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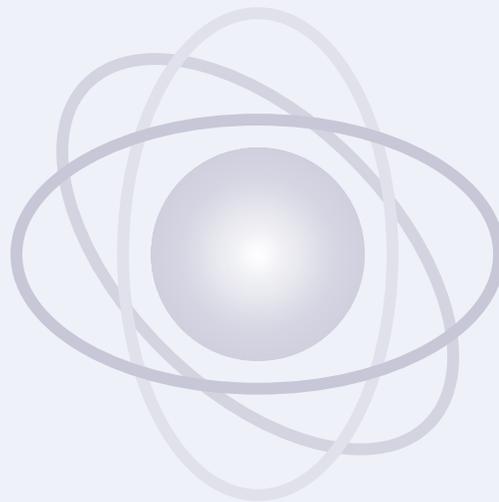
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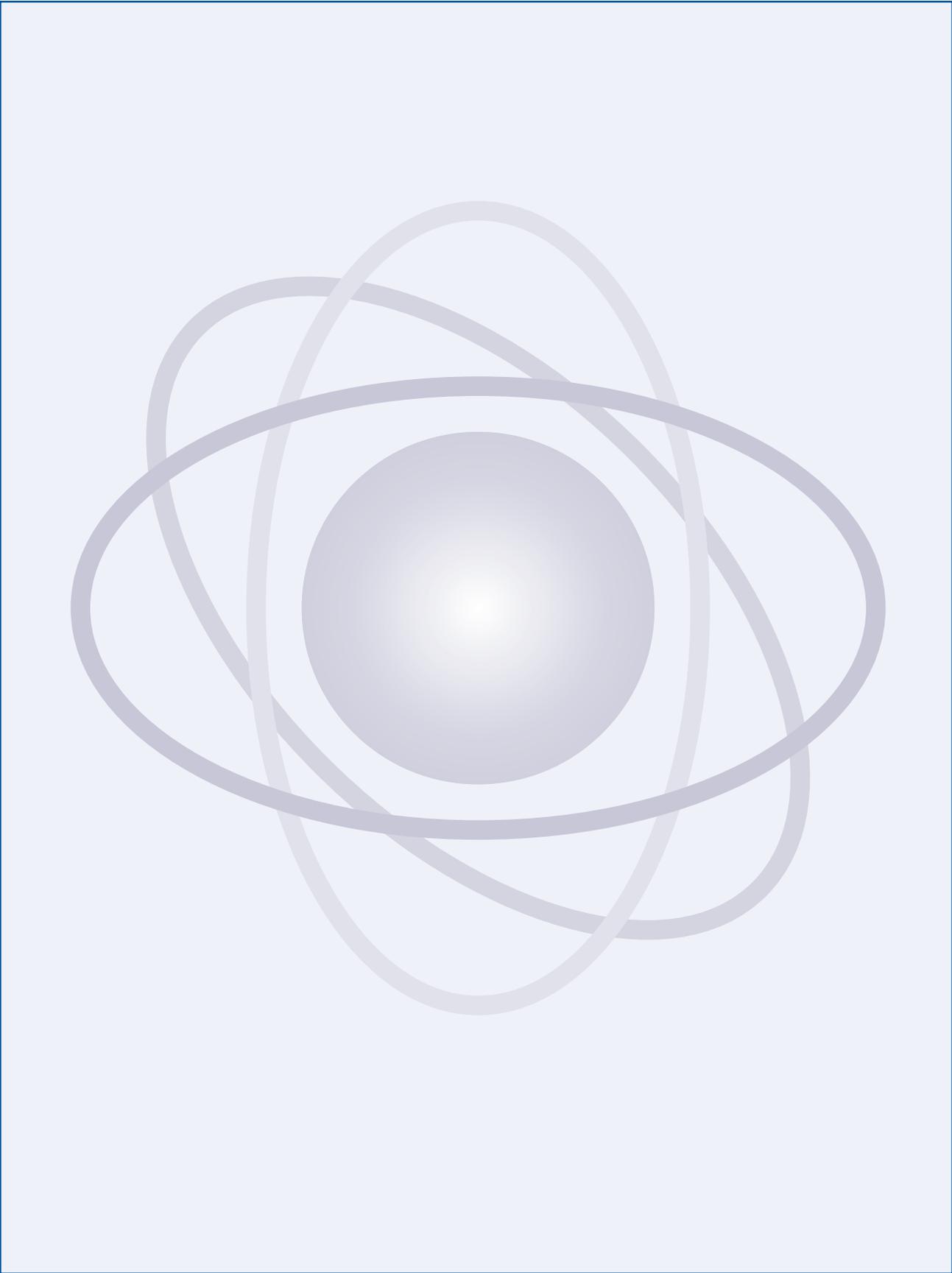
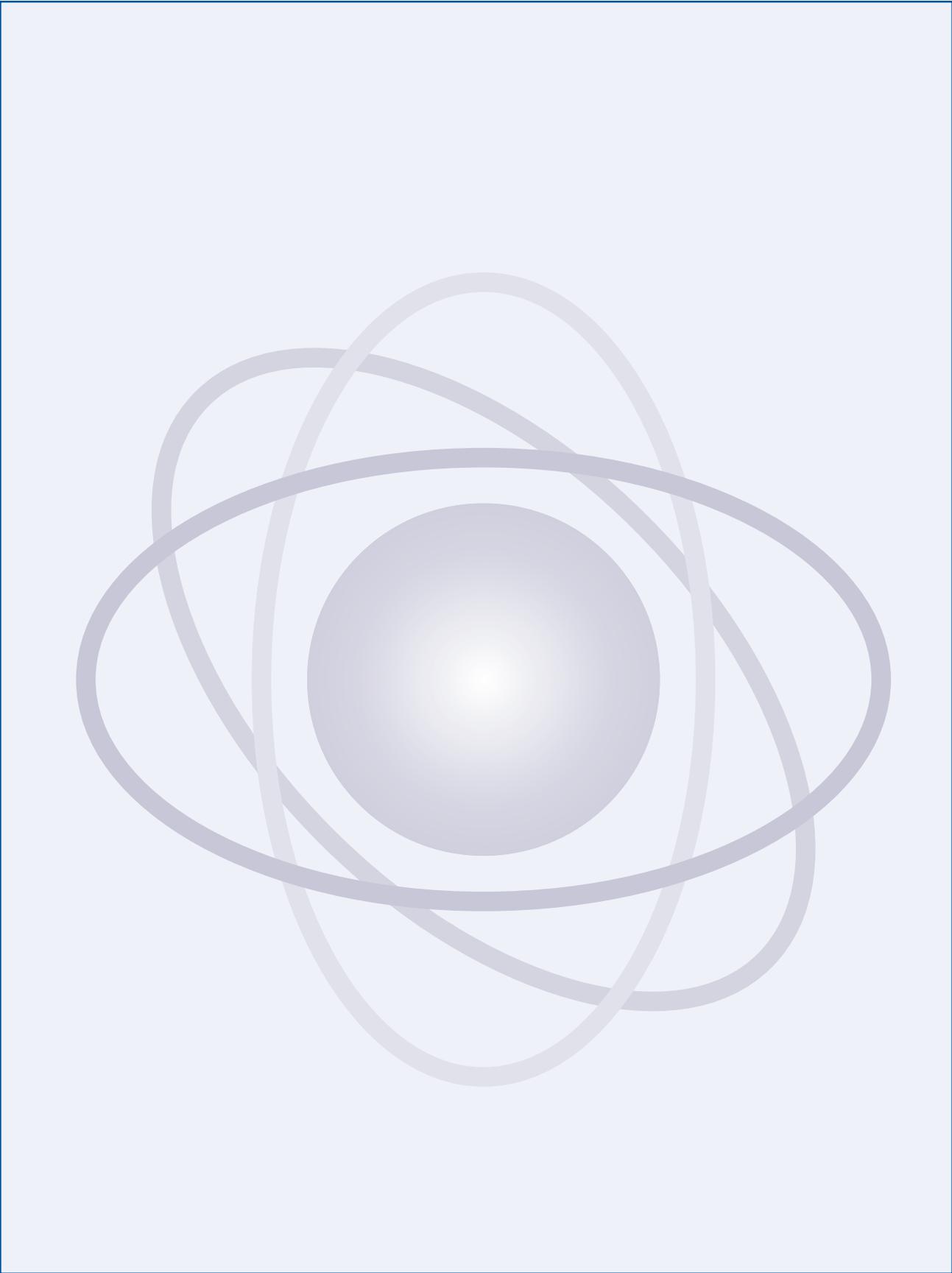


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Introduction

U.S. Hispanic Street Gangs

The alarming increase of gangs in the United States (US) has become a national priority worthy of mention in the President's State of the Union address of 2005. The President emphasized the need for psychological and social services to solve this problem. The statement emphasized the need for a comprehensive strategy in responding to the challenges of gangs in contemporary America, a strategy that includes not exclusively suppression and criminal justice actions, but social, employment, health and psychological professional services, community mobilization as well.

This monograph focuses on Hispanic street gangs in the US including Puerto Rico. It will provide a description and understanding of contemporary gangs as they are emerging in Mexican, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Dominican and Central American communities. This description and understanding requires an appreciation of the importance of immigration and transnational spaces for the phenomenon of US Hispanic street gangs. The manuscript explores the vulnerability of Hispanic communities to youth street gangs. Discussed are consequences associated with streets gangs such as drug use and sales, violence, high-risk sexual behavior and family disruption. The responses of the community to these consequences are also addressed in the form of model intervention and prevention programs. Presented are practical suggestions of how to communicate, interact and build rapport and trust with gang members. Presented is the latest research on risks associated with U.S. Hispanic adolescents becoming gang members and public policy options.

Hispanics make up a disproportionately large share of existing US street gangs due to the large numbers of Hispanic adolescents living in communities characterized by unemployment poverty, welfare dependency, single-headed households and other socioeconomic characteristics that are associated with street gang formation. Many of these gangs are emerging in areas of the U.S. that have no history of large numbers of Hispanics such as the rural and urban South and Northeastern urban areas such as Baltimore and Washington D.C. These areas are experiencing a rapid influx of Hispanic immigrants.

This monograph is written to be useful for community practitioners in order to orient themselves to the multiple and complex problems associated with street gangs. This publication also aims to be helpful in the development of effective prevention and intervention programs that are culturally relevant and meet the needs of this rapidly growing minority population. The monograph takes a multidisciplinary perspective including sociology, psychology, social work, social psychiatry, criminology, and public health and has been drafted in a style and language that will be accessible to the community practitioners, policy makers and the general public. It will also have value to professional psychological and social service provider networks (i.e. family therapists, substance abuse counselors, etc.), particularly in light of the recent challenges to their professional practices presented by increases in Hispanic gang activity in the US.

Chapter: I

Frequently Asked Questions about Hispanic Street Gangs

1. Are all Hispanic street gangs the same?

No. Despite stereotypical images and stories abounding in the public media, there is a great range of Hispanic street gangs in the US. For example, while all gangs are associated with violence and weapons there are great differences among them depending on the particular historical and social contexts of their origin. Central American gangs have recently received sensationalist press reports as to their extent spreading across the US and their violent nature. What is absent in many of these reports is the violent historical context of civil war in Central America which stimulated immigration to the US and has left its legacy in high homicide rates. The immigrants had adapted to violence and many had combat experience and know-how that expressed itself in highly violent behavior. On the other hand, traditional Mexican American “barrio” gangs and Puerto Rican street gangs have been in existence for generations and have exercised restricted violence in protecting the community “turf” from other ethnic groups as well as providing social support for its members who may have been physically neglected because of the poverty in the community.

Furthermore, there is an acknowledged variation between street gangs and drug gangs. Street gangs engage in fighting for various reasons such as territory, prestige, honor and females. Their violence may largely be related to expressive reasons. In contrast, drug gangs are characterized by their engagement in drug dealing and trafficking. Their violence is basically related to instrumental functions such as enforcement of market advantages and the collection of debts. Drug gangs can also become involved in other illegal activities such as undocumented immigration as has been reported among the Central American gangs. The distinction between drug gangs and street gangs is not a static classification and is likely to change over time and in different contexts. A street gang can develop a “work” ethic and transform itself into a drug gang where business, money-raising new rules aiming at enforcing collectivism in transaction, supplants the street gang’s cultural, honor and prestige values.

2. Are the individuals who become Hispanic gang members a highly homogenous population?

In some respects, most Hispanic gang members are recruited from communities that are characterized by concentrated disadvantage, social isolation and poverty. They are identified

with a highly ritualized and symbolic subculture that emphasizes conformity to the “code of the streets” and values of toughness and masculinity (machismo). However, despite these social structural and cultural constants, there is a large variation among gang members in terms of their family and peer group dynamics and their individual psychological differences. In terms of psychological distress many Hispanic gang members have been found to suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a result of the violent incidents, but the actual prevalence of this disorder in the population has not been conclusively determined. The same can be said for childhood trauma.

Many Hispanic gang members report some level of childhood trauma, mostly in the area of physical neglect directly related to the poverty of their living circumstances, but it definitely is not a constant in the population. Psychopathy and other mental disorders exist in the population, but it is safe to say that most Hispanic gang members fall in the grey area of being at risk for mental health disorders but have not passed over the clinical thresholds. In terms of family relationships and stress, many gang members are not properly supervised by their parents. In some cases, the parents have lost control of the situation; in other cases because of incarceration and long working hours they are functionally absent. As with the psychological functioning, family functioning presents a wide range of behaviors that challenge scientific generalizations and arriving at a single “best practice” for interventions in this population.

