⁵ “*emotional control; stress management; conflict resolution; communication and listening; and decisionmaking, problem-solving, and goal-setting skills*” (Reed, & Decker, 2002, p. 158).

2.4.2.4 What Works

This section discusses the ‘What Works’-principles, followed by the principles of treatment effectiveness.

What Works principles

According to a meta-analysis of Dowden and Andrews (1999), four principles need to be taken into account when targeting juvenile delinquency: the principle of human service, the risk principle, the need principle and the general responsivity principle. The risk principle entails that the program or treatment should be adapted to the level of risk (low, medium, high) to which a young delinquent is likely to relapse, i.e. the risk of recidivism. The principle of general responsivity means that, in order to reduce the recidivism rate, the program must be *“behavioral or [use] several treatment methods such as modeling, graduated practice, role-playing and several other skill-building techniques”* (Dowden & Andrews, 1999, p. 22). The need principle explains that programs must focus on criminogenic and not on noncriminogenic needs. According to Andrews and Bonta (2006, p. 281) *“Criminogenic needs are a subset of an offender’s risk level. They are dynamic risk factors that, when changed, are associated with changes in the probability of recidivism. Noncriminogenic needs are also dynamic and changeable, but they are weakly associated with recidivism”*. The most effective criminogenic needs are: *“family supervision, and family affection, barriers to treatment, self-control, anger /antisocial feelings, vocational skills + job, and academic”* (Dowden & Andrews, 1999, p. 23). Other criminogenic needs with a positive effect on reducing recidivism rates are: *“pro-social model, antisocial attitudes, [reducing] antisocial peers, vocational skills, relapse prevention, and substance abuse treatment”* (Dowden & Andrews, 1999, p. 23). For more principles of effective treatment, a table with an overview of Andrews’ *“principles of effective prevention and correctional treatment through direct service”* (Andrews, 1995, p. 42) can be found in annex (see Annex 1).

As mentioned above, according to Dowden and Andrews (1999), programs targeting noncriminogenic needs have a negative impact on helping youngsters to deter from

delinquency.³⁶ Equally so, interventions based on criminal sanctioning do not have positive results regarding the deterring process of young delinquents.

Treatment effectiveness

While some researchers focus on the group and community aspects of delinquency, Lipsey (1995) focuses on the individual aspects of youth delinquency. Lipsey (1995) reviewed 400 studies to investigate the effectiveness of treatment with young delinquents between 12 and 21 years old. According to Lipsey (1995), six aspects are effective regarding the treatment of young delinquents. Firstly, youngsters with a delinquent background who get a treatment are less likely to reoffend. Secondly, psychological treatment, focusing on for example “*attitudes, self-esteem, MMPI or other clinical scales*” (Lipsey, 1995, p. 68), is effective in reducing youth delinquency. Thirdly, interpersonal adjustment treatment, focusing on for example “*peer or family relationships, interpersonal skills*” (Lipsey, 1995, p. 68), is effective in reducing the recidivism rate. Fourthly, young delinquents who received a school participation treatment, focusing on for example “*attendance, drop-out*” (Lipsey, 1995, p. 68), are less likely to reoffend. Fifthly, academic performance treatment, focusing on for example “*grades, achievement tests*” (Lipsey, 1995, p. 68) facilitates the reduction of youth delinquency. Sixthly, young delinquents, who received a vocational accomplishment treatment, focusing on for example “*job status, wages*” (Lipsey, 1995, p. 68), are less likely to reoffend. Lipsey (1995) encountered differential effects for three other treatment aspects. Firstly, according to Lipsey (1995), treatment of high risk young offenders shows greater impact on recidivism rates, than treatment of low risk youth. These findings are comparable to what Dowden and Andrews (1999) state about keeping in mind the risk principle when applying a certain treatment. Secondly, following extra-judicial treatment forms seemed to be most effective in reducing juvenile delinquency: “*skill oriented, multimodal, behavioral, group counseling, casework, family counseling, advocacy, [and] other counseling*” (Lipsey, 1995, p. 75). Thirdly, although Lipsey (1995) also revised the influence of the involvement of the researcher and the duration of the program on recidivism rates, these factors were far less important than the type of treatment when receives.

³⁶ For example, programs which focus on “*fear of official punishment, increase cohesive antisocial peers, other family interventions, target self-esteem, vague emotional/personal problems, respect antisocial thinking, physical activity, and increase conventional ambition*” (Dowden & Andrews, 1999, p. 23).

Lipsey (1995) additionally identified some negative treatment measurements regarding non-juvenile justice programs. “*School class/tutor [and] individual counseling*” (Lipsey, 1995, p. 75) prove no effects and “*employment/vocational*” (Lipsey, 1995, p. 75) treatments resulted in negative effects on juvenile recidivism rates. Shaw and McKay (1969) agree with Lipsey (1995) that individual methods of treatment are not likely to achieve positive results regarding the reintegration of young gang members.

Lipsey (1995) concludes by giving three points of focus when it comes down to treatment programs for juvenile delinquents:

1. *Focus treatment around behavioral, training or skills issues appropriate to the clientele using concrete, structured approaches as much as possible* (Lipsey, 1995, p. 77).
2. *Monitor, supervise and implement the treatment well* (Lipsey, 1995, p. 78).
3. *Provide a sufficient amount of service, preferably 100 or more total contact hours, delivered at two or more contacts per week over a period of 26 weeks or more* (Lipsey, 1995, p. 78).

According to Lipsey’s and Wilson’s (1998) joint research synthesis of effective and non-effective interventions with juvenile offenders, most effective methods proved to be “*individual counseling, interpersonal skills, and behavioral programs*” (Lipsey & Wilson, 1998, p. 332). Also effective, but less convincing, are “*multiple services, and restitution - probation/parole*” (Lipsey & Wilson, 1998, p. 332). Five methods seemed to have mixed, although positive, results: “*employment related, academic programs, advocacy/casework, family counseling, and group counseling*” (Lipsey & Wilson, 1998, p. 332).

Lipsey and Wilson (1998) also came across five methods which had little to no effect on the treatment of non-institutionalized offenders. Those methods are: “*reduced caseload (probation/parole), wilderness/challenge, early release (probation/parole), deterrence programs, and vocational programs*” (Lipsey & Wilson, 1998, p. 332).

2.4.3 Rehabilitation/reintegration in Honduras

This section focuses on aspects of rehabilitation and reintegration in Honduras. We first discuss reasons to leave the gang, followed by some intervention programs in Honduras.

2.4.3.1 Reasons to leave the gang

According to Merino (2004), it is not easy for a *marero* to leave the gang. First of all, a gang is never eager in letting one of its members go. Secondly, although society wants to fight crime, they do not warmly welcome ex-criminals, and *ex-mareros* will often be confronted with discrimination. This section discusses the reasons (ex-) gang members give for leaving their gang and the difficulties they experience when doing so.

“Those who leave the gang, but not for a child, a marriage, or for God, is a betrayer and the betrayer will be punished” (Merino, 2004, p. 126).³⁷ According to Merino (2004), there are two main reasons for *mareros* to (get permission to) leave their gang: converting to the Evangelism or starting a family. By getting married or having a child, the *marero* is obliged to start working in order to earn money and to maintain his family, which means he has less time to spend with the gang, which can ensure that he will eventually leave the gang. Rodríguez Bolaños and Sanabria León (2007) state that a high percentage of Central American gang members perceive a job or education as an opportunity to leave their gang. Also according to Aplíciano Cubero (2012) a lot of youngsters keep up the hope that one day they can pick up their studies again and thus will be able to meet their goals in a legal way, which not include violence or crime.

Despite the stereotypical notion, that it is impossible to leave a gang, more than half of the (active) gang members indicate that there is nothing that keeps them from leaving the gang. Nevertheless, they are aware of the possible reprisals of the gang, which may include assassination (Rodríguez Bolaños & Sanabria León, 2007). The possibility of reprisals against themselves or their family is one of the main preoccupations of incarcerated gang members, along with the visibility of their tattoos and not finding a job (PNPRRS, 2011).

Given this information, it becomes evident that, for a gang member, it is not easy to leave the gang. Not every *marero* is willing to leave his gang, because it would include giving up the social bonds with the other gang members. When leaving the gang, *ex-pandilleros* place themselves in a vulnerable position, as society is not eager to welcome them, in conjunction with the fact that there is an insufficient amount of available rehabilitation projects (Rodríguez Bolaños & Sanabria León, 2007).

³⁷ *“El que deja la mara, a no ser por un hijo, por casarse, o por Dios, es un traidor y al traidor se le castiga”*(Merino, 2004, p. 126).

According to the research of Rodríguez Bolaños and Sanabria León (2007) almost half of the ex-gang members declare that leaving their gang was their own decision. Also, almost 50% of the gang members they have interviewed say they have been offered an alternative to live their life and to leave the gang. Those alternatives were mostly given by their families and/or friends, and by religious institutions. Only a minority of the gang members has been offered an alternative by NGO's and none of them mention being helped by governmental programs.

The next section will give an overview of alternatives for *mareros*, offered by the government as well as by non-governmental institutions.

2.4.3.2 Intervention programs in Honduras

This section outlines governmental as well as non-governmental interventions in Honduras.

Governmental interventions

There is a great difference in rehabilitation initiatives created by the government and those created by NGO's. According to Merino (2004) the government focuses mainly on penitential rehabilitation forms. This section discusses the governmental interventions regarding the reintegration of *maras* and *pandillas*.

Rodríguez Bolaños and Sanabria León (2007) state that although a lot of gang members are willing to leave the gang, there is a lack of well-functioning alternatives to support their process of desistance. The society discriminates (ex-) gang members and does not offer any opportunities to change their lives. Also according to the PNPRRS (2011), young *mareros* who are locked up in prison often do not receive help from the state, in order to be able to rehabilitate and reintegrate themselves in society. They state that gang members ask for specific help from the state, which includes work opportunities or support for the development of a microenterprise, and rehabilitation programs.

Besides the reformation of the article 332 of the Penal Code of Honduras (the *Ley Mano Dura*), the politicians failed to address the problem of *maras* and *pandillas*. According to the PNPRRS (2011) and Reisman (2006) the state should strategize and focus on prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration, even though this could generate a lot of expenses. Unfortunately, the opposite of

what they aimed happened. Instead of focusing on alternative sanctions, such as community work, the justice system aimed at punishment and imprisonment. Only a small amount of the governmental budget went to prevention, rehabilitation and reinsertion. This small budget goes to the implementation of the National Program for Prevention, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (PNPRRS). The main goal of this program is to coordinate and support the implementation of programs, projects and other activities regarding this topic. By focusing on prevention, the PNPRRS aims to reduce the risk factors that foster youngsters to join a gang. Despite these good intentions, the PNPRRS argue they do not have sufficient resources to implement their activities in order to achieve these goals (PNPRRS, 2011).³⁸

Other governmental institutions include: *La Unidad de Muerte de Menores* (The Unity of the Death of Minors), which aim to clarify the extrajudicial executions; *El Instituto Nacional de la Juventud* (The National Institute of Youth); the Community Police, which aim to educate and work preventively via sensibilisation programs. In 2011, there were 110 community programs in different cities of Honduras. The aim of these community programs is to promote local politics in favor of children and youngsters. They try to do this by organizing activities on different problematic themes that affect children and youngsters (e.g. HIV/AIDS infections). These programs collaborate with the other, similar, organizations in their community (PNPRRS, 2011).

Non-governmental interventions

According to the PNPRRS (2011), non-governmental institutions that work in the field of rehabilitation and reintegration of *maras* and *pandillas*, lack sufficient resources to implement their projects. Nevertheless, there are several non-governmental institutions in Honduras, working in the field of prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration of *maras* and *pandillas*: “*Proyecto Victoria, Hogares Crea, Sociedad Amigos de Los Niños, Remar Internacional Honduras, Teen Challenge, Orphan Helpers, JHA-JA, Evangelismo Explosivo, Generación X, Fundación Unidos Por la Vida, Casa Alianza, Manos Extendidas, Free The Oppressed, Ministerio Jehová Nissi, Misioneras Scalabrinianas, CPTRT*” (PNPRRS, 2011, p. 84). Other NGO actions consist of: “*Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes, Arte y Acción, Libre Expresión,*

³⁸ By way of comparison (and as mentioned earlier in this dissertation): as much as 4137.1 million Lempira (almost 200 million dollar), or 4.6% of the central administration expenses of Honduras, goes to security (i.d. the police forces). While only 6.4 million Lempira (or 300 thousand dollar) is spent on the national program of prevention, rehabilitation and social reintegration (*Presupuesto Ciudadano*, 2013).

COFADEH, Cámara Junior de Honduras, Red COIPRODEN, Pastoral Social Juvenil” (PNPRRS, 2011, p. 84) and churches that guide youngsters in their process of development.

According to Merino (2004), both the Christian and Catholic Church have an important role in the rehabilitation of gang members. The main difference between Christians and Catholics is that Christians distinguish between the person as a human being in this world and his religious relationship with God (which is more transcendental). Catholics, on the contrary, do not make this distinction. It is not surprising that the Christian Church commits itself to the rehabilitation of alcohol and drug addicts, and *mareros*, because that is one of the goals of Christians. When a *marero* wants to accept the Gospel, and thus submit himself to God in order to be saved, he must leave the gang, entailing no more fornication, drugs, alcohol, theft and other delinquent acts. The Christian Churches provide food and a place to stay for people who are in their process of change, where they can find support and assistance from other companions. This sense of belonging to a group is something very important for (ex-) *mareros*, which they previously could find in the gang, but now in a more socially acceptable context. According to the Gospel, tattoos do not have to be removed, because they are prove of the growth of a person, from gang member to a religious Christian. Contrary to the Christian Church, the main (and often only) support from the Catholic Church to *mareros* is the removal of their tattoos.

2.4.4 Good and bad practices of rehabilitation/reintegration interventions

This section highlights some good and bad practices of rehabilitation and/or reintegration interventions in Honduras.

2.4.4.1 Good practices of rehabilitation/reintegration interventions

According to Merino (2004), repression is not an effective form to reduce gang violence. It is more important to search for the main cause of gang violence, rather than merely looking at the outcome. When there is a clear view of the reasons and circumstances that provoke the violence, it is easier to tackle the problem at its roots. Each and every form of rehabilitation needs to focus on the person as such and not on his behavior.

Some good practices can facilitate the reintegration process. According to Merino (2004) it is important to talk and listen to what (ex-) gang members have to say and thus to respond to their

specific needs. This is in line with what Andrews and Bonta (2006) mean with the need and responsivity principle. Merino (2004) also agrees with the principle that rehabilitation needs to take place in the environment of the (ex-) gang member, where he feels safe and secure, which is in accordance with Andrews' and Bonta's (2010) community-based principle.

2.4.4.2 Bad practices of rehabilitation/reintegration interventions

Though the implementation of the *Mano Dura* law cannot be seen as a bad practice as such, Rodriguez Bolaños and Sanabria León (2007) argue that the Honduran policy makers, though aiming at the decrease of crime and assassination in their country, achieved the opposite. In 2003 (when the *Mano Dura* law was implemented) and 2004, the homicide rate was at one of its lowest points in history with less than 40 assassinations per 100.000 inhabitants. Deplorably, between 2005 and 2010 the murder rate increased to more than 80 (per 100.000) people being killed and currently no less than 90 per 100.000 citizens are assassinated every year in Honduras (UNODC, 2011; UNODC, 2013). According to Afonso, Cardoso, Santos, Roque and Moura (2012), crime rates did not drop in Honduras and Central America as a whole, due to the common lack of prevention and reintegration programs. They also state there was no improvement of the socio-economic circumstances in which many of the young gang members have to live.

