

# Why Do Youth Join Gangs?

## Individual Factors

The following are characteristics of the individual youth that contribute to gang involvement.

- \* A teenager's existing rebelliousness and/or antisocial personality.
- \* An adolescent's pursuit of personal identity, pride, respect, and recognition, usually not available in the mainstream. 36% of youths surveyed look to their gang or group to provide them with "status or identity."
- \* Deviant, delinquent, and often illegal behavior.
- \* Rejection of middle-class goals.
- \* Fear of exclusion. One in ten youths surveyed said that they had "no other choice" when selecting a particular group of friends.
- \* Violent behavior towards others, which often is founded in fear of physical harm to self or family.
- \* Cultural and language differences.

Wiener, V. (1999). *Winning the war against youth gangs: A guide for teens, families, and communities*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.