3. What distinguishes the Hispanic youth gang from other delinquent groups?

Youth gang violence and the violence of other delinquent groups share many features in common; most notably a high frequency and group orientation. What distinguishes youth gang violence from other youth violence helps us to understand the differences between the two groups. It is often very unclear what distinguishes a Hispanic youth gang from other Hispanic delinquent groups. Both community members and the police often confuse the two leading to distortions in statistics and definitions. In terms of outcomes, youth gangs tend to employ more lethal violence than other delinquent groups. Both gangs and delinquent groups exhibit fighting behavior, but gang-initiated violence tends to be more severe in injury and more intense in terms of the frequent use of guns and other weapons. Gangs also tend to be more socially organized than delinquent groups. Delinquent groups have a fluid leadership structure resembling other youth peer groups, while gangs tend to be organized in terms of leaders, hard core gang members, followers and “wannabes.” This is not to say that there are not differences within Hispanic gangs in terms of social organization. Mexican American gangs, for instance, have tended to operate as one loosely structured group with many cliques. Unlike delinquent groups, the gang group can be so large that nobody knows everybody in the group and the question, “Where are you from?” is common. The Mexican American gangs can be contrasted in organization with some of the Puerto Rican gangs on the East Coast where leaders may be elected president or warlord and where the hierarchy is stringently enforced.

Hispanic gangs also induce strong feelings of belonging and loyalty in their individual members that is not the case of other delinquent groups where the ties are less emotionally invested. In the youth gang, you are given a strong identity by which you are recognized. This often involves a “moniker,” a kind of nickname that focuses on a special physical or “macho” characteristic such as “Flaco” (Slim) or “Maton” (Killer).

Furthermore, your gang lifestyle must have the highest salience for its members often replacing attachments to family and girlfriends. Your “homeboys” become your number one social contact and there is pressure exerted to demonstrate where your loyalty lies. These characteristics all serve to distinguish the gangs from other delinquent groups.

Fashion in clothing and body adornment is important to all youth, but for gangs a certain color and tip of the cap is an emblem communicating to the world that they belong to a gang that requires fear and respect from others. Tattoos are especially important although this distinguishing feature has been adopted by other youth. In fact, because of the current fashion of “gangsterism” and hip hop culture the distinguishing styles of dress are becoming ever more refined.

Finally, different patterns of drug use tend to be manifested between youth gangs and delinquent groups. Youth gangs exhibit many of the “party” drug use patterns of delinquent and other youth including marijuana and cocaine usually used together with binge drinking. However, in contemporary Hispanic gangs heroin use in non-injection and injection forms is quite prevalent especially among the older “veterano” Mexican American gang members.

4. What role do Mexican prison gangs have on the development of Hispanic youth gangs?

Traditionally, the youth street gang and the prison gang have been quite separate entities. Street gang members were perceived as too emotional and undisciplined to warrant recruitment by a prison gang until they were incarcerated. Even when incarcerated, street gang members tended to sustain their identification with their gangs and even resist prison gangs by keeping true to their geographical loyalties and animosities. However, as more and more gang members are incarcerated the traditional relationships between prison and youth street gangs are changing. Youth gang conflicts within prison over control of contraband activities have made the alliance with prison gangs more necessary to have some modicum of a life behind the walls.

Inadequate personnel and youth services in the prisons have created a vacuum which the prison gangs are filling. This is tied to the problems of overcrowding and a general lack of resources in the prison system which encourages cooperation across traditionally separate groups. The ethnic tensions that exist in the community are amplified in the overcrowded conditions of the prison making it mutually advantageous for Hispanic youth gangs and Hispanic prison gangs to align. Another contributing factor has been the growth of youth drug gangs and the simultaneous control of local drug markets by prison gangs. It has now become

profitable for prison gangs to recruit youth gang members in the community to work as pushers in their drug distribution networks. Youth gang members upon re-entry in the community find economic opportunities in these drug markets and have good “references” from their prison gang contacts. The alliance of youth street gangs and prison gangs has been exacerbated by the large number of formerly incarcerated Hispanics returning to their communities.

5. What functions do gangs serve in satisfying social and psychological needs that may not be otherwise available in your community?

Gangs proliferate under certain conditions because they serve specific functions in satisfying unfulfilled social and psychological needs of their members. Joining a gang is a process that can be characterized as a series of pushes and pulls that play off the scarcity of resources in the community. In socially isolated communities, gang membership provides status, prestige and recognition among both boy and girl friends and a structured opportunity to meet and be together. Gangs provide excitement in conditions that are otherwise depressing and hopeless. Part of this excitement is the chance of making money by the selling of drugs and other criminal activities. Often these sources of income are the best opportunities available, thus a material as well as an emotional need is satisfied by gang membership. To many gang members, the gang is a rational strategy for coping with adversity.

Individuals are pushed into gangs to find protection and increase their feelings of well being in what is perceived as a dangerous community or environment. Belonging to a gang compensates for many of the socioeconomic deficits that have been associated with the underclass. For example, it provides role models of masculinity to male youth who often have grown up in single parent, female-headed households. The gang also provides a structured secondary socialization, a virtual “school of hard knocks,” missed by dropping out of school for many gang members. Gangs satisfy the need for social adjustment and informal social control that are necessary for coping with feelings of anxiety that are part of the normal developmental dynamics of adolescent “storm and stress”. Finally, in cases such as the traditional “barrio” gangs among Mexican Americans, membership is a prerequisite of connectedness to extended family networks that provide the young male with his proper place in the community and the family.

6. Why does one youth become a gang member and another, from the same family or community, does not?

Becoming a gang member needs to be understood as a complex social process that affects each individual in a slightly different way. A constellation of risk and protective factors can be identified that explain the multiple outcomes of this process. Individuals with a greater number of risk factors and a lower number of protective factors are likely to become gang members under the right conditions. Risk and protective factors can be organized under specific domains including the community, family, school, peer group and individual. Generally speaking, the community domain risk factor that explains why individuals join gangs is the level of social

capital or social integration that exists in the neighborhood. In Hispanic communities, despite conditions of persistent poverty, the levels of social capital tend to be higher than in other socially isolated communities and traditional intergenerational gangs are likely to exist. This unique situation leads to complex and multiple outcomes where strong attachment to the community as well as to one's family can lead to gang membership. In the case of Hispanics, a focus on the family is necessary to understand these dynamics. For example, in the "cholo" family characterized by transgenerational gang membership, weak attachment may lead to not joining a gang while the opposite may be the case for a family without the "cholo" background. School risk factors are also important in explaining who joins a gang in Hispanic communities. Those youth with low commitment to school, low expectations for success (including the parents expectations) and low attachment to teachers are more at-risk for gang membership. But, again, with Hispanics the family is an important intervening factor. In large Hispanic families some selection may take place in which, for example, expectations for success in school may be quite different for different children. Finally, with Hispanics substance use patterns and preferences seem to be important peer group and individual risk factors for determining which youth become gang members and which do not. Those youth who are using alcohol excessively in binge drinking as well as experimenting with drugs such as cocaine and heroin are more likely to join gangs.

7. What strategy or solution works best to address gang problems?

The rigorous and systematic evaluation of interventions aiming at the reduction of gangs and their related antisocial and harmful behaviors and consequences that would provide a definitive answer to this critical question is still in its developmental stage, especially for Hispanics. The current consensus of informed opinion holds that there is no single strategy or easy solution for Hispanic gang problems. A promising approach is to think of different strategies that can be combined in meaningful ways. These combined strategies must be honestly and systematically tested through science-based evaluation research. For Hispanics, family-oriented approaches seem to show promise. There is now some evidence that the drug using behavior and the attachment to the gang can be significantly reduced by an intervention consisting of brief family therapy that improves the communication skills between the gang members and their parents. Preventing youth from joining gangs in the first place seems to be the most cost-effective strategy. Comprehensive community mobilization strategies also show promise involving the participation of broad-based community coalitions ranging from the police and prosecutors to street outreach workers. The lesson to be learned from these comprehensive approaches is that the police should not be expected to be the sole responsible agency for gang problems. Gang suppression organized by the police still, however, tends to be the preferred solution to the gang problem. In order to be effective this strategy needs to offer enhanced options to incarceration and probation. These include various employment-training programs in either aftercare or alternative sentencing forms as well as integrated substance abuse and mental health services.

8. What kinds of skills does it take to be effective in working with Hispanic gangs and their individual members?

Working with Hispanic gang members is both taxing and rewarding. A basic requirement is a clear sense of professionalism that requires prior specialized training, knowledge acquisition, and a sense of specific service provision. With this professionalism comes a healthy distance from the problems and the population. Many ineffective attempts of helping the gang problem can come from either a lack of distance from the gang member leading to an unconscious reinforcement of gang behaviors or, on the other hand, too far a distance leading to a loss of perspective on the real needs of the gang members. With Hispanic gangs, this latter form of incompetence is often tied to a lack of cultural relevance and sensitivity. A basic understanding of cultural prerequisites such as *familismo*, *respeto* and *colectivismo* is of course necessary, but a more refined sensitivity will also be required. An appreciation of local idioms and mores tied to Hispanic deviant subcultures is necessary—an ability to at least recognize the appropriate “*moviditas*” in a non-judgmental way. Skills related to negotiation, conflict resolution and mediation between gangs, their members, families, schools and community agencies will be useful to anyone wishing to work in this highly volatile field.

9. How can public policy be improved to be culturally relevant and effective in addressing the multiple problems of gangs in Hispanic communities?

The most important lesson that has been learned over the past 20 years of active gang policy development has been the attempt to build a policy of gang control on the principles of deterrence and gang suppression alone. We have learned that incarceration while providing some positive short term results in reducing crime in the community has longer term consequences of removing from disadvantaged communities their most precious resource for future economic and social development—their are young and able bodied citizens. With incarceration of youth offenders comes the inevitable problem of re-entry into the community. Some of the unintended negative effects can be seen in the growth in influence of prison gangs in Hispanic communities. Policy needs to be transformed by how Hispanic cultural *a priori* such as *respeto* and *familismo* have contributed to the strengthening of prison gangs and how other outlets can be found within prisons to channel these strong cultural prescriptions. Faith-based initiatives that are sensitive to the deep spiritual commitments of Hispanic culture have been documented to provide an alternative to the prison gang.

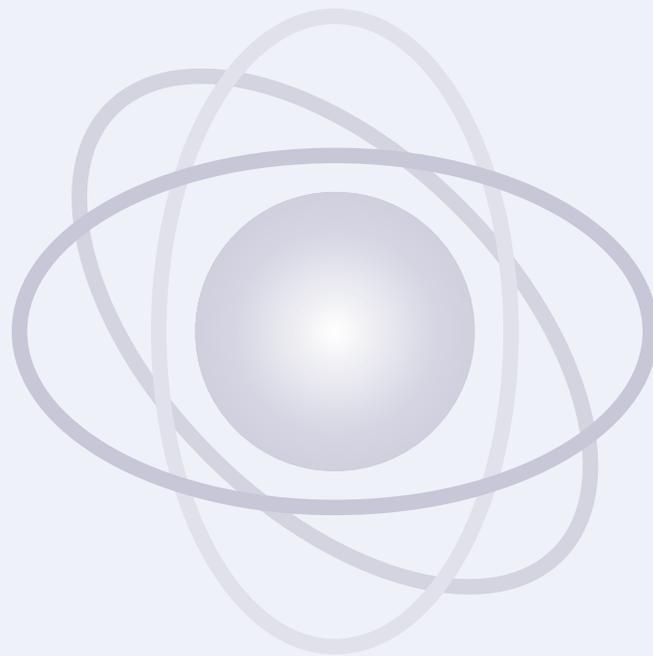
In a related area, the problem of transnational Central American gangs can be linked to another misapplication of deterrence principles and gang suppression control policies. Deportation of Central American gang members who were socialized into gangs as immigrant children on the streets of US cities back to their countries of birth have only intensified the gang problem. Gangs have now been introduced as a political force in Central America and their transnational networks and character have added a new dimension of complexity to the already formidable Hispanic gang problem in the US. This policy was insensitive to the cultural meaning of deportation in Central America. This act worked only to increase the respect of the gang

members and link their image to that of other victims of misplaced immigration policies rather than to the criminal underworld.

Gang policies devoted to Hispanic communities have to fact that suppression can be associated with the further destruction of community institutions and unpopular immigration policies. Family preservation in Hispanic communities should be a policy a priori even if the family involves intergenerational gang involvement and certain illegal activities tied to drug use and immigration. Policy for Hispanic communities should emphasize positive institution building through community mobilization of resources for reforming the educational system, increasing attachment to the work force and overcoming specific barriers and stressor in family interactions.

In Conclusion

The answers to these questions have been merely suggestive. They were meant to stimulate thinking and to provide an introduction and orientation to the chapters that lie ahead. The underlying thread to be found in these answers indicates that Hispanic gangs are unique in the US big picture of gang research and policy. While sharing some essential similarities with other ethnic groups gang problems, Hispanic gangs present an entirely novel set of challenges. It is the intention of this monograph to recognize this point clearly and make a start at stimulating new research as well as providing a guidebook for practitioners in the rapidly expanding field of service provision to gang members and their families.



Chapter II

Hispanic Gang Types

Identifying the types of Hispanic gangs first requires an answer to the question just “What is a gang?” Over the years various definitions have struggled with distinguishing a gang from peer groups of adolescents engaging in delinquent behaviors. Malcolm Klein (1971) provides one of the most precise definitions of gang. He defines a gang as a identifiable group of youngsters who (a) are generally perceived as a distinct aggregation by others, (b) recognize themselves as an identifiable group (almost invariably with a group name), and (c) have been involved in a sufficient number of delinquent incidents to call forth a consistent negative response from neighborhood residents and/or law enforcement agencies.