Although the aim of imprisonment should be the rehabilitation of offenders, Honduran prisons have a lot of shortcomings. Besides the overcrowded prison cells and violence between prisoners, there are very few formal education opportunities, let alone other forms of trainings or rehabilitation programs (PNPRRS, 2011; Reisman, 2006). If the government thought they could increase the gang's power, they made a mistake. According to Cruz (2010), gangs became better organized; strategies were discussed, and the orders and instructions were commanded from inside the prisons, where a lot of gang leaders were locked up together.

The previous chapters discuss the phenomenon of *maras* and *pandillas* in Honduras and criminological theories of gangs and the rehabilitation/reintegration of gang members. Based on this literature review we set up our conceptual framework and research design, which is discussed in the next chapter.

3. Methodology

This chapter contains three sections. The first section clarifies the definition of the central problem. The second section outlines the conceptual framework. The third section discusses the research design.

3.1 Definition of the central problem

In this section we discuss the research topic and objectives, as well as the description of the research questions.

3.1.1 Research topic and objectives

The topic of this dissertation is the reintegration process of young gang members (*maras y pandillas*) in Honduras. This topic is researched by investigating the intervention methods used in programs to reintegrate gang members.

According to the PNPRRS (2011), currently, notwithstanding the fact that the phenomenon of *maras* and *pandillas* in Central America has already existed for more than 20 years, merely descriptive research, based upon secondary information, has been done thus far. The severity of the problem urges for more research, including primary data. Also Wood and Alleyne believe that the problems caused by street gangs needs to be taken seriously and is worthwhile to be researched. They state that “*our knowledge on gangs is still limited and rather muddy*” (Wood & Alleyne, 2010, pp. 100-101).

In May 2013 the two biggest gangs in Honduras, *Mara Salvatrucha* and *Barrio 18* announced a truce stating they would cease all violence. The aforementioned truce was facilitated by Bishop Romulo Emiliani (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-22694989>). Although not all violence stopped in Honduras and it is not sure if we can speak of a truce between the two gangs, it can be of interest to investigate which intervention methods are effective in helping gang members to reintegrate into society.

3.1.2 Description of the research questions

There is one main question and two sub-questions. The two sub-questions aim to formulate a clear answer to the main question.

Main question:

How can the reintegration of young gang members into society best be facilitated?

Sub-questions:

1. For which reasons can young gang members leave a gang?
2. Which intervention methods can facilitate young gang members in their process of leaving the gang and reintegrate in society?

In order to be able to answer the main question, two aspects will be considered. Firstly, we need to know how a young gang member can be motivated to leave his gang. This means, we need to seek which triggers, internally and externally, can convince him to leave the gang. Secondly, when a gang member is willing to leave his gang, we need to know what the intervention methods of reintegration programs offer the youngster. The latter sub-question will include both governmental and nongovernmental reintegration programs.

3.2 Conceptual framework

Deriving from the findings in the literature review and based upon the research questions, two conceptual frameworks can be drawn. The first one gives an overview of the whole research process, while the second one focuses specifically on the intervention methods of the reintegration process.



Figure 1: Conceptual framework

The aim of the first conceptual framework (see figure 1) is to give an oversight of the concepts that are used to answer the research questions. The relations between the concepts, shown by the arrows, do not indicate a causal link; it does show descriptive or theory-driven links. The concept ‘gang membership’ is both a dependent and an independent variable. On the one hand, whether or not a youngster becomes involved in a gang depends on the specific context, which is indicated with ‘reasons to join a gang’. On the other hand, being in a gang has an influence on whether or not a youngster is able to leave the gang (‘reasons to leave the gang’) and can get enrolled in a reintegration program (‘intervention methods’). The latter two concepts are coupled, as intervention methods can only be applied to those who are willing to leave their gang.

The concepts ‘reasons to join a gang’ and ‘gang membership’ are not directly derived from the research questions, but are necessary to understand the investigation on reintegration processes. In order to comprehend how and for which reasons young gang members can leave the gang, we should be familiar with the reasons why youngsters join a gang in the first place. The concept ‘reasons to leave a gang’ is derived from the first sub-question (“For which reasons can young gang members leave the gang?”). The concept ‘intervention methods’ is subsequently derived from the second research question (“With which intervention methods can the reintegration of young gang members be facilitated?”).

The second conceptual framework is a matrix (see table 1), which focuses more on the intervention methods of reintegration.

Intervention methods	Respondents that incorporate these practices + the methods they use
1. Community-based 1.1 Local community /neighborhood	
1.2 Family	
1.3 Education	

1.4 Religion and church
2. Psychological treatment
3. Medical treatment
4. Vocational training 4.1 Interpersonal skills 4.2 Employment
5 General responsivity (multimodality)
6 Holistic approach

Table 1: Conceptual framework - matrix

The first column of figure 2 gives an overview of six intervention methods which are derived from the literature. The second column is to be filled in when analyzing the data. This column will display the organizations that incorporate these aspects in their programs and practical examples from how the organization implements the given methods in their programs.

3.3 Research design

The section of the research design consists of five parts. Firstly, the method proposed for the research will be explained. Secondly, the sampling process, and within it the different phases, will be elucidated. Thirdly, the data collection methods and instruments will be discussed. Fourthly, the way in which the data will be analyzed will be explained. Fifthly, the strategies to guarantee the quality of the research will be discussed.

3.3.1 Research method

In order to investigate the reintegration process of young gang members into society, a qualitative research method seems to be appropriate for several reasons. Firstly, the purpose of the research is to get a profound understanding of – once a person got involved as a gang member – the reasons way and how young gang members can leave a gang. It will be investigated how gang members experience this process and thus their life histories matter (Silverman, 2013). Secondly, qualitative data can be “*inherently more ‘interesting’ than numbers*” (Silverman, 2013, p. 12). This is definitely the case for this research, as it is the aim to

acquire in-depth information from the respondents who will be interviewed with respect to their experiences with young gang members who want to reintegrate into society. Thirdly, choosing for a qualitative research design includes a practical matter too (Silverman, 2013). There are no lists available with names and details of all gang members in Honduras. When using a qualitative design, we are able to interview stakeholders and thus get access to the field via personal contacts.

3.3.2 Sampling process

This part discusses the research population, the research sample, the sampling techniques that will be used, and how access to the sources of information will be guaranteed.

3.3.2.1 Research population

The research population exists out of a larger entity of individuals with specific characteristics. The research cannot include the whole research population and the limits, along with the criteria of inclusion, will be discussed (Mortelmans, 2010).

Firstly, only organizations, institutions or individuals located in Honduras can be selected for the research. Secondly, both ambulant and residential programs will be investigated. Thirdly, it must be stated clearly that gang members as such will not be interviewed directly, due to safety reasons. The information will thus be gathered via secondary instances (people working with the youngsters). Fourthly, governmental as well as non-governmental organizations or individual actors will be included in the research population.

3.3.2.2 Research sample

In order to make an investigation of the research population possible (without including the entire population), 10-15 sample units are selected in Honduras. The research units are not elected from an existing sampling frame (Mortelmans, 2010), but they are chosen based upon inclusion criteria (cf. 3.3.2.1). Attention will be paid to all categories of the research population. It is in the interest of the research to differentiate between programs created by governmental and non-governmental organizations. The latter is often more critical towards the government policies and can give a specific meaning to its program. While governmental organizations, on the other hand, are interesting to get a view on what the government's focus is. Besides these

organizations, professors and academics that setup, monitor or evaluate certain programs are also interviewed to get insight in the academic approach of dealing with youth gang membership.

3.3.2.3 Sampling techniques

For this qualitative research, several sampling techniques are used. Firstly, the technique of non-random, purposive sampling is applied. Drawing a purposive non-random sample means that especially information rich cases are elected for the research sample, i.e. respondents who can give information on reintegration processes of young gang members. Secondly, in order to get an insight in the different visions of methods of reintegration processes of gang members, we strived for heterogeneity or maximum variation between the sample units. This means that a balance is sought between information on programs implemented by governmental and non-governmental organizations, complemented with the expertise of academics. Thirdly, because the research team is not very familiar with the research field of youth gangs in Honduras, and for the sake of including the right people in the research sample, the method of snowball sampling is also used during the data gathering (Mortelmans, 2010).

3.3.2.4 Access to sources of information

The units are elected via contacts of both Prof. Parmentier and dr. Van Wijnendaele. Before heading to the field, internet research has been done to contact research units via e-mail and telephone. Most of the Honduran respondents were contacted via the University Institute of Democracy, Peace and Security (*Instituto Universitario de Democracia, Paz y Seguridad; IUDPAS*), in Tegucigalpa. The team of IUDPAS can be seen as ‘key figures’ that can facilitate access to the field of research (Vander Laenen, 2010). The IUDPAS team has a lot of contacts all over the capital and the rest of the country.

3.3.3 Data collection

For this research, the method of qualitative interviews is used, in order to “‘*get inside the heads of particular groups of people and to tell things from their ‘point of view’*” (Silverman, 2013, p. 201). This means that respondents are free to discuss their findings on the intervention methods of their own projects as well as methods used in other projects. In total 26 interviews were taken in the five Central American countries, but only the 14 interviews conducted in Honduras were

used, as this is the focus of the study. In order to be able to analyze the interviews, they were recorded and transcribed (Silverman, 2013).

As mentioned above, the information was gathered by interviewing the sample units via semi-structured interviews, using a topic list (see Annex 1 and 2) to guide the interview (Beyens & Tournel, 2010; Silverman, 2013). The topic list consists of six parts. The first part is the ‘general’ part, where general questions are asked; for example: “how is your work related to gang members?” This question is used as a step towards some more specific questions and to get an insight in the functioning of the organization or to get insight in the work of the respondent. The second part is the ‘prevention’ part. Organizations who work with young gang members, who want to reintegrate in society, often simultaneously work preventively. It is thus in the interest of the research to find out if a certain organization also pays attention to the prevention of gang membership in its programs. The third part is the ‘life-of-a-gang-member’ part. The aim of this part is to get an insight in how and why youngsters get involved in gangs. This information can help to get an insight in the process (and difficulties) of leaving the gang. This brings us to the fourth part or the ‘leaving-the-gang’ part. The questions of this part ask about the motivation of youngsters who want to leave the gang and which obstacles they (and those who don’t leave the gang) meet on their way out. After these questions, the interview focuses on the reintegration process of gang members. This is the fifth part, which investigates intervention methods (good and bad practices) of reintegration programs or actions. It also includes a question about the importance of religion in the reintegration process, as Honduras is a very religious country. Then the sixth and last part of the topic list handles the ‘durable-life-change’ part. In this part following question is asked: “how can you prevent that former gang members fall back into old habits?” At the end of the interview, the interviewer always asks the respondent if he or she would like to talk about another topic which seems to be important to him or her regarding the reintegration of gang members, in order to give the respondent the chance to add anything to the interview.

3.3.4 Data analysis

The research data is analyzed using the qualitative software program Nvivo. Nvivo can facilitate the coding of the transcribed interviews (Decorte, 2010). This helps to structure the findings on

processes of gang membership and integration into society, as it would otherwise be difficult to derive these processes from a continuous text.

The coding tree which is used during the coding of the interviews is attached in annex (see Annex 3). The coding tree is used to structure the interview data and to generate meaning to the gathered information.

In order to be able to test or confirm the findings, the constant comparing method is used. Already coded interview fragments are compared to new (yet to be coded) fragments (Decorte, 2010). This mainly implies that fragments on a particular concept, e.g. 'community-based', are compared in order to obtain a nuanced view on how different organizations incorporate, for example, the 'community principle' into their program.

3.3.5 Quality of research

In this part the measurements to ensure the validity and reliability of the data analysis, which needs to guarantee the quality of the research, is discussed.

3.3.5.1 Validity

Two strategies are used during the data collection and analysis in order to guarantee the validity of the research.

The first strategy that will be used is the 'constant comparative method'. The constant comparative method implies that all data fragments are to be analyzed and compared with the other data fragments (Silverman, 2013). The constant comparative method is crucial for this research, as the aim is to find out differences between all the different organizations and actors in the field of reintegration of young gang members. Methods and findings from the programs of non-governmental organizations are compared with intervention methods of governmental organizations.

The second strategy used is the method of 'comprehensive data treatment'. This method resembles the previous, as it also implies that all data are to be analyzed, but it focuses more on "*anomalies or deviant cases*" (Silverman, 2013, pp. 291-292). The aim of this method is to achieve generalization of the data. During the data analysis it will become clear that the diverse categories of respondents differ in their work and opinion on the reintegration of young gang members. These differences are examined and analyzed simultaneously, in order to obtain generalization of a theory.

3.3.5.2 Reliability

An additional two strategies are used during the data collection and analysis in order to guarantee the reliability of the research.

The first strategy is the method of ‘low-inference descriptors’ (Silverman, 2013). During the data analysis, the recorded interviews are transcribed very precisely (word for word). Although the transcription and reporting are anonymously, other researchers could analyze the transcribed interviews in order to investigate if they reach the same conclusions. In annex a list of the interviews is provided (see annex 4). This list includes the date of interview, category of respondent, and, if allowed, their function. For privacy reasons, no names are given.

The second strategy used, to guarantee the reliability of the research, is the method of transparency (Maesschalck, 2010). This method builds upon the previous method, as it aims to provide the data to other researchers. This method recognizes the problem of privacy, and as mentioned above, no names are publicized. Notwithstanding the foregoing however, transparency is pursued, by reporting very precisely which methodological choices are made and how those choices thus influence the results.

The above discussed methodology of research was used to implement our investigation on the field. The results of this investigation are outlined in the next chapter.

4. Interview results

In this section the results of the data analysis will be exposed. The focus will be the main research question: ‘How can young gang members reintegrate into society?’ which will be answered via the following sub-questions:

1. For which reasons can young gang members leave the gang?
2. Which intervention methods can facilitate young gang members in their process of leaving the gang and reintegrating in society?

In order to be able to answer these questions, we first need to know why youngsters get involved with gangs in the first place. Secondly, the first sub-question regarding the ways of leaving a gang will be discussed. Thirdly, the intervention methods used by Honduran organizations which work on the reintegration of gang members will be presented and evaluated.

4.1 Gang involvement

Most respondents agree upon the fact that gang involvement is a gradual process whereby a youngster has a first informal contact with gang members, then subsequently carries out some small tasks. These tasks become increasingly more frequent and with greater responsibility, and this eventually – after earning the gang’s trust – provides the youngster with a certain position within the gang. M. Flores of Proyecto Victoria describes the hierarchy which the gang maintains. On the lowest level we can find the Aspirant (*Aspirante*) and the Sympathizer (*Simpatizante*), which do not yet belong to the gang. After going through the initiation rite, an Aspirant or Sympathizer becomes a Newbie (*Novato*). The Newbie can later on evolve to a Permanent Member (*Miembro Permanente*). On the highest level is the Leader (*Líder*) of the group.

There are several reasons for a young girl or boy to get involved with a gang: firstly, the lack of socio-economic opportunities in Honduras, which also include the high number of youngsters not attending school; secondly, a (problematic) family and environmental situation in which a youngster is raised; thirdly, the willingness to belong to a gang in order to maintain a certain status within society; and fourthly, the fact that youngsters are seduced (whether or not using the threat of violence) by the gang to become a part of their gang.

Firstly, according to Casa Alianza, more than 70% of the children in Honduras are raised in poverty. Along with M. Obando and S. Stadthagen, they state that these children often grow up without a father (according to C. Díaz, 70% grow up in single mother families), little or no access to proper healthcare, education, recreation, or a job. Although the work opportunities are scarce, S. Stadthagen states that children growing up in a single parent household, are often obliged to go out to work, in order to sustain their family. On the other hand, M. Flores states that 816.000 youngster in Honduras are not going to school or working, and are, also according to M. Obando, most likely to be found on the streets or forming part of a gang. Also O. Lopez confirms that not going to school forms a risk for gang involvement. Along with S. Stadthagen, M. Obando and the Pastor argue that one of the problems of children not going to school is the fact that elementary schools and especially higher education schools are not within reach of youngsters living in rural or remote areas.