Racial and Ethnic Group Gang Types

Ethnic group composition has been widely used to classify gangs. Despite the rise of the new ethnically hybrid gangs, most gangs tend to be ethnically homogenous (Starbuck, Howell, & Lindquist, 2001). For example, Chicago police data has shown that the average ethnic homogeneity for Hispanic gangs was 94 percent compared to African American at 96 percent and White at 88 percent (Klein, 1995). Ethnic minority group members comprise an overwhelming number of existing gangs due to the large proportion living in communities characterized by unemployment, poverty, welfare dependency, single headed households and other socioeconomic characteristics associated with the underclass. Racial and ethnic group gangs are often distinct from each other, reflecting differences in economic situation, social status, generations and cultural characteristics. Historically, African-Americans have been more negatively impacted by the nation’s economic transformations than other minority groups (Wilson, 1987). As a result, more street gangs of greater variation have emerged in the black community compared to others. Taylor (1990) argues that most black gangs are geared toward a “corporate structure” organization whose main focus is making money illegally. This may be due to the extreme economic isolation of African American inner city communities in which underground economies thrive (Wilson, 1996). Asian gangs are distinct in that they are linked to the semi-legal businesses involved in criminal-gain activities such as extortion and heroin distribution in highly exclusive communities (Chin, 1995). Often, these Asian gangs are associated with adult gangs such as Tongs, Triad groups, and other Asian community organizations.

An Overview of Hispanic Gangs

One of the most important dimensions in considering the different types of Hispanic gangs is ethnicity. Hispanic gangs in the US are generally comprised of Puerto Ricans, Central Americans and Mexican Americans. They have distinctive characteristics associated with the special circumstances of the populations on which their membership is drawn. Mexican American gangs have been recognized in Southwestern communities, such as Los Angeles, to have closely knit, multi-generational barrio based gangs that clearly distinguishes them from other Hispanic gangs. The Puerto Rican population is concentrated in Northeastern and Mid-western urban areas severely impacted by de-industrialization. The socioeconomic conditions experienced by Puerto Ricans have forced many gangs to focus on the drug trade for economic survival. In this sense, Puerto Rican gangs are similar in structure and activities to those in the African American community. Cuban American adolescent gangs tend to be comprised of first generation immigrants that are more centered on party activities. As most immigrant based gangs, Cuban gangs have faded as this group has successfully integrated into mainstream society (Page, 1997).

Central American gangs consist of recent immigrants residing primarily in multiethnic and multi urban areas in Los Angeles, but spreading fast to other regions of the US. Until recently, these gangs were more territorial and engaged in less organized criminal activities than other ethnic gangs. Most of their activities revolved around protecting themselves from other ethnic gangs and youth in their neighborhoods and coping with the physical and emotional neglect that came from immigrant parents working multiple jobs with no network support for child supervision (Menjívar, 2000). However, with increasing stressors due to deportation policies, social isolation in the US, and increasing gang-related violence in Central American cities and prisons, these gangs are adapting to even harsher conditions than in the past (DeCesare, 1998). This has stimulated the development of more organized criminal activities that can exploit their increasingly transnational character. Journalistic stories have repeatedly associated these gangs with highly violent activities, international smuggling and even terrorism.

Towards a Hispanic Gang Typology

Assuming sensitivity to the diversity of the Hispanic populations, there are several arguments that support the generalizability of a science-based typology of Hispanic gangs. First, there seems to be a process of hybridization occurring within Hispanic gangs as a result of changes in immigration and migration patterns. For instance, traditionally Mexican immigrants were concentrated in the Western regions of the US, but in the last two decades there has been a phenomenal growth of this population in both the urban and rural Eastern regions of the US. These gangs now operate alongside Puerto Rican and Dominican gangs in areas such as Brooklyn as well as in the small towns of the Shenandoah valley of Virginia (Brzezinski, 2004). As a result of the social isolation of these Hispanic groups in these areas, many of these Hispanic gangs are now composed of a mixture of Mexicans, El Salvadorians, Guatemalans and other Hispanic groups. Secondly, the growing influence of prison gangs that recruit

Hispanics across all ethnicities seems to be blurring traditional Hispanic population differences. For example, the growth of the Latin Kings and Queens, a New York Puerto Rican gang, is linked to their recruitment of other Hispanic groups. One result of this inclusiveness is the emergence of spirituality and a social movements orientation as a core value of this gang (Barrios, 2003; Brotherton & Salazar-Atias, 2003).

The proposed Hispanic gang typology is based on five distinct dimensions including: illegal activities, gang organization, drug use patterns, adult influences, and violent behavior. However, two emerging categories are observable that may prove to be significant enough to become dimensions in their own right in future research. One is the category of spirituality/social movement that is especially apparent in the Puerto Rican gangs. Another category is transnationality that is evident in the growing Central American gangs. Gang migration has been documented to be an emerging characteristic of modern gangs as first indicated by the 1999 National Youth Gang Survey where 18 percent of all youth gang members had migrated from one jurisdiction to another (Egley, 2000). Thus, it is quite likely that in the future new dimensions will be added to the following list:

Illegal Activities: Gangs frequently participate in various criminal activities including drug dealing, auto theft, burglary, car jacking, robbery, fencing, and weapon sales. Gangs differ on the basis of whether the illegal activities are controlled by the gang as an organization or more on an individual or clique basis. Organized gangs are identified as having a distinct division of labor that assigns members specific tasks associated with criminal operations. Profits are dispersed according to each member's status, role and the needs of the gang. Unlike these organized gangs, other gangs engage in criminal activity that is more individually based. In some cases, there are groups of individuals, or crews/cliques that function as a subset of the gang. In these types of gangs, the gang provides a cover for the activities of the individual or clique. For instance, it provides protection within a physical territory or market in which the individuals are operating. The clique typically keeps the profits, however, it is often obligated to contribute to the gang for organizational needs such as the purchasing of guns.

Organizational Structure: The gang organizational structure is based on type of leadership hierarchy, and rules among gangs. The type of leadership may vary from those gangs that have a very diffused to a highly structured leadership (Jankowski, 1991). Gangs vary on the existence and enforcement of rules and regulations, violations, sanctions, cliques and sets, frequency of meetings, collection of money (dues), and division of labor and territory.

Drug Use Patterns: Gang members reportedly have exceptionally high rates of lifetime use of most controlled substances (Thornberry & Krohn, 1993; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith, & Tobin, 2003). For example, in the author's study of Mexican American gangs in San Antonio, the majority had tried marijuana (98%), cocaine (90%), heroin (57%), hallucinogens and various prescription pills such as Rohypnol, Valium and Xanax (Valdez, 2003). However, gang members differed on current use patterns by frequency and type of drug. Marijuana was consumed daily by a majority of gang members along with alcohol as part of their everyday routine. There was little variation among gangs on this type of substance use. Cocaine and

heroin use and abuse were perceived differently by individual gangs. Some gangs had strict regulations prohibiting the use of heroin, seriously sanctioning members who violated this rule. Sanctions included severe beatings by other members. Other gangs tolerated the use of heroin as long as it did not interfere with the individual's responsibility to the gang. Other gangs generally were known for partying and polydrug use, including cocaine and heroin.

Adult involvement: The level of dependence on adults influences the nature of a gang's illegal activities and organization. Those gangs that are closely associated with adults usually display higher levels of organization and sophistication with regards to criminality. These gangs tend to be organized more as criminal enterprises than as delinquent groups.

Violence: Violence has been long noted as a distinguishing characteristic of gangs (Yablonsky, 1962). Violent incidents can be differentiated into purposeful versus random (personal) acts. Purposeful violence refers to that which is planned or premeditated. Such acts are often associated with illegal activities. Other acts of violence tend to be more spontaneous and gratuitous, often centered on perceived acts of disrespect. Consideration also must be given to the severity of the violence with emphasis on the use of weapons and the frequency of the violence committed.

Typology of Hispanic Gangs

On the basis of these dimensions a tentative four-fold typology of Hispanic gangs is proposed. It is expected that this typology will be modified by future research which will be sensitive to new developments such as transnationality. Nevertheless, the proposed typology allows both researchers and practitioners to get a handle on the complexity of the gang problem in a specific city and/or neighborhood. The rule is that despite the importance of the protection of territory to gangs, many gangs compete, cooperate and otherwise co-exist in a small urban area. Knowledge of the prevalence of the type of gang in this area will provide a necessary basis for action and reflection.

1. Criminal-Adult Dependent

In this type of gang, adults provided access to illegal drugs, weapons, drug dealing networks, and national and international markets for stolen merchandise. Adults provide other important services such as protection against rival gang members and adult criminals. Drug dealing is frequently this type of gang's major source of income. Relative to other gangs in the community, these gangs are highly organized in that there is a distinct membership hierarchy and organized criminal activities. Use of excessive and especially dangerous drugs (e.g. heroin) is discouraged because it may disrupt the business activities. Violence is also more purposeful and revolves around business transactions.

Two sorts of adult criminal networks are often associated this type of gang. Criminal networks that consist of relatives of gang members such as fathers, uncles, in-laws, common-law relations and other extended family members is one sort. In some cases, the adults may be long-term neighborhood associates. Another sort of criminal adult network is composed of organized prison gang members. The prison gang can control a significant segment of the drug market in specific neighborhoods.

2. Criminal Non-Adult

This type of gang is similar in organizational structure to the criminal-adult dependent gangs, although they are more loosely knit with a flexible leadership structure. They differ from the previous type in that they are not as influenced by adults. They are involved in more independent and personal (non-adult dependent) illegal activities such as drug dealing, stolen cars, robberies and car-jacking. The gangs offer an organizational structure to protect the interests of individual gang members and do not function as a centralized criminal enterprise. Members usually display higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse than the previous type, especially heroin. The members are involved in more minor personal fights within the gang and with rival gang members. Often their level of drug dealing will determine the purposefulness of the violence. This gang may be more territorially based than the Criminal-adult-dependent gang.

Two subtypes of criminal non-adult gangs can be distinguished. One subtype is loosely organized with a weak leadership structure and the other subtype is highly structured with a clear hierarchy and strong membership. In some circumstances, the gang members are required to contribute monies (pitch in) to purchase weapons or other gang needs. This usually takes the form of an informal “pitch in” by all the members present. In most instances the gang gets to keep all their illegal income.

3. Barrio-Territorial Gangs

This type of gang is traditional and territory-based, obtaining its identity from association with a specific neighborhood or small urban area. This association has often gone on for generations and involves intergenerational linkages within families. These ties by blood relation and by place provide this type of gang’s strong sense of traditionalism. The barrio/territory can vary considerably ranging from public housing to residential single-family home neighborhoods. This type of gang tends not to be as hierarchical as the above-mentioned types that get their identity not from family and place, but from criminal activity. In this sense, the criminal gang types have a functional prerequisite to be hierarchical in order to maintain a “modern” form of social cohesion much like any other economic-political organization. In contrast, the barrio-traditional gangs can rely on a social cohesion that comes “naturally” from a tradition of living organically together in the same locality for generations. The cohesion of the barrio-territorial gang is reinforced by gang rituals. Criminal activities do occur including drug dealing, auto theft, burglary, robbery, vandalism, criminal mischief, and other petty crime. However, these crimes tend to be more individualized, less organized, and less gang directed. Violent behavior tends to be more random and personal. Except for gang

turf disputes, violence is likely to be centered on interpersonal fights and random situational acts often associated with male bravado and competition over females. Even gang drive-by shootings tend to be more spontaneous, and are predicated on issues such as defending the gang's honor. These gang members use drugs similarly to the criminal non-adult type with the exception of the low prevalence of heroin use. They operate independently of any adult criminal influence except in the case of the coincidence of overlap between intergenerational family gang membership and criminal activity. Barrio-territorial gangs seem to be the most prevalent in Hispanic communities than in other ethnic groups, but more research is needed to confirm this observation.

An interesting sub-type of the traditional barrio-territorial gang may be emerging that is smaller and restricted to a smaller area such as a housing project, school yard or a shopping mall. These gangs differ from the traditional barrio gang in that they do not involve the transmission of gang identity across generations and within families (Klein, 1995). These gangs are relatively new on the urban landscape and seem to be associated with urban renewal projects that are rearranging traditional community ecologies.

4. Transitional

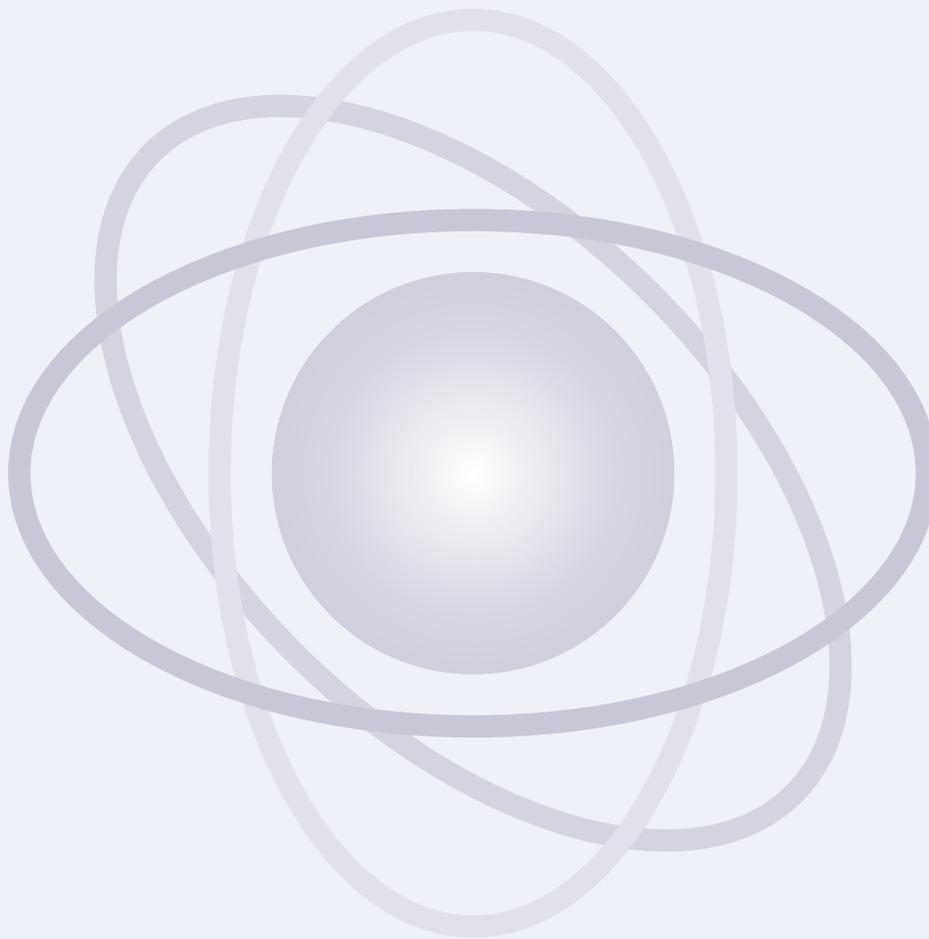
In contrast, to the barrio-territorial gang which may have lasted in a neighborhood for generations, the transitional gang type is characterized by its trajectory and movement, sometimes growing in membership and reputation and at other times fading organizationally. In some cases, the transitional gang is a temporary phenomenon, existing only when school is in session. Transitional gangs are normally smaller than other types of gangs and not as organized, with a characteristically loose and fluid hierarchy and leadership structure. Often, the gang centers on a charismatic leader. The formation of these gangs may be based on residential factors such as living in the same building or sub-area of the projects or neighborhood, but their social cohesion usually is activity-based; e.g. partying or alcohol and drug consumption. Criminal activities, such as drug dealing, stealing cars and burglaries are almost exclusively individually based with the gang having no role. In some cases, transitional gangs may have relationships with adult criminals that supply them with guns or drugs. However, these adults are often parents or other relatives of gang members or they are casual relations of a fleeting sort.

School-based gangs are a subtype of the transitional gang. They tend to be even smaller and less structured. These gangs are formed and maintained in the junior high and high schools. Membership is geographically more dispersed. Violence revolves primarily around personal fights and girl-boy differences. Many of their activities occur in school-related settings, i.e. after school hangouts, parties with school friends.

Tagging crews can also serve as the basis for the formation of another subtype of the transitional gang. Tagging crews can be accused of painting over other gang signs and operating in their neighborhood. The transitional gang's identity can be solidified when successfully defending

themselves in a gang fight with another established gang type that has accused them. Once this process begins the former tagging crew will identify a leader and begin to recruit persons for qualities other than their artistic talent. As the selection criteria and activities of the group begin to diversify, the gang activities may expand into more illegal activities such as drug dealing.

Another subtype of transitional gangs is gangs that are declining toward extinction. Combinations of factors may lead to this demise. The severity of the violence associated with a gang may result in special efforts by the police to break up the gang by arresting and convicting its leaders. At the same time, other more veteran members may begin to mature out of the gang and decide to leave. Other factors include urban renewal policies that disrupt the gang's base of operation.



Conclusion

Contemporary Hispanic gangs exhibit as wide a spectrum as exist among other racial and ethnic gangs described in the current literature. The majority of the gangs are involved in illegal activities such as theft, drug dealing and violence. Hispanic gangs are more likely to use lethal violence than in the past, although, the gangs tend to be highly discriminate in the actual use of these weapons. The use of weapons is facilitated by the availability of high-powered weapons. The gang's organizational hierarchy varies depending on the need for such a structure. Obviously, gangs described as criminal enterprises are more in need of a sophisticated structure than barrio-based gangs. The severity of drug use and abuse varies among the gangs, but all are heavy users of marijuana and alcohol. Most are occasionally users of cocaine, and a minority of mostly older gang members inject heroin.

In the past, Hispanic gangs have existed, but they are different from those that operate today. The earlier urban Hispanic gangs were linked multigenerationally, just as the European ethnic gangs described by Whyte (1949) and others. In terms of the typology, they were largely predecessors of the barrio-territorial type. Among the positive benefits brought by these multigenerational ties were the existence of indigenous social control mechanisms such as extended family members and long-term neighbors. These mechanisms managed to moderate the extreme behavior of the gangs by their supervision. However, with the massive social change engendered by globalization and the process of acculturation stress so central for Hispanics, the traditional generational connected seems to be increasingly eroding. The process of a multiple marginalization that is affecting large numbers of socially disadvantaged Hispanic youth has had the cumulative effect of both fracturing the traditional intergenerational ties that provided some modicum of social support as well as stimulating ever more severe variants of urban street gang violence (Vigil, 2003). These multiple marginalization processes also have created conditions similar to those that have affected low-income African-American communities (Wilson, 1987, 1996). These processes will be given a more extensive exposition in Chapters V and VI of this monograph when the themes of gangs in the community and the risk factors associated with joining and sustaining membership in a gang are discussed.

Chapter III

Gang Member Demographics and Psychosocial Profiles

The development of a portrait of existing Hispanic gang member demographics and psychosocial characteristics is a challenging task. While Hispanic gang member demographic characteristics tend to be rather uniform, the psychosocial characteristics of Hispanic gang members show a greater variation. The psychosocial profiles of Hispanic gang members range from normal to extreme antisocial behaviors and personalities. For example, in a study of Mexican American gang members and a matched control group of non-gang members drawn from the same socially disadvantaged neighborhoods in San Antonio conducted by the author, over half of the gang sample were categorized as low, 44% as moderate and only 4% as high on psychopathy. Both samples were lower on psychopathy than forensic cases and higher than psychiatric patients and undergraduates. The results provide grounds for early intervention efforts for this gang population since the sample showed such a diversity in psychopathy that early interventions preventing this personality disorder from manifesting was warranted (Valdez, Kaplan, & Codina, 2000). This is but one example of the difficulty of adopting intervention and policy to simple psychosocial profiles of Hispanic gang members even though the demographic of this population are generally rather straight forward.

Hispanic Gang Members Demographics

Up-to-date gang member demographic data broken by ethnicity are difficult to obtain outside of selected samples drawn from limited studies. On the national level, data from the annual National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS) have been perhaps the most useful data source, but the survey is limited to law enforcement data estimates and does not actually interview a representative sample of gang youth. For example, in San Antonio where the author had conducted a stratified random sample of gangs and gang members in the same urban areas as the NYGS, quite different estimates of the number of gangs and gang member characteristics emerged (Yin, Valdez, Mata, & Kaplan, 1996). The law enforcement data based on police perspectives tended to overestimate the number of gangs and gang members compared to the perspectives of the gang members themselves.

Nevertheless, the NYGS does provide a starting point for getting a handle on the general dynamics involved with Hispanic gang member demographics. For example, the 1996 NYGS concluded that that Hispanic and African Americans constituted the majority of gang members. (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999). The 1996 data weighted percentages indicated that Hispanics composed the largest group of gang members (44%)

followed by African American (35%), White (14%), Asian (5%) and Other (2%). The trend has shown a gradual increase in the percentage of 46% in 1998 and 47% in 1999 (Egley, 2002). With the growth of the youth Hispanic population as projected into the next century, it is likely that the majority of gang members in the US will be Hispanic Americans. This emphasizes the need for specific studies of the demographic characteristics of Hispanic gang members on the local, state and national levels.

Gender: Hispanic gang members, as with other ethnic groups, are predominantly males.

The percentage of youth self identifying as gang members who are female has been reported to range from 8 to 38 percent. The proportion of females who claim gang membership also has a high range of 9 to 22 percent in these youth surveys (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). This is notably higher than the percentages reported in the 1999 NYGS where 94 percent are males and only 6 percent are females. The NYGS did indicate that 39 percent of all gangs had female members. Although comparative studies of gender distribution differences with other ethnic groups are rare with Hispanics, it is likely that these percentages of females affiliated with gangs may be higher than other ethnic groups. Hispanic gangs tend to involve a relatively high membership of siblings and sisters are not rare to be included in the ranks of gang members as well as girlfriends and mothers of male gang member's children (Cepeda & Valdez, 2003). Traditionally, Hispanic girls may have had difficulty affiliating with gangs, but rapidly changing gender role expectations in the community may be opening gangs to girls. This can be seen in the Puerto Rican gangs where the Latin Kings and the Latin Queens both have a strong presence in numbers and recognition as viable street organizations.

Age: The trend on age distribution among gangs has been changing from 1996 through 2000.

In 1996 there was an even split in gangs between juveniles (i.e. under 18) and young adults (over 18). By 1999, the percentage of young adults had risen to 63 percent. For Hispanic gangs, these distributions seem to be similar. For example, in the San Antonio study by the author of 24 male gangs, the age range for the sample of 160 collected in 1996 and 1997 was from 14 to 25 years with a mean age of 18.5 years old. It can be expected that the distribution now would change to indicate a higher proportion of young adults in the gang sample. This is likely an effect of the growing "mass imprisonment" of school drop out youth in the African American and Hispanic American populations. This phenomenon has resulted in a significant number adolescents transitioning to young adulthood to enter prison rather than the labor market (Pettit & Western, 2004). This seems to have had the effect of prolonging gang membership. Reinforcing this trend has been the growth of prison gangs that now operate and interrelated more frequently with youth gang members. Another trend can also be seen in the opposite direction— younger children and adolescents being recruited in gangs (Howell & Lynch, 2000). This trend seems to be continuing. While Hispanic gang members are characteristically dropping out of school, their influence continues in school peer networks as some gang members continue their education. This has an effect on recruitment patterns opening up the possibility of involvement to younger cohorts.

Urban vs Rural: Hispanic gangs have been largely an urban phenomenon until recently.

As with gangs in general, Hispanic gangs have been observed to be spreading from larger cities out into the rural areas at seemingly the same proportion as the national averages (Egley, 2000). Gang member migration from the larger cities is becoming more common. The 1999 NYGS reported that 18 percent of gang members had migrated. This migration pattern has been associated with expanding the opportunities for criminal activity, but the more important factor seems to be related to the general causes of migration including family attempts for social improvement and being close to relatives that affect the gang member as well (Maxson, 1998; Maxson, Woods, & Klein, 1996).

Migration: The increasing migration of Hispanic gang members that follow the pathways

Of the migration of the general Hispanic population in the U.S. is also changing the traditional concentration of Hispanic gangs in specific regions of the country (Vigil, 2001). For example, Mexican American gangs have been historically associated with the large cities of the Southwest such as El Paso and Los Angeles and Puerto Ricans with the large cities of the Northeast. After World War II with increasing opportunities for industrial work in the Mid-West, Mexican Americans migrated to large cities such as Chicago and Milwaukee. A similar pattern can be observed in the Puerto Ricans who migrated from the large East Coast cities such as New York to Chicago. C. David Curry and Irving Spergel argues that the rise of Hispanic gangs in Chicago is the result of ethnic succession that provides organizational stability in the period of adjustment (Curry & Spergel, 1992). In contrast, in the African American community who had migrated to Chicago before the Second World War gangs also serve a function in stabilizing the social structure in poor neighborhoods affected by the out-migration of upwardly mobile African Americans to the suburbs. Malcolm W. Klein recognizes the same pattern, but in a reverse direction for Los Angeles (Klein, 1995). In this case, the African American gangs are the result of ethnic succession while the Hispanic gangs provide stability in a situation of the out-migration of the population to relatively more advantaged neighborhoods in the city. Klein concludes that ethnic patterns in gangs may reflect as much migration patterns as cultural differences.

Hispanic Gang Member Psychosocial Profiles

The migration effects on gang membership documented are having an effect on the psychosocial profile of the modern Hispanic gang member. Hispanic gang members are still located in socially disadvantaged communities in large cities that are affected with persistent poverty, an underclass and social isolation. However, with in and out migration to and from the suburbs, smaller cities and the rural areas the “big city” stereotype of Hispanic gang member

psychosocial profiles will almost certainly be modified by future research. Also it is important to keep in mind Malcolm W. Klein's remark when considering the distinguishing the social profile of gang members (Klein, 1995):

It is not sufficient to say that gang members come from lower-income areas, from minority populations, or from homes often characterized by absent parents or reconstituted families. It is not sufficient because most youths from such areas, such groups and such families do not join gangs (pp. 75 - 76).

While it may be generally true that most Hispanic youth in socially disadvantaged circumstances do not join a gang, in some Hispanic communities gang members constitute a substantial percentage (40 percent or higher) of the Hispanic youth population (Arfaniarromo, 2001). What then are the distinguishing characteristics that distinguish the social profile of gang members? Three of the most distinguishing social characteristics are that gang members tend to drop out of school, commit crimes and engage in other delinquent behaviors such as drug use at rates far exceeding those of the general population.

Criminal Behavior

Gang members in contrast to other youth limited offenders who are primarily involved in rebellious behaviors such as smoking, drinking and petty crimes engage in exceptionally high levels of criminally-related behavior. In the study by the author of 160 randomly selected male gang members from 26 gangs, 68 percent currently own a gun and 56 percent carried it in the last 30 days. Eight-two percent fired a gun in gang related fight. Half had sold drugs in the last three months and 56 percent were arrested for a violent crime. Gang members reported participation in various other criminal activities including drug selling and dealing, burglary, auto theft, car jacking, robbery, fencing and weapon sales (Valdez, 2003).

Substance Abuse

Another indication that is associated with these gang members being social profile of persistent offenders is the reported exceptional high levels of lifetime and current use of illicit drugs such as marijuana (lifetime 98%; current 75%), cocaine (lifetime 90%; current 53%) and heroin (lifetime 57%, current 26%). The mean number of days in the last 30 days of marijuana use was 20.02. Heroin was used an average of 12.19 days and cocaine somewhat less for 7.62. Current use of non-injection heroin was reported by 25 percent of the sample and 3 percent reported being injectors with a mean of approximately 11 days in the past month. Amphetamine (lifetime 29%, current 7%) and inhalant (lifetime 35%, current 4%) use was less prevalent.