Imagine a child, an adolescent, without the possibility of going to school or they [his parents - EVD] did not register him into school; in his household there is possibly no father or the present father is violent or a violent stepfather; the economic situation is very limited; there is access to drugs; his community is dark 24 hours a day; he does not have, let's say, services which middle class boys have. That is, all those limitations lead him towards the side of these groups. (D. Urbina, personal communication, August 22, 2013)³⁹

Even though youngsters grow up in the same area, some of them might get involved with a gang, while others might not, because of a difference in opportunities. I. Pereyra argues that youngsters, who are financially and emotionally supported by their family to go to school, are less likely to form part of a gang. Also the community police officer states that youngsters that do not receive the necessary support from their parents or family could have a greater motivation to become involved with a gang.

On top of that, C. Díaz discusses that even for those who graduate from university; there is a great lack of employment opportunities. This lack of employment is also according to our other respondents a risk factor for gang involvement. I. Pereyra states that youngsters are attracted to job opportunities within a gang (e.g. selling drugs), because they can easily earn a lot of money.

Secondly, the problematic family situation of a child can also have an influence on one's involvement with a gang. As already stated above by M. Obando and C. Díaz, a lot of households in Honduras are run by a single mother. M. Obando adds that parents are often irresponsible towards their children and do not control them enough.

Also, another factor is the parents' permissiveness, right. Parents allow a lot of things they are unaware, right, of the objective of the youngsters. For example: many parents

³⁹ *“Imagínate un niño, un adolescente, que no tiene posibilidades de ir a la escuela o no le matriculan en la escuela; que posiblemente es su hogar no exista un papa o el papa que existe es un violento o un padrastro violento; el nivel económico es muy limitado; existe acceso a drogas; las 24 horas del día su comunidad es oscura; no tiene, digamos, servicios que tienen los muchachos de clase media. O sea, todas estas limitaciones lo guían hacia la parte de estos grupos.” (D. Urbina, personal communication, August 22, 2013).*

allow their children to go to wherever they want, without knowing the risks that are present in those areas. (M. Obando, personal communication, August 28, 2013)⁴⁰

On the other hand, A. Rodriguez does believe that parents take their responsibilities towards their children in sending them to school. He states that youngsters simply cannot find the affection and values they are seeking for within their family and thus try to encounter this within a gang.

M. Obando and O. Lopez also highlight the impact of domestic violence on children. When children grow up in an environment where violence from the husband towards his wife or, from the parents towards their children occurs on a frequent basis, these children are also more likely to be violent towards other people. Besides violence, the poverty in which a child has been raised also forms a risk for becoming involved with a gang.

Next, it became attractive especially for the youngsters who have suffered from domestic violence, who have lived in the streets, who have become orphans. So they encounter, within gangs, a surrogate home; where they are fed, where they are dressed, where they are accepted, they have their norms of the violent situation; but it is something the family or society cannot give them. (the Pastor, personal communication, August 23, 2013)⁴¹

On the other hand, I. Pereyra argues that not all gang members come from a poor family. He states that *“there are also people that even though they have economic stability, they do not have social stability or social stability at home. En the group [i.e. gang] does give them this stability; so they become part of the group”* (I. Pereyra, personal communication, August 27, 2013).⁴²

Most respondents agree upon the fact that youngsters seek for emotional support within a gang, which they sometimes cannot encounter within their own family. Or, as stated by A. Rodriguez

⁴⁰ *“Igualmente, otro factor es la permisividad de los padres, verdad. Los padres permiten muchas cosas que no saben, verdad, cual es el objetivo de los jóvenes. Por ejemplo: muchos padres dejan que sus hijos vayan a cualquier lugar sin saber los peligros que representan estos lugares.”* (M. Obando, personal communication, August 28, 2013).

⁴¹ *“Luego, fue como atractivo especialmente para jóvenes que han sufrido violencia familiar, que han vivido en la calle, que han quedado huérfanos. Entonces ellos encuentran, al interior de las pandillas, como un hogar sustitutivo; donde se alimentan, donde se visten, donde ellos son aceptado, tengan sus normas de la situación violenta; pero es algo lo que la familia o la sociedad no les puede dar.”* (the Pastor, personal communication, August 23, 2013).

⁴² *“también hay personas que aun que tengan estabilidad económica no tienen estabilidad social o estabilidad social en sus hogares. Y el grupo si le da esta estabilidad; entonces, se hace parte del grupo.”* (I. Pereyra, personal communication, August 27, 2013).

(personal communication, August 26, 2013): “[it is - EVD] like an alternative, this lack, this lack of affection which – and this is how they enter the gang, right.”⁴³

Last, but not least, some of our respondents (O. Lopez, M. Flores and the community police officer) mentioned that while parental control is often lacking, the media have an influence on children’s behavior. According to them, the media portray violence as a common issue within society and make it look like something natural to do.

Thirdly, according to our respondents, youngsters often want to belong to a gang in order to achieve a certain status within society and to encounter a place where they can develop their identity.

Interviewer: *And what do they find within a gang?*

Interviewee: *The feeling of belonging, which they do not have at their homes; unconditional support, despite of what they do; and also the economical aspect. And all the prestige, reputation within the communities where they live.* (Community police officer, personal communication, August 30, 2013)⁴⁴

The importance of the feeling of belonging to a group and to be recognized in such a way, of solidarity within the group, and the feeling to be able to exercise a certain power over others, is also confirmed by the Pastor, I. Pereyra, E. Bardales, O. Lopez and M. Flores. According to E. Bardales, youngsters are attracted to the lifestyle of gang members, which is often referred to as “*living the crazy live*” (E. Bardales, personal communication, August 22, 2013).⁴⁵

Fourthly, F. Hernández mentioned that there are 20 to 30 vulnerable neighborhoods in Tegucigalpa, where gangs dominate. When youngsters grow up in the aforementioned circumstances, they easily get in contact with a gang which can sustain him with security, financial goods, friendship, recreation, and sexual amusement; “*they offer you protection, they can offer you amusement, the type of amusement like drug consumption, sex, money; they help*

⁴³ “*Como un alternativa, esta falta, esta carencia de afecto que – y así se entran en la pandilla, verdad.*” (A. Rodriguez, personal communication, August 26, 2013).

⁴⁴ “**Entrevistador:** *¿Y que encuentran entonces en la pandilla?*”

Entrevistado: *El sentido de pertenencia, que no tienen dentro de sus hogares; apoyo incondicional, a pesar de lo que hagan; y también el aspecto económico. Y tanto de prestigio, reputación dentro de las comunidades en las cuales ellos habitan.* (Community police officer, personal communication, August 30, 2013)

⁴⁵ “*vivir la vida loca*” (E. Bardales, personal communication, August 22, 2013).

you when your family has problems or when someone is locked up in prison” (U. Herrera, personal communication, September 27, 2013).⁴⁶ According to U. Herrera, it also frequently happens that youngsters are blackmailed by their local ruling gang. If they do not agree to carry out a certain task, the gang threatens the youngster and/or his family with violence and sometimes even with death. U. Herrera (personal communication, September 27, 2013) states that: *“those who are not willing to join a gang will be hurt or their family will be hurt”*.⁴⁷

All respondents confirm that in order to enter a gang and be part of the gang includes committing and undergoing certain types of violence, from beating up someone to killing a rival gang member. Sociologist E. Bardales, along with U. Herrera and the Pastor, state that youngsters who enter a gang are aware of these risks and dangers, but they just do not see any alternative way of living.

We all know it; we all know it, that in order to integrate in a gang I have to integrate a share of blood. I.e. by executing [someone else - EVD], participating in an armed violent act or I myself suffered the consequences. (E. Bardales, personal communication, August 22, 2013)⁴⁸

4.2 Leaving the gang

This section concerns the first sub-question: ‘How and for which reasons can young gang members leave the gang?’ The reasons a gang member can or wants to leave his gang will be discussed, as well as the ways of leaving the gang. Knowing that leaving a gang is not an easy task, attention will also be given to the difficulties one can encounter when leaving a gang.

4.2.1 (Personal) reasons to leave the gang

There are several reasons for gang members to leave their gang: firstly, choosing an alternative way of living or outgrowing; secondly, reasons associated with the gang related violence one has

⁴⁶ *“te ofrecen una protección, te pueden ofrecer diversión, tipo de diversión como consumo de drogas, sexo, dinero; te apoyan si tu familia tiene problemas o cuando este alguien en preso interno”* (U. Herrera, personal communication, September 27, 2013).

⁴⁷ *“El que no se ingresa a la pandilla te van hacer daño a ti o a la familia”* (U. Herrera, personal communication, September 27, 2013).

⁴⁸ *“Todos lo sabemos; todos lo sabemos, que para ingresar a una mara o pandilla debo de integrar a una cuota de sangre. O sea por medio de la ejecución, de participaciones en un acto violento armado o yo mismo sufrí las consecuencias.* (E. Bardales, personal communication, August 22, 2013)

to deal with within a gang and the fear of dying within the gang; thirdly, family reasons and/or external opportunities (e.g. a legal job).

Firstly, A. Rodriguez states that some gang members leave their gang, because of an outgrowing process. Upon becoming an adult, they realize they have other, greater responsibilities (e.g. taking care of their family), which they cannot fulfill by maintaining their current lifestyle. The community police officer confirms that gang members might leave their gang when they grow older and realize that what they are doing is not right. Also Casa Alianza knows youngsters that used to form part of a gang and are currently trying to convince other youngsters to leave behind the violence.

I. Pereyra also confirms that gang members, at some point in their life mature and no longer want to continue with all the violence. D. Urbina (personal communication, August 22, 2013) agrees and states that: *“when they leave, it is because they are exhausted. when they are exhausted and discover that perhaps the solidarity they believed to encounter in this world, is not so much solidarity.”*⁴⁹

Secondly, M. Flores states that youngsters, when joining a gang, are often biased regarding the motives of the gang. He states that:

Initially their aim to enter a gang was self protection, self motivation, hanging out with nice cloths, tennis [shoes - EVD], having Money, having drugs, going out with women, having a gun. Afterwards, he has to rob, he has to kidnap, he has to extort, and he even has to kill. (M. Flores, personal communication, August 29, 2013)⁵⁰

As mentioned above by I Pereyra, gang members might reach a point where they cannot take the amount of violence anymore and thus decide to leave the gang.

The greatest motivation, according to M. Flores and U. Herrera, to leave the gang, is the fact that the youngsters, after committing acts of crime and violence, start to realize they have enemies,

⁴⁹ *“Cuando se salen, es porque ellos se agotan. ... cuando ellos se agotan y descubren de que tal vez la solidaridad que ellos creyeron encontrar en este mundo no es tanta solidaridad”* (D. Urbina, personal communication, August 22, 2013)

⁵⁰ *“Al principio el objetivo de ellos para entrar era autoprotección, auto motivación, andar con buena ropa, tenis, andar con dinero, andar con drogas, andar con mujeres, andar con un arma. Después él tiene que robar, tiene que secuestrar, tiene que extorsionar, e incluso tiene que matar.”* (M. Flores, personal communication, August 29, 2013)

and they start to realize they might end up being killed or, as stated by the community police, they fear for their family to be assassinated. In addition, S. Stadthagen (personal communication, August 29, 2013) states that gang members are “*pursued by everyone*”.⁵¹ The Pastor and I. Pereyra also mention that gang members might want to leave the gang, not only for the fear of external violence, but also for the fear and suffering of internal violence, within the group.

So, motivation: no longer doing this, because they end up having four enemies: enemy number one: the opposite group, the opposite gang; enemy number two: the police, that in a fight, a ... until he converts into an enemy, a member of the group with the police and they kill one another, so they are perceived as an enemy; three: people in society who have felts aggrieved or offended by this group. Many people, who suffered a death of a relative, are seeking for this group, this member, in order to kill him likewise; and the fourth enemy comes to be his own friend or partner of the group. When he wants to leave, this leads to the death; this is what they call in their jargon “giving green light”. (M. Flores, personal communication, August 29, 2013)⁵²

Internal group dynamics can also play a role in one’s decision to leave the gang. The Pastor states that one might leave the gang when he or she has “*committed an act against the gang*” (Pastor, personal communication, August 23, 2013).⁵³ Or, as mentioned by I. Pereyra, when the bond with the group or neighborhood (*barrio*) is not strong enough, or when a gang member is not able to reach a higher level within the gang, he or she might find it a better solution to leave the gang.

Thirdly, according to Casa Alianza, a gang member will only consider leaving his gang when he encounters a better alternative. Though, this is where the problem rises, as there is a lack of employment and other opportunities within the country. Other reasons mentioned are the family

⁵¹ “*perseguidos por todo*” (S. Stadthagen, personal communication, August 29, 2013).

⁵² “*Entonces, motivación: ya no seguir haciendo esto, porque llega tener cuatro enemigos: enemigo número uno: el grupo contrario, la mara contraria; enemigo número dos: la policía, que en una refriega, una ... hasta que se convierte enemigo, el miembro de un grupo con la policía y se mata uno otro, entonces se toma como un enemigo; tres: personas de la sociedad que se han sentido agraviadas o ofendidas por esto grupo. Muchas personas, que sufrieron una muerte de un familiar, andan buscando ese grupo, ese miembro, para darle muerte igualmente también; y el cuarto enemigo viene ser su mismo amigo o compañero del grupo. Cuando el ya se quiere salir, este termina dando muerte; es lo que llaman en el jargón de ellos “darle luz verde”.*” (M. Flores, personal communication, August 29, 2013)

⁵³ “*... cometido un acto en contra de la pandilla*” (Pastor, personal communication, August 23, 2013).

who asks or begs the gang member to leave or the gang member who wants to submit himself to God and the bible.

As mentioned above in regard of the maturing process of gang members, and highlighted by the Pastor, I. Pereyra, A. Rodriguez, D. Urbina and S. Stadthagen, once a gang member becomes a father or a mother, he or she starts thinking differently and might not want their children to live the same life as they did. The latter could be a reason for them to leave the gang. Other respondents state that if we want gang members to leave their gang, certain guarantees must be given to the youngster, which gives him or her a possibility to leave the gang and reintegrate into society.

I think there should be social conditions which can guarantee that these persons will not be persecuted; that doors will open for these persons, right; and that we should continue to believe that they form part of our society, not that they are maladapted to our society.
(I. Pereyra, personal communication, August 27, 2013)⁵⁴

Concerning external opportunities, the community police officer states that a gang member would be willing to leave his gang when he finds a job or alternative, although legal, way of earning money. But the lack of employment, as stated by M. Obando, is an interfering problem which hinders one's social reintegration process into society.

4.2.2 Ways of leaving the gang

When a gang member is willing to leave his gang, he has only a few options to do so: converting to religion, seeking for refuge in an institution or fleeing the country; though the latter is not that obvious.

According to a majority of our respondents, it is difficult for a gang member to leave his or her gang, without being assassinated. Even though M. Obando (personal communication, August 28, 2013) agrees, she also thinks there is a non-violent way to leave the gang, which is by converting to religion: *“Here in Honduras, the boys can only leave the gang for two reasons: or because they enter the church and they allow them to leave the gang if they dedicate themselves to the*

⁵⁴ *“Yo pienso que tiene que haber condiciones sociales que puedan garantizar que estas personas no van a ser perseguidas; de que estas personas se van abrir puertas, verdad; y que seguimos creyendo que son parte de nuestra sociedad, no que son desadaptada de la sociedad.”* (I. Pereyra, personal communication, August 27, 2013)

things of God, or because they die.”⁵⁵ M. Obando further states that gang members leaving the gang with permission have more chances to survive.