School Drop Out

The school drop out characteristic is especially important in the social profile that includes excessive criminal behavior and drug use. For example in a national study surveys of drug and alcohol use were conducted with a probability sample of 8th- and 12th-grade Mexican-American and White non-Hispanic youth (Chavez & Swaim, 1992). Mexican American 8th graders reported generally higher rates of lifetime and current use than White non-Hispanics as well as indicating a higher frequency of high-risk drug behaviors. The pattern was reversed among 12th-grade students. The authors provide an explanation for these cohort differences based on the impact of differential school dropout rates. The high drug use rates in middle school of Hispanics seem to be related dropping out of school before the 12th grade. This research finding suggests, at least in areas with a high concentration of Hispanic gang members, that by the 8th grade Hispanic children may be orienting toward gang membership as indicated by their high drug use.

This interpretation is supported by research that has found that gang members show higher rates of “precocious transitions” in adolescent than other delinquents and conventional students—e.g. untimely and disorderly life course transitions from the viewpoint of normal social developmental pathways such as school drop out, cohabitation, unemployment and parenthood (Thornberry et al., 2003). Findings from the author’s San Antonio Mexican American gang study also indicated high rates of precocious transitions in the sample (Valdez, Kaplan, Cepeda, Mata, & Flores, In Press). Eighty seven percent reported one or more precocious transitions. The mean number of precocious transition was 2.05. Specific data on these precocious transitions indicated that 66 percent of the gang sample reported having dropped out of school. Twenty three percent reported being teenage parents while 56 percent mention “early nest leaving” which included being kicked out of the house or having run away from home. Furthermore, 14 percent were cohabitating at the time and 46 percent reported being unemployed.

Familisimo

Certain family characteristics among Hispanics are an integral part of the social profile of gang members. This is understandable in light of the strong cultural influence of familismo on Hispanic identity and orientation. In the author’s San Antonio study, a high percentage of the Mexican American gang members expressed that their family was involved in illegal activities (73%) and 50 percent also expressed that they grew up in families where there were drugs in the household. The majority of Mexican American gang member families correspond to Joan Moore’s “cholo, or street-oriented” family in which parents not only engaged in illicit activity, had incarceration histories and neglected parental supervision responsibilities, but also tended to socialize their children along similar values (Moore, 1994).

Psychological Differences

There has been a continuing literature on the psychological differences between gang, delinquent and conventional youth. Lewis Yablonsky in his study comparing gang and non-gang youth over 40 years ago concluded that the gang members were more:

- *socially inept*
- *have lower self-esteem*
- *have sociopathic characteristics.*

Gang members have also been found in comparative studies with other youth groups to be more:

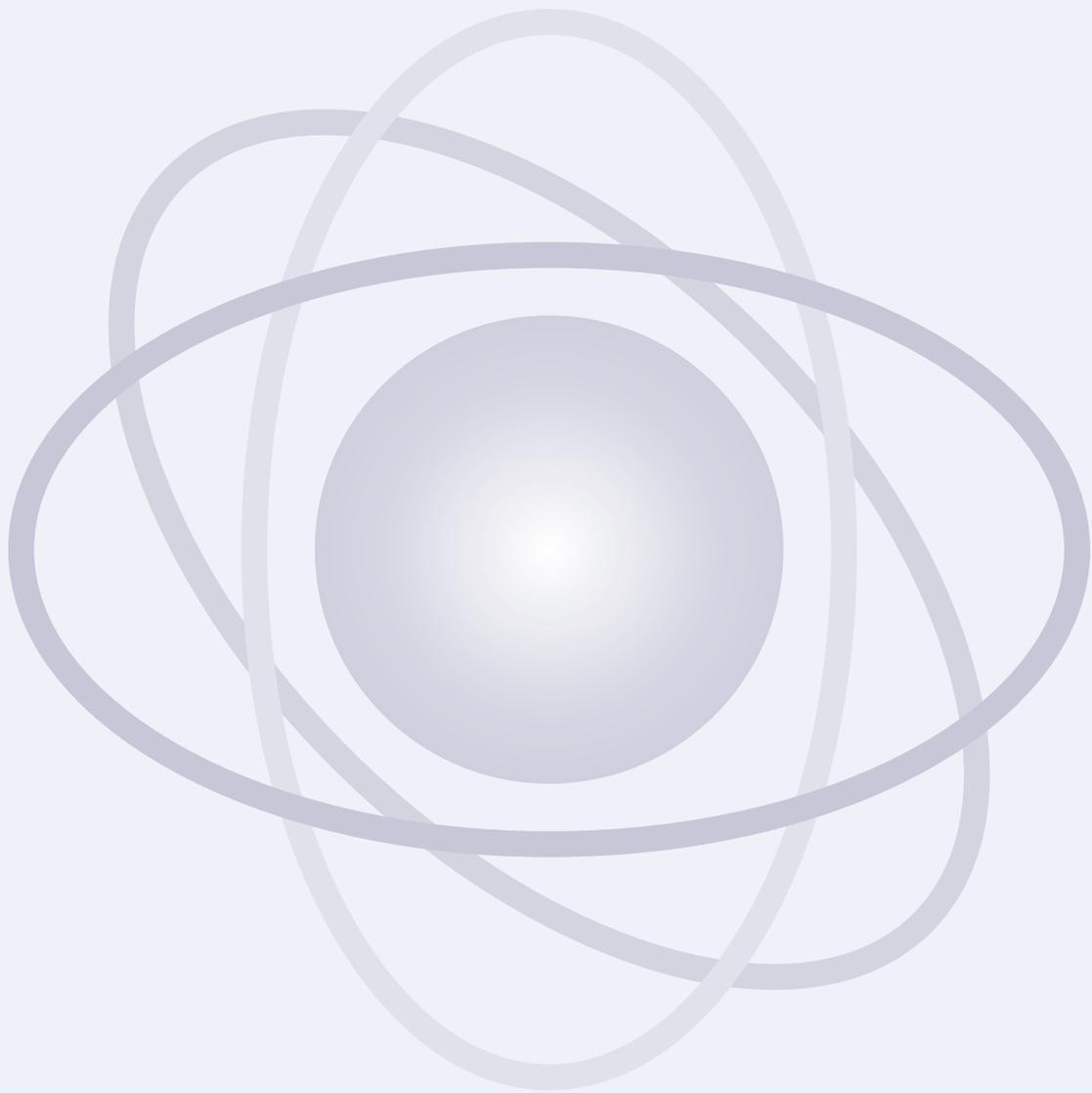
- *impulsive,*
- *engaged in more risk-seeking behavior*
- *less committed to school*
- *have lower communication levels with their parents*

Specific studies of individual psychological differences between Hispanic gang members and other Hispanic youth are developing. In the San Antonio study comparing gang members and matched community controls cited above, the Mexican American gang members scored higher on the total, affective and behavioral subscales of a psychopathy checklist than the non-gang members from the same community. The gang members scored twice as high as non-gang members on the item measuring lack of empathy (Valdez et al., 2000). These psychological differences are consistent with the social psychological process of “choloization” that is associated with the cholo family described above as well as the formation of a specific street identity within the subculture of the gang (Zatz, 1985). This gang membership can also contribute to the formation of a “Chicano” national identity that compensates for the feelings of social isolation and alienation from the dominant mainstream American society (Belitz & Valdez, 1994). The gang also provides an arena where basic psychological issues such as mastery and acculturation stress can be resolved (Belitz & Valdez, 1997). Participation in the gang also increases the risk for violence victimization and other forms of traumatic stress. This accounts for the relatively high levels of Post traumatic Stress Disorder that have been documented in Hispanic gang members and is another characteristic element of their psychological profile (Cervantes, 1992).

Cholization

James D. Vigil has demonstrated in his groundbreaking study in the Mexican American barrios of Los Angeles how the youth’s self-identity is inextricably tied up with the gang (Vigil, 1988a). The gang provides the youth with the basic psychological ingredients for self-identification and becomes an ego ideal. Toughness and other street values are reinforced by characteristic psychological traits such as the lack of empathy as documented in the San

Antonio study. This specific constellation of personality traits that are the psychological outcomes of choloization process have been explained by psychological theories reaction formations or alternative responses to repellent social conditions (Arfaniarromo, 2001). The discrimination that these youth experience can trigger a reaction formation away from mainstream American values and sentiments and toward reinforcement of things associated with original immigrant identifications (Portes & Rumbaut, 1991). Support for this explanation of the specific psychological profile of Hispanic gang members is presented in an empirical study of acculturation and gang membership (Lopez & Brummet, 2003). The study of 255 Hispanic young offenders found that gang members had more of a Mexican orientation than non-gang members as measured by the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans II.



Conclusion

Hispanic gang members tend to be males, but there is evidence of increasing numbers of females that are affiliated with gangs. Within the Puerto Rican and Dominican population, this is most evident with the appearance of large female gangs such as the Latin Queens. The mean age of Hispanic gang members is around 18 years, but there seems to be a trend toward increasing number of young adults as a result of contemporary mass imprisonment policies and the growing interrelationship of prison gangs and youth street gangs. There is also some evidence of an increase in the recruitment of younger gang members as the result of the growing presence of gangs in the schools. Gang membership and dynamics is associated with migration patterns. There is a trend for gang members to be dispersed from the large inner city areas to the suburbs, smaller cities and rural areas. Transnational migration patterns can also be observed especially in the proliferation of Central American gangs.

The social profile of Hispanic gang members are characterized by a relatively weak attachment to the institutions of conventional society. Gang members drop out from schools at higher rates than their non-gang member peers. Their family attachments are often disturbed by the excessive use of alcohol and drug by the parents and parental criminal behavior. This often results in physical neglect and lack of supervision although it cannot be said that the majority of gang members have a strained relationship with their parents. Communication problems in the family however are widespread. Criminal activity is another basic characteristic in the social profile of gang members. Gang members commit a significantly greater number of crimes than non-gang delinquents and are more likely to engage in violence and own and use guns. Excessive drug abuse is also an integral part of the social profile of gang members. The psychological profile of gang members is characterized by the process of choloization that produces a specific personality profile that involves an identity that is an alternative adaptation to repellent conditions. This personality profile places the gang member at high risk for various forms of mental illness including Psychopathy and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. However, the psychological profile of gang members indicates that they are likely to benefit from early interventions that target specific outcomes of the choloization such as a deficit in empathy.

Chapter IV

Consequences of Gangs and Gang Membership

Overall, the age at which a person commits his/her first offence appears to occur between 15 and 17 years of age. This two year period is especially important because it is when most individuals begin their trajectory in crime and delinquency. Fortunately, these trends tend to be short-lived and characterized by relatively minor offenses. The average person usually “settles down” and lives a life of more or less conformity. However, this pattern is not universal in that some adolescents follow a trajectory of much longer duration involving more serious types of offenses that continue into their adulthood.

Adolescents who are members of gangs are more likely to be involved in serious and violent delinquency and crime. In this chapter, we will present the consequences of gang membership for Hispanic adolescents related to drug use, violence, crime and incarceration. How these consequences affect the family are also discussed.

Substance Use

The most critical feature of adolescent substance use is that it is often part of a constellation of behaviors that are precursors to more serious problems. Research has shown that youth gang member involvement in drug use is generally higher compared with nongang members. This is also the case for Hispanic adolescents involved in gangs which have been shown to have high prevalence rates of drug use. Ethnographic studies reveal a serious poly-drug use problem among Hispanic gang members. For instance, in a study of Mexican American youth gang members reported exceptionally high levels of lifetime and current use of marijuana (lifetime 98%; current 75%), cocaine (lifetime 90%; current 53%) and heroin (lifetime 57%, current 26%). Recreational use of prescription drugs such as Valium, Xanax, Rohyphnol, etc. (lifetime 75%; current 28%) were also reported. It is important to understand that the patterns of drug use among gang members will vary given the regional context in which they are found.

There is greater probability that Hispanic gang members will use more serious addictive drugs like cocaine and heroin. Many studies on Mexican American gangs in Los Angeles, San Antonio, San Diego and other southwestern cities found members more likely to experiment with heroin. It is common to find heroin cliques within many of these Mexican American gangs such as described by Joan Moore’s studies of Los Angeles’ gang . Mexican American gang members and associates are over-represented among persons with opiate addictions,

with HIV/AIDS, and other drug related infections in national statistics and be less likely to be treated.

Research has shown that Hispanic females associated with gangs are more likely to be involved in legal and illegal substance use than other delinquent females. For instance, several studies of Mexican American female gang members in California found heavy drug use comparable to that of men. These researchers found that these females' drug use tends to take place in the company of other drug-using girlfriends and the "wilder" boys. In a study of female gang members, Brotherton (1996) found that Mexican American females had a broader range of drug use in comparison to African American and Salvadorian gangs in San Francisco. These studies suggest that for gang involved Mexican American adolescent females, drug use has serious repercussions, including a more long-term, street oriented lifestyle that increases their risk for violence, criminal activity and incarceration (Valdez & Petersen, 2003).

Drug Selling and Dealing

Another consequence associated with gang membership is the intersection between different types of illegal drug use and some form of drug selling. Youth involved in gang activities are more likely to be involved in the drug trade than other adolescents. Some researchers have suggested that the growth of gang membership is due to resources made available through the gang's connection to drug markets. Much of this is related to the fact that declining economic conditions in many minority urban communities increase juvenile involvement in illegal drug markets. Although drug markets tend to be highly structured organized crime units, for youth involved in gangs they are rarely involved in large-scale drug distribution activities as an organized gang function. For instance in a study of Latino street gangs in San Francisco gangs were found to be loosely organized with individuals engaged in freelance, rather than organized, drug distribution entities (Waldorf & Lauderback, 1993).