U. Herrera and I. Pereyra agree upon the fact that gang members can ask permission to their leader to leave the gang, in order to become a member of a church. Though the director of Casa Alianza states this does not happen frequently, and I. Pereyra (personal communication, August 27, 2013) also mentioned he or she “*should keep, as we say “straight” or well behaved*”.⁵⁶ Also C. Díaz (personal communication, August 28, 2013) confirms: “*you cannot go out with women, you cannot smoke, and you cannot drink. You have to go to church every day; there can be no days on which you do not go to church. If they see him on a party ... they give him green light and he dies.*”⁵⁷ I. Pereyra delves deeper into the question by saying that those who try to leave their gang, without converting to religion, will always be associated to a gang, even though he or she is not involved with illicit activities anymore. Though F. Hernández is more critical towards the possibility of leaving a gang by converting to religion; according to him it has become more difficult to leave, as he states:

*In its moment the church was the primary and only alternative, but nowadays it has changed, as they [gang members – EVD] say they [those who want to leave the gang – EVD] have played too much with the faith. Even when they are not [anymore – EVD] with the gang, they keep on doing the same thing. (F. Hernández, personal communication, August 29, 2013)*⁵⁸

G. Ruelas states that young gang members who want to leave their gang, in order not to be assassinated either seek refuge in an institution (like Casa Alianza) or flee their country. Though M. Obando highlights the dangerous of fleeing the country, as in most cases this occurs in illegal and unsafe circumstances.

⁵⁵ “*Aquí en Honduras los muchachos solo pueden abandonar la pandilla por dos razones: o porque entran a la iglesia y les permitan abandonar la pandilla si les dedican a las cosas de Dios, o porque se mueren*” (M. Obando, personal communication, August 28, 2013).

⁵⁶ “*tiene que andar, como nosotros lo decimos ‘derechito’, o sea bien portado*” (I. Pereyra, personal communication, August 27, 2013).

⁵⁷ “*no puedes andar con mujeres, no puedes fumar, no puedes beber. Tiene que ir a la iglesia todos los días, no hay días que no vayas a la iglesia. Si lo ven en una fiesta..., le dan luz verde y se muere*” (C. Díaz, personal communication, August 28, 2013).

⁵⁸ “*en su momento la iglesia era la alternativa primordial y la única, pero ahora ha cambiado, porque ellos dicen que han jugado mucho con la fe. Y no están con la pandilla, pero siguen haciendo cosas*” (F. Hernández, personal communication, August 29, 2013).

According to M. Flores it is very important that youngsters take the personal decision to leave their gang, without being forced by others. He adds that Proyecto Victoria only works with ex-gang members who left the gang and are willing to be involved in the project on a voluntary basis. Also the Pastor and A. Rodriguez confirm leaving the gang should be one's personal decision.

In this section we only discussed possibilities of leaving the gang, in order to be able reintegrate into society. Though, according to some of our respondents, this should not always necessarily be the case. As the Pastor (personal communication, August 23, 2013) we interviewed states: *"Although they say they always take the decision independently, but they continue to belong to the neighborhood ('barrio')."*⁵⁹ I. Pereyra also states that forming part of a group is something that is in the nature of every human being. Though the acts the group performs might not always be positive, the structure of the group as such is not necessarily negative; as gangs, according to I. Pereyra, often are very well structured and maintain a rather strict hierarchy.

*It is that removing them from the context of the gang, in my way, viewing the things in my experience, cannot be an objective. You have to see that they already constructed a set of values and within their set of values do not think one of their values is to kill the people that are my enemies, no. It is defending my neighborhood and loving it. It is a concept of love of belonging; of respect, like I said. (I. Pereyra, personal communication, August 27, 2013)*⁶⁰

E. Bardales states he does not ask the youngsters to leave their gang anymore, because he noticed how difficult it is for them to do, mindful of the risks associated to doing so. Rather, he advocates a process of easing out, whereby the gang members commit less violence and participate less in illicit activities.

⁵⁹ *"Aunque ellos dicen que siempre independiente la decisión que toman, pero ellos siguen perteneciendo al barrio"* (the Pastor, personal communication, August 23, 2013).

⁶⁰ *"Es que sacarlos del contexto de la pandilla, a mi modo, ver las cosas en mi experiencia, no puede ser un objetivo. Usted tiene que ver que ellos ya tienen construido un conjunto de valor y dentro de su conjunto de valores no crea usted que uno de sus valores es matar a todas las personas que son mis enemigos, no. Es defender mi barrio y amarlo. Es un concepto de amor de la pertenencia; de respeto como le decía."* (I. Pereyra, personal communication, August 27, 2013)

4.2.3 Difficulties of leaving the gang

As mentioned in the previous part, leaving the gang is not always a sinecure. One must cope with the possibility of reprisals by their gang and also with a society that is not willing to give them a second chance.

According to our respondents it depends on the level of integration within a gang, whether or not a member can (successfully) leave the gang. According to M. Flores, Sympathizers and Aspirants have up to 90% chances to leave the gang, as they have not gone through the initiation rite yet. Once initiated, a Newbie has only 50% chances to leave the gang. S. Stadthagen (personal communication, August 29, 2013) confirms this by saying: *“once they have gone through the initiation rite, it is very difficult to leave”*.⁶¹ A Permanent Member has 30-40% chances and a Leader has no less than 5-10% chances to leave the gang. The more a member is integrated within a gang, the slower the rehabilitation and reintegration process or *“psychological deprogramming”* (M. Flores, personal communication, August 29, 2013) process,⁶² which we will discuss in the next part, evolves. Also, U. Herrera states gang leaders are often the ones with psychiatric problems, which require more and more specific attention during the process of rehabilitation.

As mentioned above and confirmed by the experiences of M. Flores and S. Stadthagen, leaving the gang is often not possible and surely not without any risk. If a youngster gets permission from the gang to leave, he will be followed (shadowed) for one to two years and if he does anything wrong, i.e. if he starts using drugs again or commits any crime, the gang will execute him.

And when a boy left a gang and enters a church and they find out he steals, that he started using drugs again or something else, they kill him. And one already knows what the sign is: they put a Bible on his chest and... the mouth. They kill him because he did

⁶¹ *“si han pasado el rito de inserción, es muy difícil de salir”* (S. Stadthagen, personal communication, August 29, 2013).

⁶² *“desprogramación psicológica”* (M. Flores, personal communication, August 29, 2013).

not comply with what he was offered, right. (M. Obando, personal communication, August 28, 2013)⁶³

When the gang suspects one of their members of possibly leaving the gang and betraying the group, that member gets “Green Light”.

Green light is when they see someone wants to leave, betraying the group. So, in some cases they know a lot: the hierarchical order, the structure, how the commands are given, where the infiltrations are, etc. Thus, by knowing a lot, they end up killing him, because he wants to leave and he would possibly discuss or disclose names, strategies and all those things. (M. Flores, personal communication, August 29, 2013)⁶⁴

Many respondents, including academics such as sociologist C. Nuñez from UNAH, and social workers, like E. Bardales and S. Stadthagen, raised the issue of stigmatization by society, which impedes the reintegration process of (ex-) gang members. Most blame the government, with the repressive *Mano Dura* laws, but equally so the media, which often publishes articles on gang violence and assassination (which is in fact not always linked to gangs). The Pastor states that while the government implemented these strict so-called Anti-gang laws, they did not invest in the necessary conditions or platforms to give the youngsters a second chance. The Honduran citizens are very dismissive regarding (ex-) gang members and do not believe in second chances or the fact that a person could change. The tattoos some gang members have on visible spots, like their arms or faces, often refer to a particular gang. Thus, even when a youngster left his gang, his tattoos will remind others of his affiliation with a gang.

It is extremely difficult for a person to leave a gang, here in Honduras. In the sense that we are a society that stigmatizes people. It is to say, here, the simple fact that you see a tattooed person, here they already associate the person with being a drug addict, they

⁶³ “Y si un muchacho abandonó a una pandilla y entra en una iglesia y encuentran que roba, que volvió a usar drogas o algo, lo matan. Y uno ya sabe cuál es el signo: le ponen una Biblia sobre el pecho y... la boca. Lo matan porque no cumplió con lo que había ofrecido, verdad.” (M. Obando, personal communication, August 28, 2013)

⁶⁴ “Luz verde es cuando miran que uno se quiere salir traicionando el grupo. Entonces, en algunos casos saben bastante: el orden jerárquico, la estructura, como van los mandos, donde están las infiltraciones, etcétera. Entonces, al saber bastante, terminan dándole muerte, porque se quiere salir y posiblemente comente o divulgue nombres, estrategias y todas esas cosas.” (M. Flores, personal communication, August 29, 2013)

associate him with being a person that can be involved in criminal activities.
(Community police officer, personal communication, August 30, 2013)⁶⁵

According to D. Urbina and M. Obando it is thus very important to remove the tattoos, in order to prevent further stigmatization. But according to other respondents the removal of tattoos is not sufficient, as society is not willing to give an ex-gang member a second chance.

The NGO, working with youth, also warns for the net-widening of stigmatization. Not only juvenile gangs, but also other groups of youngsters are being stigmatized and blamed for violence in the community. *“We did not have the phenomenon of stigmatization of barras, like we have today, but it mutated after the phenomenon, because the gangs were the first to radicalize”* (NGO, working with youth, personal communication, August 22, 2013).⁶⁶

The above discussed difficulties to leave the gang all refer to external actors or acts, which hinder the reintegration process. Additionally, there are internal aspects, within the personality of the gang member himself, that impede the reintegration process. As I. Pereyra mentioned:

Even though he leaves the gang, within himself he built his identity, he may still have the whole idea of the neighborhood. You do not take out their neighborhood. They continue speaking the same; they continue thinking the same; they continue to feel the same. (I. Pereyra, personal communication, August 27, 2013)⁶⁷

When taking into account all the above mentioned difficulties to leave a gang, one might consider staying in the gang, in order not to be exposed to the risks and hazards when leaving the gang. As already mentioned by I. Pereyra, J. Flores confirms that gang members incorporate a certain lifestyle. J. Flores states youngsters might be willing to stay in the gang, because the only thing they know is *“collect the war tax, killing and all”*,⁶⁸ and gang members would feel obliged to stay in the gang, because *“if I leave here, I will starve. I cannot maintain my family, I will not*

⁶⁵ *“Es sumamente difícil para que una persona abandone una pandilla aquí en Honduras. En el sentido de que somos una sociedad que estigmatiza a las personas. O sea aquí, el simple hecho que usted vea a una persona tatuada, aquí ya lo asocien que es una persona adicta a las drogas, le asocien a que es una persona que puede estar involucrado en actividades criminales.”* (Community police officer, personal communication, August 30, 2013)

⁶⁶ *“No teníamos el fenómeno de estigmatización de barras como ahora, pero va mutado después del fenómeno, porque se radicalizo primero a las maras”* (NGO, working with youth, personal communication, August 22, 2013).

⁶⁷ *“Aunque se salga de la pandilla, él dentro de sí mismo construía su identidad, puede tener todavía toda la idea del barrio. Tú no sacas el barrio de ellos. Ellos siguen hablando igual, siguen creyendo igual, siguen pensando igual, siguen sintiendo igual”* (I. Pereyra, personal communication, August 27, 2013)

⁶⁸ *“cobrar el impuesto de guerra, sicarito y todo”* (J. Flores, personal communication, September 27, 2013).

have the power I have, I will not have the vehicle that I maybe have” (J. Flores, personal communication, September 27, 2013).⁶⁹ According to U. Herrera, another reason to stay in the gang is to take revenge on those who killed their relatives; or as stated by the Director of Casa Alianza:

So even though I am in a gang, I suffer violence there, but I am respected by the police, I am respected and feared by society, by the police and some form of this violence. Although inside [the gang – EVD] I suffer from more controlled violence. When I am not a member of the gang, then I will be followed by social actors and I will also be followed by the gang. (G. Ruelas, personal communication, September 27, 2013)⁷⁰

4.3 Reintegration into society

Regarding the methods and tools of reintegration of young (ex-) gang members, the following parts, which are also outlined in table one, will be discussed: the community based principle, psychological attention, medical attention, vocational training and employment. These aspects are outlined with examples from the field in Annex 6.

4.3.1 Community based

The four most discussed community based reintegration tools will be highlighted in this section: the local community, the family, the school, and the church or religious community.

Local community

According to the majority of our respondents, the reintegration process should take place as close to one’s community as possible. O. Lopez, I. Pereyra, A. Rodriguez and D. Urbina also state that it is important to focus, during the rehabilitation process, on rebuilding or strengthening the relationship with the community. A reconciliation process should take place, whereby the people of the local community are willing to give the ex-gang member a second chance.

⁶⁹ *“si me salgo aquí, muero de hambre. No puedo mantener a mi familia, no voy a tener el poder que tengo, no voy a tener el vehículo tal vez que tengo”*

⁷⁰ *“Entonces aunque si yo estoy en una pandilla, sufro violencia allí, pero soy respetado por la policía, soy respetado y temido, por la sociedad, por la policía y cierta forma de esta violencia. Aunque adentro sufro violencia más controlado. Si no soy miembro de la pandilla, entonces voy a ser seguido por actores sociales y voy a ser seguido también por la pandilla.”* (G. Ruelas, personal communication, September 27, 2013)

The so-called truce between the MS 13 and the *Barrio 18*, as discussed by U. Herrera, I. Pereyra and D. Urbina, is an example of reconciliation between gang members and society. Though, not everyone is convinced of this truce; as the community police officer (personal communication, August 30, 2013) stated: *“What happened here was a presentation of some gang members, whereby they asked society to forgive them for the crimes they have committed; but they keep on doing the same thing”*.⁷¹

M. Obando and G. Ruelas talked about the recuperation of public spaces, as another example of bringing together the community. According to G. Ruelas, in order to unite the community and reduce the violence, more community events, like sports, music, theater and other festivities, should be organized and, in order to guarantee the safety, supervised by the police.

Although most of our respondents agree upon the fact that the process of rehabilitation and reintegration should take place as close to one’s local community as possible, some respondents stressed the possible dangers of rehabilitation and reintegration in one’s own community. According to the community police officer (personal communication, August 30, 2013) it can be necessary to:

*“Also relocate them to other places where the environment is not that hostile. Because it is of no use to grab a gang member, remove him, take him for a treatment and put him back in the same place. He will return to [do – EVD] the same thing.”*⁷²

As we will see in the ‘Education’ section, also Proyecto Victoria focuses more on isolating a gang member from his environment, in order to protect him from any external violence or reprisals.

Family

According to our respondents, it is necessary to include the family aspect into the reintegration process of youth gang members. According to M. Flores, M. Obando and G. Ruelas it is

⁷¹ *“Aquí lo que hubo fue una presentación de algunos miembros de pandillas, en lo cual ellos solamente pidieron perdón a la sociedad, por el crimen que han cometido; y siguiendo lo mismo.”* (Community police officer, personal communication, August 30, 2013)

⁷² *“reubicarlos también en otros lugares donde el ambiente no sea hostil pues. Porque de nada nos sirve agarrar un miembro de la mara, sacarlo, llevarlo dar un tratamiento y volver meterlo en el mismo lugar. Vuelve de lo mismo”* (Community police officer, personal communication, August 30, 2013).

important to maintain regular contact with the family during the rehabilitation process and to receive the family's cooperation, in order to be able to reintegrate the youngster into his family and community in a later stage.

And the third step, that within the rehabilitation, because we are talking about social reinsertion; which is: a new approach with the family, no boy leaves a gang alone. They cannot, they cannot. Either with his original family or with the new family he has, because very early they have a family. (M. Obando, personal communication, August 28, 2013)⁷³

M. Flores, U. Herrera and M. Obando state family counseling can be useful to strengthen or rebuild the family ties. For M. Flores (personal communication, August 29, 2013) this family counseling includes that *“we talk about this situation, about the fact that at their homes there should be a fortitude that avoids drugs and violence”*.⁷⁴

M. Obando states the support of the family is an important asset. When the family lacks the necessary resources to support their child (e.g. in sending their child to school), the family should, according to the community police officer, C. Díaz and U. Herrera, receive support in order to comply with its obligations towards their son or daughter.

The Emanuelito Project works with street children, but they are children at risk of gangs. Because of that they work with the child and the family. So they do work holistically. And when the mother has no job and does not know how to maintain, then they support the mother so that she is also able to maintain her family. (C. Díaz, personal communication, August 28, 2013)⁷⁵

⁷³ *“Y el tercer paso, que dentro de la rehabilitación, porque estamos hablando de la reinsertión social; que es: un nuevo acercamiento con la familia, ningún muchacho sale de una pandilla solo. No pueden, no pueden. Sea con su familia originaria o con la nueva familia que tienen, porque tienen familia muy temprano.”* (M. Obando, personal communication, August 28, 2013)

⁷⁴ *“... sobre que en el lugar debe existir una fortaleza que evite drogas, violencia”* (M. Flores, personal communication, August 29, 2013).

⁷⁵ *“El Proyecto Emanuelito trabaja con niños en calle, pero son niños en riesgo de maras. Por eso ellos trabajan con el niño y con la familia. Entonces ellos si trabajan de manera integral. Y si la mama no tiene un oficio y no sabe a como mantener, entonces ellos ayuden a la mama para que también pueda sostener a su familia.”* (C. Díaz, personal communication, August 28, 2013)

Education

After being brought back in contact with the family, Casa Alianza makes sure the youngster picks up his educational studies again. Moreover, the NGO working with youth helps youngsters to seek and participate in educational opportunities; as this keeps youngsters away from the street and from gangs. “*They do not go to school, so in the end many children are recruited by gangs...*” (NGO working with youth, personal communication, August 22, 2013).⁷⁶ Also U. Herrera, O. Lopez, M. Obando and A. Rodriguez confirm the importance of reinserting the youngster into the educational system, as part of his reintegration process. Though M. Obando admits that going to school is not a guarantee to stay out of a gang, but at school the teachers can at least get a sense of what is going on in their pupils’ lives and possibly act upon this. One example of a additional school-based method to keep children of the street is the ‘Open School’ (*‘Escuelas Abiertas’*) system.

The teachers are now obliged to go [to school – EVD] the Saturday mornings. Said the minister of education the other day, and he is right, if Saturday in the morning of the day the teachers do not give classes or they do not want to do anything with the children, the mere fact they are at school already separates them half a day from the street. So with the Scout Association of Honduras, the National Prevention Program is making an effort to train teachers. And those weekends the school remains open, but not only for the children, also for the parents, to do some activities. (M. Obando, personal communication, August 28, 2013)⁷⁷

Proyecto Victoria, on the other hand, does not have contact with the school were the youngster used to go to, because they want to protect the ex-gang members, involved in the rehabilitation program, from reprisals by former schoolmates or gang members.

⁷⁶ “*Ellos no van a la escuela, entonces al final muchos niños están reclutadas por las maras...*” (NGO working with youth, personal communication, August 22, 2013).

⁷⁷ “*Los maestros están obligado ahora ir los sábados por la mañana. Dice el otro día el ministro de educación, y tiene mucha razón, si el sábado en la jornada de la mañana los maestros no le dan clases o no quieren hacer nada con los niños, el solo hecho que estén en la escuela ya los separa media jornada de la calle. Entonces con lo Asociación de Scout de Honduras, el Programa Nacional de Prevención está haciendo un esfuerzo de formación de los maestros. Y estos fines de semana la escuela permanece abierta pero no solamente para los niños, también para los padres, para hacer algunas actividades.*” (M. Obando, personal communication, August 28, 2013)

With his school no. Because many times – for example, the boy is from San Pedro Sula, he comes up here incognito. So, we cannot go and say “he is there in Proyecto Victoria”, because it can be dangerous; they can come over here to remove him from the rehabilitation center. (M. Flores, personal communication, August 29, 2013)⁷⁸

Church and religion

Generally, all our respondents, academics as well as social workers, acknowledge the positive influence of religion regarding the rehabilitation and reintegration process of ex-gang members. Proyecto Victoria uses the Bible to draw similarities between the life of a gang member and what is written in the Bible, in order to convince youngsters of the fact they all receive a second chance from God, regardless of what they did wrong in their past.

So, we tell them that God is not there to point out or judge anyone. Likewise we are [not – EVD] there to point out, nor to judge anyone. We do what the Bible says. The Bible says: “... therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature”. The old things have passed and here all things become new. So, we talk a lot about forgiveness. (M. Flores, personal communication, August 29, 2013)⁷⁹

Though E. Bardales does not perceive religion as the ultimate solution in rehabilitating ex-gang members, he does believe in the strength of the dynamics of religious groups.

Interviewer: *And how about religion, like the Christian or Catholic Church? What is your opinion on that?*

Interviewee: *It is not a solution. It is a partial response. During my best moment of social work with gangs, I articulated religion as part of the response model. And not so much*

⁷⁸ *“Con la escuela de él, no. Porque muchas veces – por ejemplo, el muchacho es de San Pedro Sula, viene hasta acá de manera incógnita. Entonces, no podemos ir a decir “allá en Proyecto Victoria está él”, porque puede ser peligroso; pueden venirse allá irlo a sacar del centro de rehabilitación.” (M. Flores, personal communication, August 29, 2013)*

⁷⁹ *“Entonces, les hablamos que Dios no está para señalar, ni juzgar a nadie. Igualmente nosotros estamos para señalar, ni juzgar a nadie. Hacemos lo que dice la biblia. Dice la biblia: “... por tanto si alguno está en Cristo, nueva creatura es”. Las cosas viejas pasaron y aquí todos son hechas nuevas. Entonces, hablamos bastante del perdón.” (M. Flores, personal communication, August 29, 2013)*

for the theological inspiration, no. But for the dynamics of the religious groups, because they are dynamic. (E. Bardales, personal communication, August 22, 2013)⁸⁰

However, C. Díaz also refers to the limitations of religion in regard of the rehabilitation of ex-gang members, as religious methods are often only based on the word of God and lack in most cases the aspect of a psychological support.

According to the community police officer, religious people, especially from the Christian community, can facilitate the access to certain areas in conflict and thereby assist the community police in their work, as they often more easily receive access to certain areas than others.

The Pastor we interviewed works with all sorts of inmates. Of those belonging to a gang, he experiences that members of *Barrio 18* are more attached to God than MS 13. This has as a consequence that it is easier for a *Barrio 18* member to leave his gang when converting to religion, than it is for a MS 13 member. One reason, according to our respondents, might be the fact that MS 13 have a more rigid structure, whereby it is more difficult to get out of this structure.

4.3.3 Psychological treatment

The psychologists we interviewed, C. Díaz and I. Pereyra, underscore the importance of including psychological treatment in the rehabilitation process. M. Obando also mentions the aspect of counseling, more specifically family counseling.

Regarding psychological treatment within Casa Alianza, U. Herrera (personal communication, September 27, 2013) highlights the importance of separating the youngster from their gang, as youngsters “*in gangs are much more violent than alone*”.⁸¹ I. Pereyra describes the process of depersonalization, which makes it easier for a person to commit a crime, without feeling any emotions of regret or guilt. According to him, this aspect of depersonalization needs to be handled.

⁸⁰ “**Entrevistador:** *¿Y qué tal la religión, como la iglesia cristiana o católica? ¿Qué es su opinión sobre eso?*

Entrevistado: *No es una solución. Es una respuesta parcial. En mi mejor momento de trabajo social con maras y pandillas, yo articule a la religión como parte de modelo de respuesta. Y no tanto por la inspiración teológica, no. Sino por la dinámica de los grupos religiosos, porque son dinámicos.*” (E. Bardales, personal communication, August 22, 2013)

⁸¹ “*en pandillas en maras, son mucho más violentos que solos*” (U. Herrera, personal communication, September 27, 2013).

On the other hand, U. Herrera also stresses the importance of working with the group and the community as a whole, as isolated interventions are less effective than collective interventions. A. Rodriguez is also more critical towards the focus on psychological treatment of gang members. In his opinion, by focusing on the psychological aspect, we forget that the problem of gang membership is a social and not an individual problem. Thus it needs to be handles in a collective, a public way, and not in an individual way.

According to our respondents, working on one's self-esteem is an important aspect of the reintegration process. The youngsters, coming to Casa Alianza, often have a negative self-esteem or have the feeling they need to be feared, by conducting violent acts, in order to be respected. G. Ruelas (personal communication, September 27, 2013) states that the youngsters "*are not visible within their communities, they are anonymous, they are instruments of violence, nothing more. Over here they become visible. So they encounter opportunities to be someone, to be recognized, to be respected, though not being feared.*"⁸²

M. Flores described a specific approach of psychological treatment which they use in Proyecto Victoria: psychological deprogramming. Psychological deprogramming includes trying to change the psychological mindset of ex-gang members, by working on their self-esteem and teaching them new values. Those new values include: respect (also towards those who think differently), tolerance, comprehension, patience, self-control, mutual love between human beings, respect to the law and authorities, and also religious (Christian) values. With respect to working on their self-esteem, Proyecto Victoria tries to teach the youngsters that they are all equal, wherever they come from, to whatever group they belong or whatever cloths they are wearing.

The philosophy that we implement is a therapy within the therapeutic plan; changing the way they think, is changing their way of living. They are internal within Project Victoria; they stay for seven months or more. During that time of being within Project Victoria,

⁸² "*en sus comunidades no son visibles, son anónimos, son instrumentos de violencia, nada más. Aquí se hacen visibles. Entonces encuentran oportunidades de ser alguien, de ser reconocido, de ser respetados aunque no sean temidos*" (G. Ruelas, personal communication, September 27, 2013).

they are acquiring new habits, new values. (M. Flores, personal communication, August 29, 2013)⁸³

4.3.4 Medical treatment

Some organizations, like Casa Alianza, provide general medical care for the youngsters of their project. Proyecto Victoria and UNICEF also provide special care to drug addicts, in order to overcome their drug addiction, and AJH-USAID financially supported FUNDASALVA, which is a rehabilitation project for drug addicts (in El Salvador). Also M. Obando (personal communication, August 28, 2013) confirms that: “... *there should be a rehabilitation program which takes into consideration [drug – EVD] consumption and addictions, but also a serious effort to get him out of the gang.*”⁸⁴

Besides general and drug related care, some organizations, like PNPRRS and UNICEF, also focus on the removal of tattoos. M. Obando perceives the removal of tattoos as an ultimate step in the process of rehabilitation, which functions as a step towards the process of reintegration.

... That is where the program of the removal of tattoos operates, because it is like the final phase. The boy has demonstrated that he is going through his rehabilitation program, he starts removing his tattoos and he reaches the third step which is the social reinsertion program. (M. Obando, personal communication, August 28, 2013)⁸⁵

On the other hand, M. Obanda is also critical regarding the removal of tattoos in order to be able to reintegrate into society. She argues that society should be more tolerant towards people with tattoos. Academics, like A. Rodriguez, O. Lopez and I. Pereyra, follow her opinion and state that the stigmatizing effect of tattoos is due to the close-minded attitude of the people; more specifically the close-minded attitude of employers who do not want to employ an (alleged) (ex)

⁸³ “*La filosofía que nosotros ponemos, es una terapia dentro del plan terapéutico; cambian su manera de pensar, cambiar su manera de vivir. Ellos están interno dentro del Proyecto Victoria; están siete meses hasta más. En este tiempo de estar dentro de Proyecto Victoria, están adquiriendo nuevos hábitos, nuevos valores.*” (M. Flores, personal communication, August 29, 2013)

⁸⁴ “... *tiene que haber un programa de rehabilitación en lo que se refiera al consumo y lo que refiera adicciones, pero también un seria de esfuerzos de sacarlo de la pandilla.*” (M. Obando, personal communication, August 28, 2013).

⁸⁵ “... *allí donde funcione el programa de borrarles los tatuajes, porque es como la última etapa. El muchacho ha demostrado que esta yendo su programa de rehabilitación, empieza borrarse sus tatuajes y llega al tercer paso que es el programa de reinsertión social.*” (M. Obando, personal communication, August 28, 2013)

gang member. The academics would even recommend not removing the tattoo, as a visible scar will always remind others that the person once had a tattoo and thus, in their opinion, once formed part of a gang.

It leaves behind scars and that was a mark. So, we created a conclusion in our study: the society is the one who has the tattoo. The social tattoo is there, it is on the other side; because they do not allow the reintegration process of youngsters. (A. Rodriguez, personal communication, August 26, 2013)⁸⁶

4.3.5 Vocational training and employment

Vocational training includes trainings or workshops in interpersonal skills and employment opportunities. All our respondents, working for an NGO, stress the importance of vocational training within the reintegration process. M. Obando points out to an agreement of INFOP (*Instituto Nacional de Formación Profesional*) with PNPRRS and CETSPN (*Comisión Especial de Transición del Sistema Penitenciario Nacional*) on professional trainings for (ex-) gang members.⁸⁷ Though M. Obando (personal communication, August 28, 2013) perceives this project as “*uno miso incide en toda esta situación de identificación, de peyorativa y de discriminación social que hay*”, along with E. Bardales, U. Herrera and G. Ruelas, she agrees upon the fact that youngsters should encounter a vocational training that fits them and should be encouraged and supported to complete their formation, in order to achieve a stronger position on the labor market.

According to E. Bardales and M. Obando, commercial skills, of how to administrate a business, should be incorporated in the vocational training. Also the ability of setting up a micro enterprise can facilitate a youngster in his or her reintegration process, as employers or governmental institutions are not always eager to employ ex-gang members, as said by C. Díaz, M. Obando and G. Ruelas. C. Díaz outlined an example, of what she witnessed in El Salvador, of how a group of religious people supported gang members in their process of reintegration:

⁸⁶ “*Quedan cicatrices y esa era una marca. Entonces, en nuestro estudio creamos una conclusión: el tatuaje lo tiene la sociedad. El tatuaje social está allí, está en el otro lado. Porque no permiten el proceso de reinserción de los jóvenes.*” (A. Rodriguez, personal communication, August 26, 2013)

⁸⁷ For more information on this project, see website of INFOP Honduras: http://www.infop.hn/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=518:infop-pnprrs-y-cetspn-firman-convenio-de-cooperacion-para-contribuir-al-mejoramiento-de-las-condiciones-de-vida-de-los-jovenes-privados-de-libertad&catid=43:noticias-institucionales&Itemid=61

They grabbed all the gang members that were willing to leave and created a macro workshop. They have carpentry, they have welding, they have – so, they create microenterprises right there. For example, the ministry of education of El Salvador tells them “we need 2000 school desks, you [can – EVD] make them”. So they make 2000 school desks, they buy the materials and they distribute the profits among all the partners. So over there it is working a lot. (C. Díaz, personal communication, August 28, 2013)⁸⁸

S. Stadthagen also mentioned a project of AJH-USAID; which was a reintegration program with ex-gang members, trying to reintegrate into society by creating their own micro enterprise. The whole process was filmed and exposed on television as a reality show: “*Challenge X*” (with 10 ex-gang members),⁸⁹ and later on “*Challenge 100*” (with 100 ex-gang members).⁹⁰ When *Challenge 100* took place in San Pedro Sula, AJH-USAID was able to integrate more than 40 ex-gang members in the public labor market. The idea of converting the program into a reality show was mainly to raise awareness among society in giving ex-gang members a second chance.

All our respondents agreed upon the fact that in order for one’s reintegration process into society to work, employment and earning a decent income is an important asset. If the latter is not fulfilled, youngsters will be tempted to go back to their gang, where it was much easier to earn a lot of money within a small amount of time. Most respondents stated that the government should play a leading role in creating employment opportunities.

Interviewer: *So, the role of the government is to create opportunities?*

Interviewee: *Yes, of course the responsibility is there. The state must promote the opportunities. The state is the one who needs to generate processes of – i.e., as the rights of youngsters; employment is a right. (A. Rodriguez, personal communication, August 26, 2013)⁹¹*

⁸⁸ “Ellos agarraron a todos los mareros que querían salir y crear un macro taller. Tienen carpintería, tienen soldadura, tienen – entonces, ellos allí mismo crean microempresas. Por ejemplo, el ministerio de educación de El Salvador les dice “necesitamos 2000 pupitres, háganlos ustedes”. Entonces ellos hacen 2000 pupitres, compran los materiales y las ganancias se distribuyen entre todos los socios. Entonces allí está funcionando mucho eso.” (C. Díaz, personal communication, August 28, 2013).