In order to understand the relationship among Hispanic gang membership, drug use and drug distribution, two dimensions need to be taken into consideration as identified by Valdez and Sifaneck (2004):

- 1) the gang's organizational structure defined by involvement in drug dealing*
- 2) the individual gang member's role in using, selling and dealing drugs.*

By taking these two dimensions into consideration, the subtle yet complex roles played by individual gang members can be appreciated. That is, there may exist a multiplicity of roles that individual gang members play in the drug distribution system that is not necessarily dictated by the gang structure (i.e. some gangs have nothing to do with the dealing of drugs).

Violence

Victimization and perpetration of violent offenses is another consequence associated with gang membership among Hispanic adolescents. Delinquent youth frequently use physical violence to resolve interpersonal conflicts. There is ample evidence that interpersonal violence associated with members of youth gangs has grown and spread in segments of the U.S. Hispanic population that are characterized by poverty and social isolation. In this environment, Hispanic gang members experience a street socialization process that emphasizes the development of collective and individual identities, norms and emotional coping strategies that legitimate violence as a means of resolving conflicts. In this process, violence becomes recognized as a norm of collective and individual gang member behavior. Within this context, a “code of the streets” develops that meets violence with counter-violence and becomes the basis for an identity and reputation (Anderson, 1999). Violent incidents are differentiated as purposeful (expressive) versus random (personal) acts of violence. Purposeful violence is planned or premeditated. Such acts are often associated with illegal activities. Other acts of violence tend to be more spontaneous and gratuitous, often centered on perceived acts of disrespect.

Hispanic gangs have become associated with increased involvement in violent offense often with the use of sophisticated weaponry. Violent offenses committed by gang members include drive-by shooting, personal fights, assault, car-jacking, and armed robbery. These offenses usually result in minor injuries (bruises, cuts and scrapes) but sometimes may result in death. There is also evidence that gang may be involved in higher rates of intimate partner and dating violence.

The use of automobiles to drive to opponent’s homes or hang-outs to shoot at victims from a moving car has become a widely used tactic among youth gangs. Sanders (Sanders, 1994) identified several issues on how the use of drive-by shootings served the gang several purposes:

- 1) gang status*
- 2) means of resolving arguments by facilitating premeditated attacks of rivals*
- 3) counter competition in illegal business*

Furthermore, reports indicate that the use of high caliber lethal weapons (i.e. automatic or semi-automatic) in gang assaults is increasing gang related homicides. Gang homicides differ from non-gang in that they are more likely to take place in public settings, involve strangers and third parties, characterized by periodic spurts and often times motivated by retaliation. In fact, in some cities like Chicago, Hispanic gangs are associated with increased homicides rates (Block & Block, 1993). The unprecedented increase of youth involvement in gangs and homicide is a major concern in many Hispanic urban communities.

Finally, while gang members commit more serious and violent offenses in comparison to nongang youth, it is important to keep in mind that gang violence is fluid. That is, this type of violence will differ from one city to another depending on the community context and structure

of the gang. In general the majority of violent incidents involving gang members have more than one circumstance or motive which may include:

- Drug Related Dispute - argument associated with drug transactions/use
- Dispute- argument associated with personal or gang related issues
- Assault - victim attacked and taken by surprise
- Rolling Out – gang exit rite that entails a physical beating by several gang members
- Personal Vendetta – feud between victim and offender
- Gang Revenge/Retaliatio n – retribution associated with specific gang incident
- Gang Rivalry - ongoing feud between two gangs
- Territorial Trespassing – intruding into rival gangs neighborhood/turf/barrio
- Self-Defense – spontaneous reaction to defend oneself
- Gang Solidarity – expression of shared goals, norms and aims among gang (camaraderie)
- Spontaneous Retaliatio n – personal spontaneous (spur of moment) retribution

Crime

Hispanic gangs participate in various criminal activities including drug dealing, auto theft, burglary, car jacking, robbery, fencing, and weapon sales. Gangs differ on the basis of whether the illegal activities are controlled by the gang as an organization or more on an individual basis. Organized gangs are identified as having a distinct division of labor that assign members specific tasks associated with criminal operations. Profits are dispersed according to each member's status, role and also the needs of the gang. Unlike these organized gangs, other gangs engaged in criminal activity that are more individually based. In some cases, there are groups of individuals, or crews, that function as a subset of the gang. In these types of gangs, the gang provides a cover for the activities of the individual or crew. For instance, it provides protection within a physical territory or market in which they are operating. The subset typically keeps the profits, however, those members are obligated to contribute to the gang for organizational needs such as the purchase of guns.

Incarceration

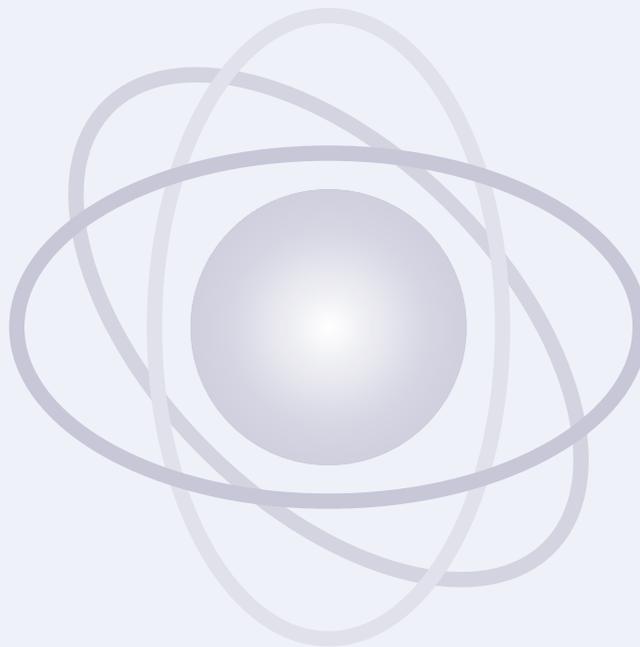
Imprisonment is becoming an expected part of young adult life for Hispanics as is the case for young uneducated Black males (Pettit & Western, 2004; Valdez, 2003; Vigil, 2002). Among the repercussion of increased imprisonment is the growth of prison gangs and their activities in and out of the prison systems. Upon being released as convicted felons, prisoners return to their communities and begin to engage in drug selling and dealing with other ex-convicts and criminals. There is some evidence, that for Hispanic gang members, adult prison gangs play a role in facilitating their participation in drug related criminal activities (Valdez & Sifaneck, 2004).

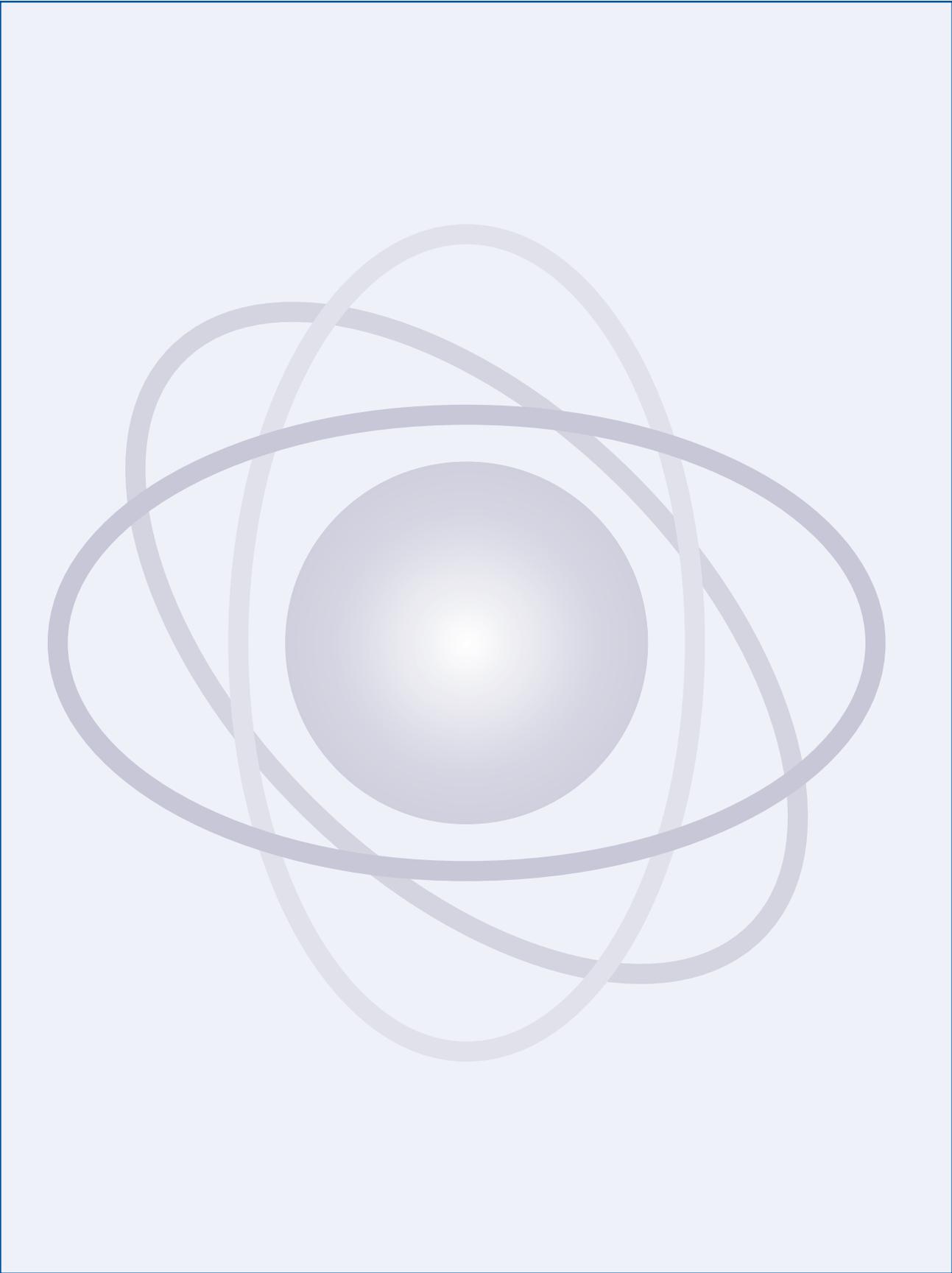
Family

For Mexican American gangs involvement in selling and dealing was influenced by the presence of adult criminals in the gang members' social network. Many of the gang members are related by family ties to adult criminals who are prison gang members active in drug distribution. Moore (1994) similarly described the importance of the "cholo" family in sustaining a wide array of delinquent and criminal behavior among Mexican Americans in Los Angeles (Moore, 1994; Vigil, 1988b). This "intergenerational closure" provides a social cohesiveness to the street gang that is absent in other community contexts. Intergenerational closure, in this context, has a negative valence than what is found in the literature to explain the determinants of neighborhood social cohesion in Chicago that have been related to positive social outcomes (Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999). Nonetheless, the capacity of adult criminal family relationships to influence and intervene in the lives of young males provides a marker for distinguishing the Mexican American gangs in this study.

Long-Term Consequences

Overall, this chapter has demonstrated the effects of gang membership on substance use, drug dealing, violence, crime and incarceration. It is important to understand these consequences given the fact that gang members develop an antisocial career trajectory that has been shown to persist from adolescence to young adulthood. Furthermore, gang membership among youth is often confounded with other concurrent problems such as poor mental health and social and psychological problems through mechanisms such as distraction from conventional pursuits and precocious transitions including dropping out of school, becoming pregnant/impregnating someone, teenage parenthood, and living independently from parents.





Chapter V

Gangs in Your Community

A majority of Hispanic adolescents involved in street gangs are situated in urban ghettos or barrios across the nation. Before discussing gangs in our communities, it is important to understand that environmental factors or community conditions play an important role in creating the conditions that contribute to the emergence of gangs in a given community. Gang scholars have argued that the disruption of a local community's social organization leads to crime, delinquency and gang activity. High rates of gang activity in minority communities have persisted over the years, regardless of ethnic groups residing in these areas. This is particularly the case with Hispanic groups, who's communities have experienced an ethnic succession similar to those of other groups. This approach contends that the emergence of gangs can not only be explained by individual characteristics but must focus on community level factors.

Moore (1998) identified four community conditions that often precede a transition from typical adolescent groupings to established Hispanic youth gangs:

- *Conventional socializing agents, such as families and schools, are largely ineffective and alienating that result in the absence of conventional adult supervision*
- *Adolescents must have a great deal of free time that is not taken up by other prosocial roles*
- *In order for the gang to be established – if not fully institutionalized across generation, members must have limited access to appealing conventional career pursuits (i.e. good jobs)*
- *Youth must have a place to congregate – a neighborhood*

In this chapter we will present community characteristics associated with the emergence of gangs in Hispanic neighborhoods including poverty, unemployment, residential mobility, immigration, low levels of education, low home ownership, and economic instability.

Poverty

Not always a necessary condition, most Hispanic gangs are living in areas within cities that have the highest levels of economic inequality. During the last 30 years (1970-2000) the U.S. has experienced an economic restructuring that moved jobs from central cities to suburbs and reduced access to manufacturing jobs and demand for low skilled workers. This situation blocked the upward mobility for many Hispanics in an increasingly service oriented, high

tech society. These economic changes exacerbated the misdistribution of wealth and have produced greater inequality and, as a by-product, poverty, joblessness, and welfare dependency in urban minority neighborhoods. Wilson (1987) and others (Ricketts & Sawhill, 1988) argue that the constellation of these characteristics in low-income urban communities produces what they identify as “concentrated effects.” One of the long-term results of this transformation, was that those Hispanics who were able to move to better neighborhoods away from the barrios did so leaving behind the most impoverished.

Increased inequality and poverty have socially isolated minorities in urban neighborhoods that contain multiple, interlocking social problems (Jencks & Mayer, 1990; LaFree & Drass, 1996). These problems are reinforced by the inadequate investment in city’s infrastructure, resulting in dilapidated streets, run down public recreational facilities, lack of affordable housing and environmental hazards. Residents of these communities are more susceptible to unconventional and deviant behaviors such as substance abuse and crime.