⁸⁹ “*Desafío X*” (S. Stadthagen, personal communication, August 29, 2013)

⁹⁰ “*Desafío 100*” (S. Stadthagen, personal communication, August 29, 2013)

⁹¹ “**Entrevistador:** *Entonces, ¿el papel del gobierno es crear oportunidades?*

Finally, we would like to conclude this section by saying that some of our respondents said that all the above mentioned rehabilitation and reintegration aspects should be incorporated into one holistic approach, in order to be able to tackle the problem of gang membership by focusing simultaneously on its different characteristics.

5. Discussion

In this section we discuss the results, followed by the limitations of this research and recommendations for further investigation.

5.1 Discussion of results

In this section we discuss the results of our research in comparison with the literature. In order to understand the process of reintegration into society, we first of all discuss why youngsters join a gang. Secondly, we discuss the reasons for a gang member to leave the gang. Thirdly, we take a look at the different aspects of the reintegration process of (ex-) gang members.

Before discussing the reasons for youngsters to join a gang, we need to clarify the presence of gang members within society. It is not an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ story, as gangs are present in all big (and even small) cities in Honduras. With more or less 35.000 gang members in the country (USAID, 2012), 80% of them living in the two biggest cities (Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula), it is not unlikely to come in contact with gang members. This implies that regardless of the following factors, which might have an influence on whether or not a boy or girl will become a gang member, children are confronted with the presence of gangs from a very young age onwards, and they basically grow up in communities where one gang or another is present. The latter implies that, as stated by Sutherland (1947), when youngsters find themselves in a place where criminal behavior forms part of the social structure of that neighborhood, they are more likely to become involved with the present delinquent groups.

Entrevistado: Si, claro que la responsabilidad esta acá. El estado debe promover las oportunidades. El estado es el que debe generar procesos de – o sea, como los derechos de los jóvenes; el empleo es un derecho.” (A. Rodriguez, personal communication, August 26, 2013)

As our data analysis revealed: the lack of socio-economic opportunities in Honduras, one's instable family and environmental situation, the willingness to belong, and the persuading factor of gangs, can all contribute to the fact that a youngster joins a gang.

First of all, more than half of the children in Honduras grow up in poverty, often without a father, and in an environment that lacks proper healthcare, education, recreational space, and employment opportunities. Several researchers (Aplíciano Cubero, 2012; Merino, 2004; Reisman, 2006; Santacruz Giralt, Concha-Eastman & Homies Unidos, 2001; Thornberry, 1998) confirm that this is an ideal situation for the practices of gangs. O. Lopez and M. Obando stated that not going to school forms a risk for gang involvement. Knowing that, according to M. Flores, 816.000 youngsters in Honduras are not going to school or working, and there are 'only' 35.000 gang members, one might wonder what happened to the other children and what made the difference for them not to form part of a gang. Or, in the words of Matza (1964), how come that some youngsters drift more towards criminal and other more towards norm conform behavior?

Secondly, many children in Honduras are raised by a single mother (up to 70% according to C. Díaz) or grow up with the experience of domestic violence. The latter can have an influence on a child's vision towards problem solving. Though not all gang members come from poor families, they most likely seek for emotional support within a gang, when this is lacking in their own family (cf. Thrasher, 1963). This also reminds us of Hirschi's (1969) and Reckless' (1967) control theory. When a youngster does not feel a strong attachment to his family or school or is not influenced by this outer containment, he is more likely to get involved with nonconformist activities. However, we cannot state this is due to a child's behavior; rather it is the responsibility of the family and the school to keep a youngster occupied and involved, and subsequently away from the streets (cf. Thrasher, 1963).

Thirdly, youngsters encounter, in a gang, a place where they can belong and develop their identity. As a gang member you can exercise power, be respected and protected against external violence. Also the PNPRRS (2011) and Reisman (2006) stated that youngsters are attracted to gangs, because they can provide them with economic goods and give them a place in the group to develop their social identity (cf. Shaw & McKay, 1969; Thrasher, 1927). Though we might ask ourselves, as stated by I. Pereyra, why it is that some youngsters, in the course of developing their identity, try to find their place within society by joining a gang? Should there be more alternative youth movements in Honduras, like boy scouts? This, according to Thrasher (1963)

sometimes has the same structure or hierarchy as a gang, but with a positive attitude towards the community and society.

Fourthly, youngsters, who are not interested in joining a gang in the first place, can, according to some of our respondents, also be persuaded by their local ruling gang to perform a certain task, and by doing so get even more involved with the gang. Though we need to mention that when youngsters (who basically grew up with gang members living in their neighborhood) are asked to perform a certain task (e.g. sell some marihuana to earn a bit of money), they do not immediately link this act with forming part of a gang; as to form part of a gang, they need to go through an initiation rite first. To some extent we could link this to Cohen's (1955) subculture theory on status frustration; as Cohen states that youngsters who want to achieve a certain social status (i.e. having economic goods), but do not have the legal means to achieve it, will be tempted to use illegal means in order to get what they want. On the other hand, we were not able to confirm Cohen (1955) and Whyte's (1937) distinction between a corner boy, a college boy and a delinquent subculture - more research should be done regarding this aspect.

Though there are youngsters who want to leave their gang, it is not always easy to do so. We first discuss the (personal) reasons to leave the gang, followed by the different ways to do so and the related difficulties.

Our respondents gave several reasons why youngsters want to leave their gang. Firstly, they want to leave as a consequence of the process of maturing. Secondly, they want to leave for the fear of being assassinated by a rivaling gang, the police, someone from the community, or by one of their fellow gang members. Thirdly, the gang member might be willing to leave his gang for family reasons and/or when he encounters external opportunities.

First of all, as our respondents mentioned, at a certain age youngsters mature and realize that what they are doing is not right. Moreover, they have had enough of all the violence. This process of maturing is what Moffitt (1993) identified as adolescent limited antisocial behavior.⁹² More research should be done to find out at what age youngsters start to mature; thus at what age youngsters will be more willing to leave their gang.

⁹² Moffitt (1993) developed an age-crime curve, whereby she demonstrates that most delinquency is committed at the age of 17 and the amount of crime committed decreases severely by the age of 20 and even more by the age of 25.

Secondly, gang members want to leave the gang when they are aware of how life in a gang really is in practice; i.e. committing crimes, such as robbery, murder, drug consumption, or suffering from internal (by their own gang) and external (by other gangs or the police) violence (cf. Cruz, 2010; Merino, 2004). After committing all these crimes, gang members realize they have built up a network of enemies and subsequently start to fear for their lives.

Thirdly, as stated by our respondents and confirmed by the literature (cf. Rodríguez Bolaños & Sanabria León, 2007; Aplíciano Cubero, 2012), youngsters are willing to leave their gang when they are offered a job or educational opportunity (cf. Hirschi, 1969; Matza, 1964). Our respondents also mentioned that when a gang member gets a child, he or she starts to think differently and often does not want their child to grow up as a future gang member. Although finding a job, going back to school or starting a family seems to be quite obvious reasons to leave a gang, it is not always that simple. First of all, there is a great lack of employment opportunities within the country and even if a gang member finds a job, he will most likely be refused because of his history (cf. Aplíciano Cubero, 2012; UNDP, n.d.). Some other difficulties are discussed in the next part.

According to some of our respondents, there are only a few options to leaving the gang: converting to religion, starting a family or dying (cf. Matza, 1964; Merino, 2004). Even when a gang member wants to leave his gang to dedicate himself to the word of God, he always needs the permission of the gang. Other ways of leaving the gang is by seeking refuge in an institution (e.g. Casa Alianza or Proyecto Victoria) or even by fleeing the country. Though these options cannot be seen in the light of reintegration, as in the first case (for example Proyecto Victoria) ex-gang members often stay inside the rehabilitation center for a long time without going back to their community (this for safety reasons), and in the second case ex-gang members literally move to another city or another country in order to avoid reprisals.

While some youngsters, depending on their situation (cf. *supra*), are willing to leave their gang, they are also aware of the dangers of doing so; one of them being, as we just mentioned, the risk of reprisals by the gang (cf. Rodríguez Bolaños & Sanabria León, 2007; PNPRRS, 2011). Although not every gang member has equal chances to leave his gang; for a Sympathizer, Aspirant or Newbie it is easier to leave than for a Permanent Member or Leader (cf. Proyecto Victoria, 2013). With this in mind, it might make sense to focus reintegration programs on the specific needs of each category or to choose to only focus on the reintegration of Sympathizers,

Aspirants and Newbies. Another difficulty that a gang member is most likely to face when leaving his gang is the issue of stigmatization by society (cf. Aplíciano Cubero, 2012; Samayoa, 2011). This stigmatization is even more severe when the person has tattoos. Whether or not the removal of tattoos can prevent an ex-gang member from further stigmatization; it is up to society to become more aware of giving second chances to ex-gang members.

Until now we have only discussed reasons and methods to leave the gang. Though, some of our respondents (e.g. E. Bardales) mentioned that leaving the gang is not always a good option (cf. Rodríguez Bolaños & Sanabria León, 2007; Thrasher, 1963); they would rather opt for preservation (i.e. giving a place within the community), though reformation, of the gang.

When leaving the gang, our respondents stated that the process of rehabilitation and reintegration of young gang members into society should contain different aspects, and implement these aspects simultaneously in a holistic approach (cf. Dowden & Andrews, 1999; Howell, 1998; Thrasher, 1963).

First of all, as most of our respondents stated, the reintegration process should take place in the local community of the youngster, including his family, educational training and religion (cf. Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Merino, 2004; Shaw & McKay, 1969; Thrasher, 1963). The relationship with the community, as well as with one's family should be strengthened, in order to ensure the local reintegration process (cf. Howell; Shaw & McKay, 1969). Also the educational aspect of going to school and having access to extracurricular activities (e.g. the 'Open School' system), should keep youngsters occupied and away from the street (cf. Hirschi, 1969; Lipsey, 1995; Lipsey & Wilson, 1998; Thrasher, 1963). While Proyecto Victoria isolates the youngster from his community, and does not have contact with the youngster's school, Casa Alianza emphasizes the importance of rehabilitating the youngster in his own environment. One might wonder whether it would be useful to reintegrate an ex-gang member in the same environment where he grew up, as it would include the same aspects which moved him towards the gang in the first place. In this regard we might ask ourselves if we can speak of a culture of violence in

(certain parts of) Honduras,⁹³ and if it would thus make sense at all to reincorporate a rehabilitated ex-gang member in such an environment.

Secondly, psychological aspects should also be included in the reintegration process. Our respondents agreed upon the fact that psychological treatment should be given individually as well as within a group or family context. Though the literature confirms the effects of psychological treatment, they are rather critical regarding the different psychological intervention methods (cf. Lipsey, 1995; Lipsey & Wilson, 1998; Shaw & McKay, 1969). In line with Merton's (1938) strain theory and Reckless' (1967) containment theory, we would recommend psychological treatment to focus on the person's self-control. The effectiveness of the different kinds of psychological interventions should be investigated in future studies on the rehabilitation and reintegration of gang members.

Thirdly, besides psychological, also medical aspects should be included in the reintegration process. Our respondents highlighted the importance of medical treatment, from providing general healthcare to specific attention for drug addicts and the removal of tattoos. General medical attention can be an important asset for youngsters who have limited access to health care within their community (cf. *supra*); though the effectiveness of the removal of tattoos was still open for discussion (cf. Merino, 2004).

Fourthly, though there is some disagreement among academic researchers whether vocational training aspects should be included in the reintegration process or not (cf. Dowden & Andrews, 1999; Lipsey, 1995; Lipsey & Wilson, 1998). According to our respondents it should. A future study, regarding this aspect, should investigate which vocational skills are most useful for ex-gang members who want to reintegrate into society. From this study we remember that vocational skills, which focus on employment, micro enterprises and commercial or administrative business skills, can facilitate the reinsertion process on the labor market.

Following the discussion of our results in relation to known criminological theories and other literature; we would like to conclude by singling out one theoretical approach which in our opinion is most related to the phenomenon of youth gang members and their reintegration into society, namely, the approach of labeling theories. We consider this approach to be related to the

⁹³ We can find some factors referring to a culture of violence, as described by Waldmann (2007) on the case of Colombia, which are similar to the case of Honduras; e.g.: high homicide rates, a culture of machismo and revenge, a lack of state monopoly of violence, ineffectiveness of the rule of law, dominance of drug cartels, etc.

specific situation of *maras* and *pandillas* in Honduras for the following reasons. First of all, when Ricardo Maduro implemented the so-called Anti-gang law, he created a platform whereby it was possible for police officers to arrest and detain youngsters who were (often allegedly) being suspected to form part of a gang (cf. Carranza, 2006). According to our respondents and confirmed by the literature (Aplicano Cubero, 2012; Samayoa, 2011), due to this Anti-gang law many youngsters were being stigmatized by their looks, economic situation and area where they lived; to state it with the words of Becker (1963), those youngsters were labeled as outsiders. Secondly, as Lemert (1951) argued in his theory on primary and secondary deviation, or before him Tannenbaum (1938) with his theory on dramatization of the evil, the disapproving reactions of the government, the media and subsequently the community on primary deviant behavior, fostered further secondary deviant behavior, as the youngster has the feeling he is already pushed into a certain category. The latter is particularly important regarding this research, as our respondents repeatedly mentioned that the Honduran society is very stigmatizing towards youngsters with a history of gang membership, especially towards those with tattoos; subsequently they are not eager in giving second chances. In order to avoid these processes of stigmatization, outsiders should be relabeled as insiders, and they should be given a space within society (cf. E. Bardales).

5.2 Limitations of research and recommendations for further investigation

From the aspects we discussed in the previous part, we would like to make some recommendations and also highlight the limitations of this research. We will first discuss the limitations and subsequently give some recommendations regarding practice, policy and further research.

This dissertation has several limitations. First of all, during our research, no gang members or ex-gang members as such were interviewed. If we really want to get a better insight into the reintegration process of gang members, we should be able to work on primary data and thus include the youngsters in the investigation. Secondly, as we already mentioned in our discussion, we were not able to identify the reasons for certain youngsters to join a gang, for others to join a *barra*, and others to be involved with a non-violent peer group; even though they all grow up in the same area, experiencing the same living conditions. This should be further investigated. Thirdly, we were not able to identify the specific needs related to the different levels of gang

membership (Aspirant, Sympathizer, Newbie, Permanent member, Leader). More research regarding the need principle is necessary.

As we discussed in the previous section, the process of rehabilitation/reintegration should be adapted to the specific needs of a youngster. We could first make a distinction between the different levels of gang membership; we would even recommend practitioners only to focus on the lowest ranks (Aspirant, Sympathizer and Newbie), as they have a much higher chance to successfully leave their gang and reintegrate into society. Subsequently, special attention should be given to the person's reintegration possibilities within society. Can he go back to his family or is it better to live separately? Can he go back to his community or should he be relocated to another community (or, for that matter, another country)? Can he resume his studies or start working? When taking these factors into account, more targeted intervention methods can be applied.

With regard to governmental and legislative policies, we would recommend to invest more in preventive, rehabilitative and reintegrative interventions. The eponymous legislation can be used for this. In response to the results from the interviews and literature on the National Prevention, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Program, we would like to recommend to the Honduran government to evaluate this project and to provide more resources if this would be required. In conjunction thereto, we would suggest starting up some pilot projects, focusing on different reintegration aspects (e.g. psychological and medical assistance, vocational skills, etc.). Also, as our respondents mentioned, more free or inexpensive drug rehabilitation centers should be installed by the government, as these are currently rather expensive or overcrowded. In addition we would like to encourage more initiatives which aim at providing more opportunities for youngsters (cf. President Juan Orlando's 'Better Living with Chambas' program). Finally, we would like to stress that Anti-gang legislations, which were implemented by a previous government, along with its consequences, should by all means be prevented in the future.

Regarding further investigation, we could make the following suggestions. First of all, while focusing on gang members in general, we did not distinguish between male and female members. We briefly highlighted the different roles of men and women within a gang, but it could be of interest to elaborate more on this issue. Secondly, the focus of this dissertation was on the

reintegration of *maras* and *pandillas* in Honduras. No distinction was made between the different gangs. This could be another recommendation for further research; i.e. to investigate the difference between the *Mara Salvatrucha* and the *Barrio 18*. By investigating the differences, and also the similarities, between those two gangs, we could have a better view on the potentiality of a truce, which was initiated by Bishop Rómulo Emiliani. Subsequently, we could elaborate more on the differences and similarities of the *MS* and *18* in Honduras and the rest of Central America and even in the United States, where those gangs are active. Finally, while we focused on extramural reintegration methods, it could be of interest to investigate which rehabilitation and reintegration methods within an intramural setting, i.e. within jail or other closed centers, are most effective.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to find an answer to the question: ‘How can the reintegration of young gang members into society best be facilitated?’ In order to respond this research question, two sub-questions were investigated:

1. For which reasons can young gang members leave the gang?
2. Which intervention methods can facilitate young gang members in their process of leaving the gang and reintegrate in society?

We used 14 qualitative semi-open interviews with stakeholders, living in Honduras, to research this subject.

Regarding our first sub-question, we can state that there are several reasons for gang members to leave their gang. Those reasons are: the fear of being assassinated by a rivaling gang or to die within the gang; the family of the gang member who wants him to leave the gang; and encountering a better alternative of living (e.g. formal education or a legal job). These are some push and pull factors for gang members to leave their gang, but actually doing so is not that obvious. According to most of our respondents, a gang member can only leave his gang if he converts to religion (and goes to church on a daily basis) or when he dies. The options to leave the gang are scarce and there is always the risk of reprisals by the gang. When a gang member leaves his gang, for one of the reasons mentioned above, he is followed up by his gang for one to

two years. If he trespasses one of the conditions for leaving the gang (e.g. if he stops going to church or commits a crime), the gang gives him ‘green light’ (*luz verde*), which means they kill him for the mistake he made.

Regarding our second sub-question, we can state that the process of reintegration of young gang members into society can best be facilitated when it contains different intervention aspects, which are simultaneously implemented in a holistic approach. This research highlights the importance of making a distinction between the different levels of gang membership; rehabilitation and reintegration interventions should focus on the Sympathizers, Aspirants and Newbie’s. The reintegration process should take place in the local community of the youngster, if possible. Otherwise, the youngster should be relocated to another community. During the process, the youngster’s family and school or educational formation should be incorporated. The reintegration process should also contain psychological aspects, focusing on one’s self-esteem and the youngster must be provided with the required medical treatment. Ex-gang members, who tattooed themselves, should also get the opportunity to remove their tattoos, as (mostly visible) tattoos have a stigmatizing effect regarding one’s chances on the job market. Finally, our respondents also stated vocational training aspects should be included in the youngster’s reintegration process, though the literature is more critical towards this aspect.

Bibliography

ADE (2011). *Evaluation of the European Commission's co-operation with Honduras*. Rome, Italy: ADE.

Afonso, C., Cardoso, K., Santos, R., Roque, R., & Moura, T. (2012). *Youth and urban violence in San Salvador, Rio de Janeiro and Praia: public policies, community-based responses and recommendations*. Peace Studies Group.

Agnew, R. (1992). Foundation for a general strain theory of crime and delinquency. *Criminology*, 30(1), 47-87.

Andrews, D. (1995). The psychology of criminal conduct and effective treatment. In J. McGuire (Ed.), *What works: reducing reoffending* (pp. 35-62). Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (2006). *The psychology of criminal conduct* (4th ed.). New Providence, New Jersey: LexisNexis Group.

Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (2010). *The psychology of criminal conduct* (5th ed.). New Providence, New Jersey: LexisNexis Group.

Aplicano Cubero, A. (2012). Relato de vida de una expandillera de Honduras. In M. Ávalos Quispal (Ed.), *Historias y relatos de vida de pandilleros y ex pandilleros de Guatemala, El Salvador y Honduras: Inicio de diálogo desde su realidad y percepciones* (pp. 287-321). Guatemala: Instituto de Estudios Comparados en Ciencias Penales de Guatemala.

Becker, H. (1963). *Outsiders: studies in the sociology of deviance*. New York: Free Press.

Beyens, K., & Tournel, H. (2010). Mijnwerkers of ontdekkingsreizigers? Het kwalitatieve interview. In T. Decorte & D. Zaitch (Eds.), *Kwalitatieve methoden en technieken in de criminologie* (pp. 200-232). Leuven: Acco.

Burgess, E. W. (1926). *The urban community*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Burgess, R. L., & Akers, R. L. (1966). A differential association-reinforcement theory of criminal behavior. *Social Problems*, 14(2), 128-147.

Cálix, Á. (2010). Honduras: de la crisis política al surgimiento de un nuevo actor social. *Nueva Sociedad*, 226, 34-51.

CAP (n.d.). *Chicago Area Project: Strengthening neighborhoods – helping young people*. Retrieved on June 28, 2014, from <http://www.chicagoareaproject.org/>

Carranza, M. (2006). Del asistencialismo a la incidencia y el cabildeo: las diversas respuestas de la sociedad civil organizada al fenómeno de las pandillas en Honduras. In J. M. Cruz (Ed.), *Maras y pandillas en Centroamérica: las respuestas de la sociedad civil organizada (Volumen IV)* (pp. 235-328). San Salvador: UCA.

Centinela Económico (2013). *Lobo alaba tregua entre maras promovida por obispo Emiliani y embajador Blackwell*. Retrieved June 30, 2014, from <http://www.centinelaeconomico.com/2013/05/27/lobo-alaba-tregua-entre-maras-promovida-por-obispo-emiliani-y-embajador-blackwell/>

Cloward, R. A., & Ohlin, L. E. (1960). Delinquency and opportunity. In J. E. Jacoby (Ed.), *Classics of Criminology* (pp. 236-240). Illinois: Waveland Press.

Cohen, A. K. (1955). *Delinquent boys: the culture of the gang*. Glencoe: The Free Press.

Cruz, J. M. (2010). Central American maras: from youth street gangs to transnational protection rackets. *Global Crime*, 11(4), 379-398.

Cruz, J. M., & Macías, R. C. (2004). *The political culture of democracy in Honduras, 2004*. Nashville: Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), Vanderbilt University.

Decorte, T. (2010). Kwalitatieve data-analyse in het criminologisch onderzoek. In T. Decorte & D. Zaitch (Eds.), *Kwalitatieve methoden en technieken in de criminologie* (pp. 441-472). Leuven: Acco.

Decorte, T. (2010). Software voor kwalitatieve dataverwerking. In T. Decorte & D. Zaitch (Eds.), *Kwalitatieve methoden en technieken in de criminologie* (pp. 473-488). Leuven: Acco.

Dowden, C., & Andrews, D. A. (1999). What works in young offender treatment: a meta-analysis. *Forum on Corrections Research*, 11, 21-24.

Durán Chavarría, D. (2012). *Prevención de la violencia juvenil y fortalecimiento del sistema de justicia penal juvenil*. San José: ILANUD.

El Heraldo (2012). *Lanzan programa Honduras por la vida*. Retrieved June 30, 2014, from <http://www.elheraldo.hn/csp/mediapool/sites/ElHeraldo/Pais/story.csp?cid=573167&sid=299&fid=214>

Floresi, H., Mejía, J., Mejía, J. A., SJ, I. M., & Serrano, O. (2004). Políticas juveniles y rehabilitación de mareros en Honduras. In ERIC, DIRINPRO, NITLAPÁN, IDIES, & IUDOP (Ed.), *Maras y pandillas en Centroamérica: vol. III. políticas juveniles y rehabilitación* (pp. 187-292). Managua, El Salvador: UCA Publicaciones.

Goethals, J. (2007). *Psychologie en delinquentie: een inleiding in de criminologische psychologie*. Leuven: ACCO.

Gobierno de la República de Honduras (2014). *Juan Orlando Hernández – presidente de la república de Honduras: plan de todos para una vida mejor*. Retrieved June 30, 2014, from <http://www.presidencia.gob.hn/>

Hayward, K. (2004). Crime, consumer culture and the urban experience. In K. Hayward (Ed.), *City limits: crime, consumer culture and the urban experience* (pp. 147-173). London: Grasshouse.

Hirschi, T. (1969). *Causes of delinquency*. California: University of California Press.

Honduran gangs Salvatrucha and 18 Street announce truce. Retrieved on April 24, 2014, from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-22694989>

Howell, J. C. (1998). Promising programs for youth gang violence prevention and intervention. In R. Loeber, & D. P. Farrington (Eds.), *Serious & violent juvenile offenders* (pp. 284-312).

Howland, S. E. (2014). *Migra y Maras: the relationship between the proliferation of Central American street gangs and migratory patterns in the northern triangle, Mexico, and the United States*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University.

Interpeace (2013). *Violentas y violentadas: relaciones de género en las maras Salvatrucha y Barrio 18 del triángulo norte de Centroamérica*. Guatemala: Interpeace Regional Office for Latin America.

IUDOP (2010). *“Seconds in the Air”: women gang-members and their prisons*. San Salvador: UCA.

IUDOP (2012). *Encuesta de evaluación del año 2012*. San Salvador: Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas.

J. (2013, November 25). *Honduras election results – Juan Orlando Hernández the winner*. Retrieved December 6, 2013, from <http://www.honduras.com/honduras-election-results-juan-orlando-hernandez-won/>

Katz, J. & Jackson-Jacobs, C. (2004). The criminologists’ gang. In C. Summer (Ed.), *Blackwell Companion to Criminology* (pp. 91-124). London: Blackwell.

Kobrin, S. (1959). The Chicago Area Project – a 25-year assessment. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 322, 19-29.

Lemert, E. M. (1951). *Social pathology*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Lipsey, M. W. (1995). What do we learn from 400 research studies on the effectiveness of treatment with juvenile delinquents? In J. McGuire (Ed.), *What Works: Reducing Reoffending* (pp. 63-78). Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

Lipsey, M. W., & Wilson, D. B. (1998). Effective intervention for serious juvenile offenders: a synthesis of research. In R. Loeber, & D. P. Farrington (Eds.), *Serious & Violent Juvenile Offenders* (pp. 313-345).

Llanos, M., & Marsteintredet, L. (2010). Ruptura y continuidad: la caída de “Mel” Zelaya en perspectiva comparada. *América Latina Hoy*, 55, 173-197.

Maesschalck, J. (2010). Methodologische kwaliteit in het kwalitatief criminologisch onderzoek. In T. Decorte & D. Zaitch (Eds.), *Kwalitatieve methoden en technieken in de criminologie* (pp. 119-145). Leuven: Acco.

Matza, D. (1964). *Delinquency and drift*. New York: Wiley.

Merino, J. M. (2004). Políticas juveniles y rehabilitación de mareros en Guatemala. In ERIC, DIRINPRO, NITLAPÁN, IDIES, & IUDOP (Ed.), *Maras y pandillas en Centroamérica: vol. III. políticas juveniles y rehabilitación* (pp. 89-186). Managua, El Salvador: UCA Publicaciones.

Merton, R. K. (1938). Social structure and anomie. *American Sociological Review*, 3, 672-682.

Moffitt, T. E. (1993). Adolescence-limited and life-course-persistent antisocial behavior: a developmental taxonomy. *Psychological Review*, 100(4), 674-701.

Mortelmans, D. (2010). Het kwalitatief onderzoeksdesign. In T. Decorte & D. Zaitch (Eds.), *Kwalitatieve methoden en technieken in de criminologie* (pp. 75-118). Leuven: Acco.

Obama zoekt meer geld in crisis met piepjonge immigranten. (2014, 30 juni). *De Standaard*. Retrieved July 1, 2014, from http://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20140629_01160932

Omar, J. (2013, August 21). *Honduras elections 2013 – the campaign officially begins*. Retrieved December 6, 2013, from <http://www.honduras.com/honduras-elections-2013-the-campaign-officially-begins/>

Posada, M. G., & López, M. (1993). El Salvador 1950-1970: latifundios, integración y crisis. *Revista de Historia de América*, 115, 37-62.

PRB (n.d.). *Honduras: highlights*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 4, 2013, from Population Reference Bureau website: <http://www.prb.org/DataFinder/Geography/Data.aspx?loc=319>

Programa Nacional de Prevención, rehabilitación y reinserción social, (2011). *Situación de maras y pandillas en Honduras*. Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Proyecto Victoria (2013). *Maras y Pandillas: sinónimo de violencia, dolor y muerte*. Tegucigalpa: Proyecto Victoria.

- Reckless, W. C. (1967). *The crime problem*. New York: Meredith Publishing Company.
- Reed, W. L., & Decker, S. H. (2002). *Responding to gangs: evaluation and research*. Pennsylvania: Diane Publishing Co.
- Reisman, L. (2006). Breaking the vicious cycle: responding to Central American youth gang violence. *SAIS Review*, 26(2), 147-152.
- Rodgers, D., Muggah, R., & Stevenson, C. (2009). *Gangs of Central America: causes, costs, and interventions*. Geneva: Small Arms Survey, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies.
- Rodríguez Bolaños, J. A., Sanabria, L. (2007). *Maras y pandillas, comunidad y policía en Centroamérica*. San José: DEMOSCOPIA S.A.
- Rubio, M. (2002). *La violencia en honduras y la región del valle de Sula*. Washington, D.C.: Departamento Regional de Operaciones II.
- Samayoa, C. V. (2011). *Ejecuciones extrajudiciales de jóvenes estigmatizados en Centroamérica: estudio de situación de Guatemala, El Salvador y Honduras, 2009*. Guatemala.
- Santacruz Giralt, M. L., Concha-Eastman, A. & Homies Unidos (2001). *Barrio adentro: la solidaridad violenta de las pandillas*. San Salvador: Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública.
- Secretaría de Finanzas (2013). *Presupuesto ciudadano. Ejercicio Fiscal 2013*. Honduras: Secretaria de Finanzas.
- Shaw, C. R. and McKay, H. D. (1969). *Juvenile delinquency and urban areas: a study of rates of delinquency in relation to differential characteristics of local communities in American cities*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Siegel, L. J. (2000). Social process theories. In L. J. Siegel (Ed.), *Criminology* (pp. 220-253). Belmont, California: Wadsworth.
- Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing qualitative research* (5th ed.). Sage.

Sutherland, E. H. (1947). Differential association. In J. E. Jacoby (Ed.), *Classics of Criminology* (pp. 225-227). Illinois: Waveland Press.

Tannenbaum, F. (1938). *Crime and the community*. Boston: Ginn.

The World Bank (n.d.). *GNI per capita, PPP (current international \$)* (n.d.). Retrieved December 6, 2013, from The World Bank website: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.PP.CD>

Thornberry, T. P. (1998). Membership in youth gangs and involvement in serious and violent offending. In R. Loeber, & D. P. Farrington (Eds.), *Serious & Violent Juvenile Offenders* (pp. 147-166).

Thrasher, F. M. (1927). *The gang: a study of 1,313 gangs in Chicago*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Thrasher, F. M. (1963). *The gang: a study of 1,313 gangs in Chicago*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

UNAH-IUDPAS (2013). *Observatorio de la violencia: boletín enero-diciembre 2012* (Edición No. 28, Enero 2013). Tegucigalpa: Instituto Universitario de Democracia, Paz y Seguridad.