Unemployment

The economic situation creates what has been identified as an underclass which describes a group that has permanently been excluded from participating in mainstream labor market opportunities. As a result, many members of the underclass rely on other economic alternatives: low paying temporary jobs, part-time jobs in the secondary labor market, welfare, and dependency on friends or relatives. In interviews with gang members, many could not identify an adult who they were close to that had a permanent full time job. As an adaptation to these structural realities certain segments of low-income minority communities have chosen to participate in sectors of the illegal economies.

The establishment and participation of adolescents in youth gangs and related illegal activities is part of a constellation of economic activities that flourishes in the context of concentrated poverty, social isolation and vice markets. Historically, vice districts have been typically segregated in minority ghettos or barrios. Opportunities to engage in illicit activities for Hispanics in cities across the U.S. are facilitated by the proximity of these vice area and their limited access to other conventional opportunities.

Residential Patterns

The economic transformation discussed above, also contributed to residential patterns among Hispanics that has influenced the emergence of gangs in many cities. Overall, Hispanics tend to live in highly segregated neighborhoods. Segregated housing reflects the realities of social distinctions by differentiating access to jobs, income, education and housing. Studies have found that lower status ethnic groups were segregated into core areas, and that, as groups improved their social status they moved to areas outside of the barrios. In many areas of the U.S., there are middle-class suburban areas that are comprised of Hispanics while poor Hispanic continue living in the inner-city.

However, Hispanic's current residential patterns suggest that this is a more complicated process. Clearly these residential patterns indicate that the poorest of Hispanic immigrant and non-immigrant populations are concentrated in these inner-city neighborhoods. However, even within these communities residents are segregated by ethnicity and immigration status. For instance, Central Los Angeles is predominantly a poor Hispanic area, but is segregated into distinct neighborhoods consisting of Central Americans, Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans. This ethnic heterogeneity and segregation results in tensions and territorial conflicts among adolescents – one of the bases of the emergence of gangs.

Immigration

Another factor contributing to the rise of gangs among Hispanics is the flow of immigrants into the U.S. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services estimated that about 7 million illegal immigrants were living in the country in 2002. Projections now put the number closer to 8 million. These individuals are immigrating to traditional Hispanic settlement communities in different regions of the United States depending on their nationality. For instance, Mexicans and Central Americans immigrated to the Southwest, Puerto Ricans to the Northeast, and Cubans to South Florida. What distinguishes the Hispanic immigrants from previous white ethnic patterns is that it has been a continuous process that reinforces the social structural conditions that leads to the formation of adolescent gangs in inner city barrios. That is, what can be expected is that adolescents will form peer groups based on their immigration status that may evolve into more organized gangs.

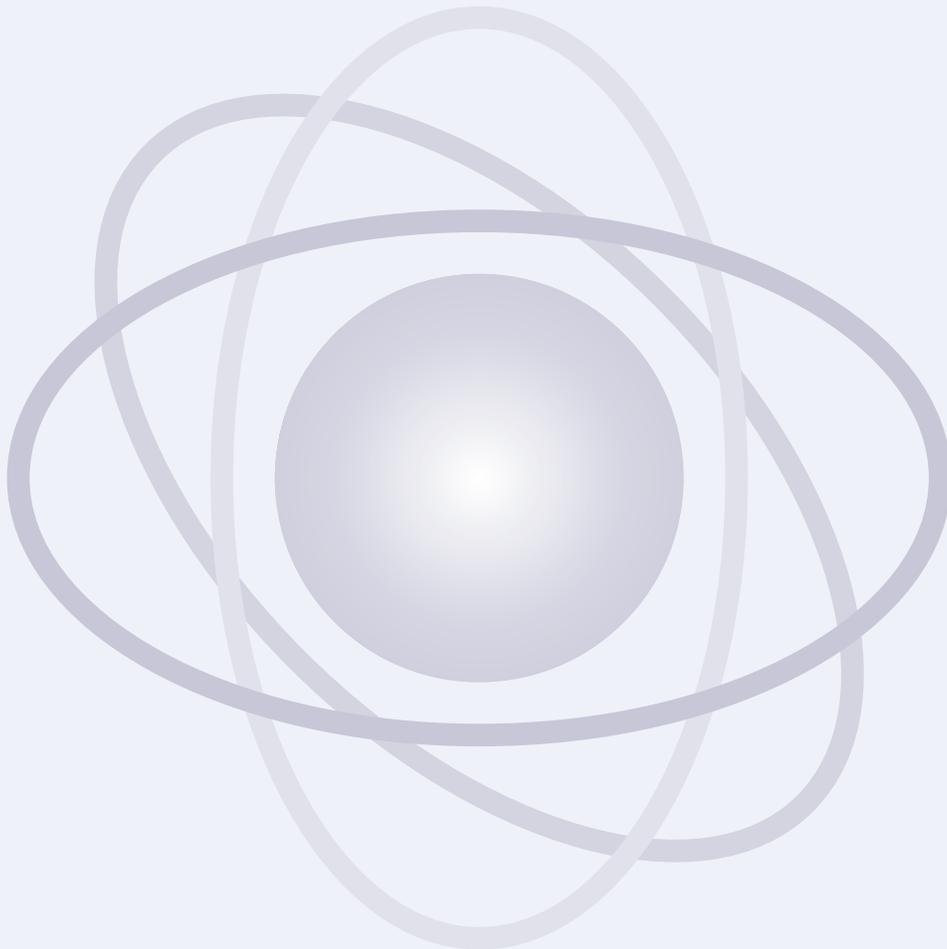
What has occurred in the last 10 years is that Hispanics are settling into areas outside of those traditional ones described above. For instance, reports indicate that there is a sizeable proportion of Mexican immigrants living in Southeastern states including Georgia, North and South Carolina and Alabama. Many of these new immigrants are residing in small rural areas working in agricultural and poultry industries. As well, Mexican immigrants are residing in non-traditional receiving areas such as New York City boroughs including Brooklyn, Queens and Harlem. As they experience conflict with other youths in those areas, many have responded by forming youth gangs for protection and engaging in illegal activities. A recent report from Brooklyn stated that a Mexican youth gang was responsible for the death of a Polish construction worker.

Another highly publicized report has been the presence of what is known as the “Mara Salvatrucha” – a Salvadorian (El Salvador) based gang. This gang is of interest due to the fact that it illustrates the unintended consequences of U.S. criminal justice policies that deport immigrant youth for criminal offenses. Many Salvadorian youth deported from Los Angeles have returned and formed gangs similar to those that exist in the U.S. Allegedly many of these Salvadorian gang members are returning to the U.S. and organizing at a national level. The Mara Salvatrucha has gained the attention of local, state and federal criminal justice officials who are convinced the gang is operating at a trans-national level involving illegal activities.

Institutional Incompleteness

Finally, gangs are more likely to emerge in communities where there are low levels of institutional completeness. Institutional completeness refers to the extent that there exists strong social institutions such as churches, community businesses, neighborhood associations, schools and intact family and kinship structures that organize and support the daily life of the residents of the community exist. Low income neighborhoods characterized by residential stability, high home ownership, and participation in local institutions are defined as institutionally complete. Moreover, these institutions function as an informal social control mechanism such as multi-generational linked peer groups discourage antisocial behavior among adolescents. Additionally, strong extended families can be a major sustaining social structure in these barrios.

High levels of institutional completeness, even in the face of poverty, may create a protective factor by providing a buffering “safety net” against an urban atmosphere of desperation and powerlessness. Even when gangs exist, these mechanisms can engender some influence such as discouraging them to engage in less random and episodic forms of violence.



Chapter VI

Who's Likely to Belong to a Gang?

Research has shown that there is no single explanation as to why Hispanic adolescents join gangs or why some adolescents do not join gangs. What is known, however, is that multiple factors are continually interacting with each other to exert influence on an individual's susceptibility for gang involvement. In order to address the question, "Who's likely to belong to a gang?" it is important to understand factors that influence this decision. These sets of factors are those identified as features that promote participation in youth gangs – *risk factors*. Risk factors are indicators that may increase the probability of an adolescent joining a gang.

In a sense, adolescent gang membership can be seen as a direct result of push and pull factors that are viewed by individuals as rational choices. For instance, research has documented gang membership as being associated with enhanced prestige or status among friends, excitement, and personal economic advantages (Baccaglioni, 1993; Pennell, Evans, Melton, & Hinson, 1994; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991). Other researchers have found that given adolescent's isolation in marginal minority communities joining the gang provides them with a sense of protection and identity (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Hagedorn, 1988; Moore, 1978; Vigil, 1988a). Given that Hispanics living in the U.S. tend to live in economically disadvantaged and immigrant communities more than other groups, this may be an important factor.

For the purposes of this chapter information about risk factors associated with adolescents joining Hispanic gangs are presented. The risk factors are organized into five categories adapted from the ecological framework: individual, family, peer, school and community influences (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Adapted Ecological Framework for Risk Factors Associated with Hispanic Adolescent Gang Membership. *Source: National Youth Violence Prevention Center (2005)*

Individual Level Risk Factors

Individual level risk factors are identified as those behaviors or characteristics of the individual that will affect that person's risk of joining a gang. It is important to understand these factors in order to avoid mislabeling or stigmatizing adolescents because they possess a certain characteristic. In addition, when examining individual level risk factors, it is important to take into consideration the developmental framework to understand what appropriate behavior is at certain ages. That is, there are age graded life course normative pathways that occur in a developmental sequence of expected and established duration (i.e. dating, marriage, parenthood, etc.). Given this, presented below are individual level risk factors or determinants for which there is evidence of contributing to Hispanic adolescent involvement in gangs.

***Prior Delinquency** – early onset of delinquency including theft, burglary, fighting and destruction of property.*

***Alcohol and Drug Use** – early onset of substance use including alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, heroin, etc.*

***Antisocial Problem Behaviors** – history of aggression, violence, depression, rebelliousness, early risky sexual behavior and other risk taking behaviors.*

***Childhood Trauma** – history of childhood maltreatment or abuse including sexual, physical and emotional.*

Family Level Risk Factors

The role of the family has been an important predictor in understanding adolescents association with street gangs. Youth street gangs are often described as a surrogate family for its members, offering something the family does not. Within Hispanic families, the nuclear and extended family has been identified as the most influential institution in the culture. However, many Hispanic families are experiencing cultural and structural changes and acculturation stress moving them away from traditional characteristics. Given this, two types of family risk factors have been identified as contributing to gang membership among Hispanic adolescents – family structure and family process characteristics. The family structure risk factors are related to the makeup of the family and household (i.e. two parent household vs. single parent household). Family process risk factors are those related to the relations between members including parental involvement, conflict resolution styles, and other communication characteristics. Presented below are family level risk factors or determinants for which there is evidence of contributing to Hispanic adolescent involvement in gangs.

Family Structure Instability/Disorganization – history of family structure (single vs. two parent households) instability or disorganization characterized by divorce and lack of adult pro-social role models.

“Cholo” Family – history of multigenerational familial involvement in gangs, substance use, illegal activities, arrests and incarceration, as found in Mexican American barrios in the Southwest.

Problematic Parent/Child Relationships – evidence of poor affective relationships, parent/child conflict, inconsistent discipline, and low parental supervision. These relationships are often aggravated in Hispanic immigrant families with children being socialized in the U.S.

Peer Level Risk Factors

Longitudinal research on deviant behavior of youth demonstrates that the effects of delinquent behavior persist from adolescence to young adulthood. In this work, the role and strength of social bonds has been found to explain the stability or change of antisocial behavior across the life course. Keeping this in mind, one of the most important risk factors found in gang studies is that an adolescent is much more likely to engage in gang activity if his or her peers are in gangs or involved in delinquent behavior. That is, the amount of time spent and exposure to deviant peers has been shown to contribute to the risk for youth joining gangs. Furthermore, the influence of this negative peer network on an adolescent’s gang membership is maintained by patterns of peer reciprocity, obligation and social support. Thus, presented below are peer level risk factors or determinants for which there is evidence of contributing to Hispanic adolescent involvement in gangs.

Negative Peer Influences – association with peers involved in antisocial behavior including school truancy, gang activity, substance use, and delinquent behavior.

Street Socialization – history of early association to deviant non-family member subcultures (i.e. adult criminals, drug sellers, thieves, etc.).

Peer Network – primary interaction with delinquent peers vs. conventional friends.

School Level Risk Factors

School factors have been less likely to be examined as potential determinants of gang membership. The research that exists however, demonstrates educational variables may be just as important as other risk factors previously identified. It has been found that adolescents involved in gangs are less committed to school than their non-gang counterparts. This lack of school attachment results in academic failure, truancy, and other problematic behaviors that ultimately result in the adolescent dropping out of school. Once an adolescent leaves school it increases their risk of associating with negative peers because of the excessive time at their

disposal during the day. Presented below are school level risk factors or determinants for which there is evidence of contributing to Hispanic adolescent involvement in gangs.

Lack of School Commitment – evidence of adolescent showing no interest in school and/or lack of educational aspiration.

Problematic Behavior at School – patterns of truancy, fighting, teacher conflict and other antisocial behavior during school.

Academic Failure – evidence of failing academic subject matters as demonstrated by grades.

Community Level Risk Factors

Individual, family, peer and school factors presented above are embedded in a larger community context which is also associated with gang membership among Hispanics. Research on community-level risk factors has focused on neighborhood social isolation and social disorganization characteristics as predictors of delinquent behavior. Social disorganization is defined as communities in which the presence of high crime rates, violence, poor housing and general deterioration exist. This disorganization contributes to the isolation of communities where lack of legitimate economic opportunities and social services are not readily available. In order to understand community level risk factors, it is important to understand the role of social capital. Social capital is composed of relationships that are mobilized to achieve certain community goals including perceived social cohesion, informal social control and trust. Thus, communities where there is social disorganization, social isolation and a lack of social capital are conducive to the establishment of gangs. Presented below are community-level risk factors or determinants for which there is evidence of contributing to Hispanic adolescent involvement in gangs.