UNDP (n.d.). *Honduras en breve*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 4, 2013, from UNDP Honduras website: <http://www.hn.undp.org/content/honduras/es/home/countryinfo/>

UNESCO (2011). *Global education digest 2011: comparing education statistics across the world*. Quebec: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

UNESCO (2012). *Global Education digest 2012*. Quebec: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

UNICEF (2003). *Censo de niñez en situación de calle: Resultados*. Honduras: UNICEF.

UNODC (2011). *Global study on homicide 2011*. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

UNODC (2012). *Transnational organized crime in Central America and the Caribbean: a threat assessment*. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

UNODC (2013). *Global study on homicide 2013*. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

USAID (2012). *Snapshot: deconstructing gang structures & operations*. Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development.

Vander Laenen, F. (2010). Focusgroepen. In T. Decorte & D. Zaitch (Eds.), *Kwalitatieve methoden en technieken in de criminologie* (pp. 233-260). Leuven: Acco.

Waldmann, P. (2007). Is there a culture of violence in colombia? *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 19(4), 593-609.

Weerman, F.M., Maxson, C.L., Esbensen, F., Aldridge, J., Medina, J., & van Gemert, F. (2009). *Eurogang program manual background, development, and use of the eurogang instruments in multi-site, multi-method comparative research*. Retrieved on March 31, 2014, from <http://www.umsl.edu/ccj/eurogang/EurogangManual.pdf>

Wells, M. (2013). *Teen gang fighting Honduras Maras for extortion profits*. InSight Crime. Retrieved on July 28, 2014, from <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-briefs/teenage-gang-fighting-honduras-maras-extortion>

Whyte, W. F. (1937). *Street corner society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wood, J. and Alleyne, E. (2010). Street gang theory and research: where are we now and where do we go from here? *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 15, 100-111.

Annex 1: Principles of effective prevention and correctional treatment through direct service (Andrews, 1995)

Table 2.1. Continued.

9. General responsiveness principle	The most effective styles and modes of treatment service are those matched with the needs, circumstances and learning styles of high-risk individuals. Generally, the most effective styles and modes of service are structured and active ones such as social learning and cognitive-behavioural approaches, as opposed to reliance upon evocative, relationship-dependent, self-reflective, verbally interactive and insight-oriented approaches. Interpersonally and cognitively immature clients in particular require structured services while the more psychologically mature client may respond to more evocative styles of service; interpersonally anxious clients in particular respond poorly to highly confrontational services; other specific considerations may also be applicable for some subtypes of offenders
10. Specific responsiveness considerations	Therapeutic resistance and weak motivation for treatment do not suggest exclusion from treatment but the design of treatment contingencies that support participation and target increased motivation for service
11. Principle of targeting weak motivation for service	Criminogenic needs are dynamic by definition and anticipation of future problems should be part of on-going programming; structured post-programme follow-ups are indicated
12. Principle of structured follow-up	Treatment services that are appropriate according to risk, need and responsibility are most effective when a treatment model of some specificity is applied by well trained and well supervised therapists
13. Principle of therapeutic integrity	Effective therapists are those who apply the principles of risk, need, responsibility and therapeutic integrity with sensitivity to moral, ethical, legal and economic considerations as well as to the uniqueness of the individuals involved
14. Principle of professional discretion	Creation of settings within which the prevention and rehabilitation efforts of human service professionals are supported in active and direct ways through training, supervision and respect for the process and goals of service will yield even stronger effects of treatment than have so far been documented under less than supportive conditions
15. The principle of social support for the delivery of quality treatment services	Implementation and programme development also depend upon principles of effective consultation and effective organizational and societal change
16. Principles of implementation and programme development	

They argued for a fair sampling of the multiple aspects of a complex biopsychosocial problem, and followed Freud by insisting that the analysis should focus upon both personal and environmental variables. Their theory was psychodynamic at the core in that criminal acts reflected 'untamed impulses', 'self-centered desires' and 'uninhibited energy-expression'.

Their 'tentative causal formula', they suggested, was relevant to the majority of, but not all, delinquent males. The major variables for the analysis of the delinquency of males were as follows (with, from the

Table 2.1. Principles of effective prevention and correctional treatment through direct service.

1. Social psychological principle	The most promising conceptual base for prevention and rehabilitation programmes is a general personality and social psychological understanding of criminal conduct and a general social psychological perspective on programming
2. The methodological principle:	Critics of psychological prediction and correctional treatment service typically discount positive findings through the application of irrational knowledge destruction techniques, while uncritically accepting negative findings. A rational empirical approach to knowledge construction is preferred to this tradition of knowledge destruction
3. Official processing/punishment principle	Criminal sanctioning without the delivery of correctional treatment services does not work
4. Principle of residential treatment as the last resort	Community-based treatment services yield more positive effects than residential-based treatment services
5. Principle of risk assessment	Substantial differences in the prevalence and incidence of future criminal conduct are assessable through systematic surveys of the number and variety of risk/need factors present for individual cases
6. Risk principle of case classification	Intensive treatment services are best delivered to higher risk cases (because lower risk cases will do as well or better without intensive service)
7. Need principle	Treatment services best target those characteristics of higher risk individuals and their circumstances that, when changed, actually link with variation in criminal conduct
8. Principle of individualized assessment of risk/need	Systematic quantitative surveys of risk/need are best supplemented by individualized assessments that uncover the particular patterns of high-risk situations and interpretations applicable with an individual case (that is, build an understanding of this client's criminality)

Annex 2: Cuestionario de entrevista (original version topic list)

General

- ¿Cómo usted/su organización entra en contacto con pandilleros?
- ¿Cómo es el trabajo de usted/su organización relacionada con pandilleros/mareros?

Prevención

- ¿Cómo usted/su organización motiva a los jóvenes a no formar parte de una pandilla?

La vida pandillera

- ¿Cómo/por qué jóvenes se involucran en pandillas?
- ¿Qué es lo que atraen a los jóvenes a unirse en una pandilla?

Dejar la pandilla

- ¿Cuál es la mayor motivación para los jóvenes para abandonar la pandilla?
- ¿Cuál es el mayor obstáculo para los pandilleros que quieren salir de la pandilla?
- ¿Cómo usted/su organización motiva a los jóvenes para abandonar la pandilla?

Reintegración/rehabilitación

- ¿Buenas prácticas?
- ¿Malas prácticas/errores del pasado?
- ¿Que todavía está en necesidad, con respecto al futuro?
- ¿Cómo la religión ayuda a reintegrar (ex) pandilleros en la sociedad?
- (¿Cuál es la función del gobierno en cuanto a la reintegración de los pandilleros? / ¿Cuál podría ser la función del gobierno o cómo podría el gobierno ayudar más?)
- (¿Usted/su organización recibe ningún apoyo de otras organizaciones, ONG o del gobierno?)

Cambio de vida duradera

- ¿Cómo se previene ex mareros de volver a caer en los viejos hábitos?
- ¿Usted/su organización toma en cuenta la situación de la familia y la escuela o la situación laboral? (visión holística)

Annex 3: Topic list (English version)

General

- How do you/your organization get in contact with pandilleros?
- How is the work of your organization related to pandilleros/mareros?

Prevention

- How do you/your organization motivates youngsters not to become part of a gang?

Gang life

- How/why do youngsters get involved in gangs?
- What is it that youngsters attract to join a gang?

Leaving the gang

- What is the greatest motivation for youngsters to leave the gang?
- What is the biggest obstacle for pandilleros who want to leave the gang?
- How do you/your organization motivates youngsters to leave a gang?

Reintegration/rehabilitation

- Good practices?
- Bad practices/mistakes from the past?
- Which is still in need, regarding the future?
- How does religion help to reintegrate (ex-) pandilleros into society?
- (What is the role of the government, regarding the reintegration of gang members? / What could be the role of the government or how could the government help more?)
- (Do you/your organization receive any support from other organizations, NGO's or from the government?)

Durable life change

- How do you prevent ex-mareros from falling back into old habits?
- Do you/your organization take into account the family situation and school/work situation? (holistic view)

Annex 4: Coding tree

Contact with gang members

- Direct contact with gang members
- Indirect contact with gang members

Functioning of the organization

- Goals of the organization
- Achievements of the organization

Work of the academic

Work of the social worker

Prevention

- Prevention measurements of the organization
- Prevention advice from academic research
- Motives for youngsters to not join a gang

Gang life

- (Personal) motives to join a gang
- Attractive image of the gang
- Gang rituals
- Gang activities

Leaving the gang

- Motives to leave the gang
- Obstacles
- Reasons to stay in the gang

Reintegration

- Good practices
 - Good practices of self
 - Good practices of other
- Bad practices
 - Bad practices of self
 - Bad practices of other
- Needs for the future
 - Needs from the government

- Financial needs from the government
- Political needs from the government
- Needs from the people/society
- Needs from other (international organizations)
- Importance of religion

Durable live change

- Aspects necessary for a durable live change
- Reasons for return to the gang

Annex 5: List of respondents

Interview number	Date of interview	Name of respondent	Organization/profession of respondent	Interview modality	Duration of interview
1	August 22, 2013	(Anonymous)	NGO, working with youth (including gang members)	Taped	33min
2	August 22, 2013	Douglas Urbina	Project Officer, PNPRRS	Taped	1h10min
3	August 22, 2013	Ernesto Bardales	Sociologist	Taped	1h10min
4	August 23, 2013	(Anonymous)	Pastor, working with imprisoned gang members	Taped	55min
5	August 23, 2013	Clarissa Nuñez	Sociologist, UNAH	Written notes	±30min
6	August 26, 2013	Arnaldo Rodriguez	Researcher, UNAH	Taped	43min
7	August 26, 2013	Osman Lopez	Researcher, UNAH	Taped	56min
8	August 27, 2013	Isai Pereyra	Psychologist, currently working in an international organization	Taped	1h06min
9	August 28, 2013	Carol Díaz	Psychology Professor, UNAH	Taped	31min
10	August 28, 2013	Marta Obando	Specialist in children's rights, UNICEF	Taped	1h06min
11	August 29, 2013	Salvador Stadthagen, Jorge Reyes, Fabricio Hernández	Chief of Party AJH-USAID, Grants & Contracts Manager AJH-USAID, Official Project Coordinator AJH-USAID	Taped	1h06min

12	August 29, 2013	Melvis Flores	Coordinator of Proyecto Victoria	Taped	56min
13	August 30, 2013	(Anonymous)	Community Police	Taped	29min
26	September 27, 2013	Guadalupe Ruelas, Ubaldo Herrera, Jaime Flores	National Director of Casa Alianza, Director of programs of Casa Alianza	Taped	1h05min

Table 2: List of respondents

Annex 6: Completed conceptual framework

Intervention methods	Respondents that incorporate these practices + the methods they use
<p>5. Community-based</p> <p>1.1 Local community /neighborhood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ E. Bardales, U. Herrera (Casa Alianza), M. Obando (UNICEF), A. Rodriguez (UNAH): reintegration process should take place in one's own community ➤ M. Obando (UNICEF) in cooperation with PNPRRS: community models ➤ O. Lopez (UNAH), I. Pereyra, A. Rodriguez (UNAH), D. Urbina (PNPRRS): rebuilding the relationship with the community (convince the community to give a second chance); reconciliation ➤ M. Obando (UNICEF), G. Ruelas (Casa Alianza): recuperation of public spaces ➤ Community police officer, M. Flores (Proyecto Victoria): relocation in safer environment or isolation from one's community ➤ Community police officer, U. Herrera (Casa Alianza), O. Lopez, I. Pereyra, D. Urbina (PNPRRS): truce between gangs
<p>1.2 Family</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ M. Flores (Proyecto Victoria), M. Obando (UNICEF), G. Ruelas (Casa Alianza): regular contact with/cooperation of family during rehabilitation process ➤ M. Obando (UNICEF), G. Ruelas (Casa Alianza): going back to one's own family during reintegration process ➤ M. Obando (UNICEF): ensuring support from the family towards the youngster ➤ Community police officer, C. Díaz (UNAH) about 'Project Emanuelito', U. Herrera (Casa Alianza): providing the family with (financial) support ➤ M. Flores (Proyecto Victoria), U. Herrera (Casa Alianza), M. Obando (UNICEF): family counseling to strengthen or rebuild the

	<p>family ties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ M. Flores (Proyecto Victoria): family program containing training, information, guidance, preparation, capacitating and prevention
1.3 Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ M. Obando (UNICEF), NGO working with youth: going to school or receiving education during rehabilitation process ➤ U. Herrera (Casa Alianza), O. Lopez (UNAH), M. Obando (UNICEF), A. Rodriguez (UNAH): reinserting into the educational system during the reintegration process ➤ M. Obando (UNICEF): receiving informal or vocational education ➤ M. Obando (UNICEF): performing tasks within the school as part of the reintegration process ➤ M. Obando (UNICEF), PNPRRS: ‘Open Schools’ (“<i>Escuelas Abiertas</i>”) ➤ M. Obando (UNICEF): alternative school programs (e.g. home schooling) ➤ M. Flores (Proyecto Victoria): not working in cooperation with one’s school in order to safeguard the youngster from reprisals
1.4 Religion and church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Community police officer, C. Díaz, M. Flores (Proyecto Victoria), the Pastor, A. Rodriguez (UNAH), D. Urbina (PNPRRS): incorporating religion in the rehabilitation process ➤ Community police officer, M. Flores (Proyecto Victoria), U. Herrera (Casa Alianza), M. Obando (UNICEF), the Pastor, S. Stadthagen (AJH-USAID), D. Urbina (PNPRRS): going to church as an alternative way of living, for a gang member’s life within a gang and/or as a refuge ➤ E. Bardales: dynamics of religious groups (e.g. organizing youth activities) ➤ M. Flores (Proyecto Victoria): using the Bible to guide an ex-gang member towards a straight way of living ➤ M. Obando (UNICEF): joint project with Bishop Romulo Emiliani and NGO ‘United for Life’ (<i>‘Unidos por la Vida’</i>)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Community police officer, S. Stadthagen (AJH-USAID): cooperation with Christians in order to get access to areas which are controlled by gangs ➤ The Pastor: working with imprisoned gang members (and other delinquents)
6. Psychological treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ M. Obando (UNICEF): family counseling ➤ M. Flores (Proyecto Victoria): psychological deprogramming ➤ C. Díaz (UNAH), U. Herrera (Casa Alianza), I. Pereyra: general psychological attention
7. Medical treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ U. Herrera (Casa Alianza): general medical attention ➤ D. Urbina (PNPRRS) and M. Obando (UNICEF): '<i>Borrón y Vida Nueva</i>', joint tattoo removal Project ➤ M. Flores (Proyecto Victoria), M. Obando (UNICEF): drug detoxification and rehabilitation of drug addicts ➤ S. Stadthagen (AJH-USAID): financial support to FUNDASALVA
8. Vocational training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ E. Bardales, M. Flores (Proyecto Victoria), U. Herrera and G. Ruelas (Casa Alianza), M. Obando (UNICEF): vocational education/training
6.1 Interpersonal skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ E. Bardales, M. Obando (UNICEF): teaching commercial skills (how to administrate a business)
6.2 Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ C. Díaz (UNAH), M. Obando (UNICEF), G. Ruelas (Casa Alianza), S. Stadthagen (AJH-USAID): creating micro enterprises ➤ Community police officer, U. Herrera (Casa Alianza), M. Obando (UNICEF), J. Reyes and F. Hernández (AJH-USAID): guarantee of a decent income ➤ E. Bardales, Community police officer, M. Flores (Proyecto Victoria), F. Hernández (AJH-USAID), U. Herrera and G. Ruelas (Casa Alianza), O. Lopez (UNAH), M. Obando (UNICEF), the Pastor, I. Pereyra, A. Rodriguez (UNAH), D. Urbina (PNPRRS): getting a job as part of the reintegration process

<p>7 Holistic approach</p>	<p>➤ Community police officer, C. Díaz (UNAH), U. Herrera (Casa Alianza), M. Obando (UNICEF): working in a collective setting with all the above mentioned actors</p>
-----------------------------------	---

Table 3: Completed conceptual framework