- **Social Disorganization** – presence of high crime and violence rates, established drug market, poverty, and other underclass characteristics.
- **Lack of Social Capital** – absence of community cohesion in the form of social control and trust by members of the community and respective institutions (i.e. church, community based agencies).
- **Social Isolation** – poor communities that are relatively similar in immigrant status and social class (i.e. income, job status). Often middle class minorities have moved outside the barrio.

Howell's Risk Factors for Youth Gang Membership

As a supplement to that presented above, the following table identifies a list of risk factors for youth gang involvement. This table was part of U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention study prepared by James C. Howell (1998). Table 1 below can be used as a resourceful reference guide for social service practitioners.

Table 1: Risk Factors for Youth Gang Membership

DOMAIN	RISK FACTORS
Community	Social disorganization, including poverty and residential mobility
Organized lowerclass communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underclass communities Presence of gangs in the neighborhood Availability of drugs in the neighborhood Availability of firearms
Barriers to and lack of social and economic opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of social capital Cultural norms supporting gang behavior Feeling unsafe in neighborhood; high crime Conflict with social control institutions
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family disorganization, including broken homes and parental drug/ alcohol abuse Troubled families, including incest, family violence, and drug addiction Family members in a gang Lack of adult male role models Lack of parental role models Low socioeconomic status <p>Extreme economic deprivation, family management problems, parents with violent attitudes, sibling antisocial behavior</p>
School Academic failure	<p>Low educational aspirations, especially among females</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negative labeling by teachers Trouble at school Few teacher role models Educational frustration Low commitment to school, low school attachment, high levels of antisocial behavior in school, low achievement test scores, and identification as being learning disabled
Peer Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High commitment to delinquent peers Low commitment to positive peers Street socialization Gang members in class Friends who use drugs or who are gang members Friends who are drug distributors Interaction with delinquent peers
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prior delinquency Deviant attitudes

DOMAIN	RISK FACTORS
	Street smartness; toughness Defiant and individualistic character Fatalistic view of the world Aggression Proclivity for excitement and trouble Locura (acting in a daring, courageous, and especially crazy fashion in the face of adversity) Higher level of normlly in the context of family, peer group, and school Social disabilities Illegal gun ownership Early or precocious sexual activity, especially among females Alcohol and drug use Drug trafficking Desire for group rewards such as status, identity, self-esteem, companionship, and protection Problem behaviors, hyperactivity, externalizing behaviors, drinking, lack of refusal skills, and early sexual activity
Victimization	

Warning Signs and Indicators of Gang Membership

Given the risk factors described above, adults need to be aware that an important factor in preventing an adolescent’s involvement in gangs is to be aware of early warning signs. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there is no single behavior that is an indicator of gang involvement in adolescents but rather a multiplicity of warning signs. Thus, the following is only a brief list of potential warnings signs of gang involvement an adolescent will display.

- Increased conflict with family members (i.e. curfew violation, talking back, lack of communication)
- Changes in behavior
- Changes in attitudes about school
- Discipline problems at school including lower grades
- Changes in style of dress
- Suspected drug and alcohol use
- Increase in material possessions and cash

Chapter VII

Intervention and Prevention

Youth gang intervention and prevention programs are as old as gangs themselves. As early as 1791 in Philadelphia, the city was active in responding to roaming gangs of youth. New York acknowledged that it had gang problems in 1825 that were entrenched in the city neighborhoods and would be difficult to eliminate. Since, these early days, intervention and prevention programs and strategies have been continually employed to change the situation for individual gang members and the community.

Intervention Programs

Intervention programs provide services and undertake actions directed to active gang members. These programs aim to divert gang members from crime into other alternatives such as after school programs, sports, counseling, and job training. Included under intervention are gang suppression strategies. Suppression strategies use the police, courts and corrections to proactively identify, isolate and punish gang members who are engaging in overt criminal behavior.

Prevention Program

Prevention programs, on the other hand, target at high risk youth who are not yet gang members and provide educational and other alternatives to joining a gang. Common across both intervention and prevention programs and strategies has been the lack of a science-based evaluation of their impact. This, however, is changing with public funding for new intervention and prevention programs requiring an evaluation component that will provide objective indicators of performance. This scientific requirement should speed the development of proven intervention and prevention programs in the field.

Theoretical Background

There is a wide range of theories, both scientific and “faith-based” that has guided and legitimated the development and implementation of intervention and prevention programs and strategies targeting gangs. These theories can be roughly classified as “individual-oriented” or “environment-oriented”.

The Individual-oriented

The individual-oriented theories attempt to identify critical mechanisms in the individual which need to be changed that interventions and prevention programs can respond to and reshape. An assessment of the individual and the population in terms of risk and protective factors is a prerequisite to the designing of an appropriate curriculum, counseling or therapeutic plan for the individual. **Risk and resiliency theory** is a general approach that has been developed for the programming of intervention and prevention programs for a wide range of range socially unacceptable behaviors from substance abuse to teenage pregnancy (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992). Another individual-oriented theory that has been applied to gang intervention and prevention programs among Hispanics has been the “**Un Hombre Noble**” (National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute, 2005). This theory contends that an individual man must find their way to become a “man of honor” and a “man of your word (palabra)”. Intervention and prevention strategies based on this theory attempt to train gang members and high-risk youth in this culturally relevant identity thereby weakening their attachment to gang identity or strengthening their resistance against gang recruitment pressure. The guiding principles of “un hombre noble” include :

- *Be a man of your word*
- *Accept responsibility for your well-being and those in your circle*
- *Act with sensitivity and understanding*
- *Reject all abuse to yourself and others*
- *Be a mirror for others, reflect clarity and support*
- *Include reflection, prayer and ceremony in your life*
- *Live honestly and with love*

Environment-oriented

Environment-oriented theory sees the cause of the socially undesirable to lie primarily in the social environment and not the individual. From this theoretical point of view, intervention and prevention must elicit changes in gang members by working with social environmental units like the gang itself, peer groups, churches, self-help groups and community resident organizations. The theoretical origins of this approach can be traced to the pioneering work of Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay of the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago (Shaw & McKay, 1942). This theory involved the close collaboration of sociology and social work. It was already evident in the Chicago Area Project founded in 1934 which started from the viewpoint that the social disorganization in the neighborhood was the root cause of the gang problem and therefore suggested that community organization would provide the needed solution (Sorrentino & Whittaker, 1994). This community change approach developed in Chicago still remains the most widely accepted program of intervention and prevention in the US although it has not been scientifically evaluated. It has been the inspiration for the development of countless numbers of gang prevention projects that target all at-risk youth in

a given neighborhood and a particular gang intervention strategy known as the “detached worker program” that has been implemented in other notable programs such as the:

- Boston Midcity Project
- Chicago Youth Development Project
- Los Angeles Group Guidance Program
- Los Angeles Ladino Hills Project (Esbensen, 2000).

Intervention Programs and Strategies

Intervention programs and strategies can be roughly classified as:

- Psychosocial support approaches
- Law enforcement suppression approaches

The interventions can be driven by either an individual-oriented theory or a social environmental theory. The detached worker programs that for many years provided the model of socially driven interventions was found to have some paradoxical effects that have greatly limited its further expansion.

Psychological Intervention

An evaluation of the Los Angeles Group Guidance program discovered that the group programming provided by the detached street worker paradoxically increased the cohesiveness of the gang and therefore contributed both to its growth and an increase in gang crime. Instead of the social support by the intervention providing real alternatives for the gang members, it rather enabled them to continue and expand their gang activities and enrollments.

In response to this critical assessment, Malcolm Klein initiated a pilot intervention, The Ladino Hills Project, that tested the hypothesis that gang cohesiveness came from outside resources and pressures (Klein, 1995). If these could be reduced, the gang cohesiveness would decrease and the gang would shrink in size and reduce its activities. Instead of first holding group meetings and counseling sessions as had been the practice in the detached worker strategy, the Project workers networked with community businesses, tutors, recreational facilities and other agencies to provide real alternative activities for the gang members. If the negative social pressures such as rival gangs and drug availability could be replaced with positive pressures that attracted subgroups of the gang to prosocial activities, change would take place. Individual therapeutic services were also organized as needed. The emphasis was on intervention that did not involve the whole group or individuals, but selected small units based on specific gang relationships and needs. The project proved successful, but could not be sustained and gangs soon again appeared in Ladino Hills. The lesson to be learned was clear as Malcolm Klein states it (1995): “gangs are by-products of their communities: They

cannot long be controlled by attacks on the symptoms alone; community structure and capacity must also be targeted (p.147).”

Innovative psychosocial interventions like the Ladino Hills Project stimulated the design of comprehensive approaches integrating elements of psychosocial support and law enforcement suppression. A good example of a comprehensive approach that has been promoted by the Department of Justice’s Office for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is Irving Spergel’s Comprehensive Gang Model. The model consists of five strategies that are illustrative of the social environment theory and can be seen in numerous intervention programs throughout the US (Burch & Kane, 1999):

1. Mobilizing community leaders and residents to expand and develop networks that link existing organizations that work with gang members and high-risk youth.
2. Using outreach workers to contact and motivate gang members for existing organization services.
3. Facilitating access to academic, economic and social opportunities.
4. Conducting gang suppression actions and holding gang members accountable for their criminal behaviors.
5. Promoting organizational change that prepares community agencies for a team problem-solving approach to gangs that is consistent with the philosophy of community policing and corrections.

Cultural Relevance

While many intervention programmes work with Hispanic gang members they routinely apply general strategies without much regard to their cultural relevance. However, interventions growing out of community organization alliances rather than from “top-down” methods are usually more sensitive to culture when designing their strategies. A good example of this is the El Joven Noble (The Noble Young Man) Male Responsibility Project that adapts “Un Hombre Noble” curriculum to high-risk youth and gang members in East Los Angeles. The program is comprehensive at the individual level because it aims at enhancing the ability of Hispanic males to act in a responsible and respectful way in all their relationships and to confront multiple issues including their gang violence behaviors. The strategies include the mobilization of adult male “compadre,” extended kinship support, youth development “rites of passage” activities, and culturally appropriate research/evaluation methodologies.

Another example of psychosocial interventions specifically tailored for Hispanic gang members are two projects that the author has initiated in San Antonio targeting gang affiliated Hispanic youth and their parents (Valdez, 2004). The main goal of these projects was to provide substance abuse treatment services that effectively reduced substance abuse behavior. However, in the process, gang identification was measured and was also expected to be reduced by the intervention. The intervention was based on the theory that family communication disturbances were one of the main reasons that gang members use such excessive amounts of substances.

Since the family is the core institution of the Hispanic culture, the rationale for the intervention was that by improving family communication and warmth, substance abuse would be reduced and the attachment to the gang would also diminish. The Brief Strategic Family Therapy Model that had been proven effective for reducing substance abuse in Hispanic youth population was employed as the treatment part of the intervention (Santisteban, Coatsworth, Perez-Vidal, Kurtines, Schwartz, LaPerriere, & Szapocznik, 2003; Szapocznick & Williams, 2000). The intervention also employed outreach workers to motivate and recruit gang members and their families for the intervention. The treatment lasted for 8 -16 weeks and promoted both change in family interactions as well as cultural/contextual factors. A total of 200 gang affiliated youth and their parents were recruited and randomly assigned to a treatment and control group. Significant effects were found including:

- Parents in improved gang awareness skills such as the ability to identify signs of gang participation
- Improved ability to communicate with their gang affiliated children about gang issues.
- Gang members showed significant improvements including a reduction in marijuana and other illicit drugs
- Gang identification.

Law Enforcement Suppression Intervention

Gang suppression approaches make primary use of the criminal justice system to reduce gang activity in a community. The police are the most apparent criminal justice agency involved with gang suppression, but the prosecuting attorneys, courts including pretrial services, and parole as well as corrections institutions all have active intervention programs for gang members. Police departments in most large cities have had gang units for sometime. In some cities like Chicago and Los Angeles they are large and highly specialized, in other cities like New York and Philadelphia they are smaller and less specialized. As an illustrative example, the Los Angeles Police department established its gang unit in 1977 with a high profile and high suppression strategy that included street surveillance, proactive suppression actions, surveillance, and proactive suppression actions (Klein, 1995). This highly suppressive intervention strategy culminated in Operation Hammer where large numbers of police swept a given area and made arrests for every possible legal violation. While these early strategies were never evaluated, the experience was that they were not effective in themselves in controlling gang crime. In Chicago, to respond to widespread feelings in neighborhoods of gang intimidation, the police created a superspecialized unit (the Flying Squad) to saturate small areas every night in order to hold gangs responsible for the actions to the fullest measure. The assessment of this intervention was negative because it failed to integrate with psychosocial interventions in the area in a comprehensive effort (Dart, 1992).

Alternative Approaches

Gradually, the principles of community policing have been emerging to provide an alternative to the “lock ‘em up” gang suppression strategy (Goldstein, 1990). The emerging approach tends to be:

- multidimensional
- citizen-involved
- pragmatic
- problem-solving in its orientation (Spergel, 1995) .

Gang units are compelled to work closely with community organizations and not only enforce the law and personal responsibility, but to help bring peace to troubled neighborhoods. These problem solving police approaches have great potential in Hispanic neighborhoods because they are far more likely to be culturally relevant and sensitive to the specific problems of the area.

Other components of the criminal justice system have developed innovative variations of the gang suppression strategy as well. The vertical prosecution strategy has become widespread among district attorneys. A single prosecutor focuses on a gang-related case and includes not only police, but community-based agencies and schools. This strategy has strengthened the data gathering capacities of the criminal justice system and has made prosecution more responsive to the community (Reiner, 1992).

The district attorneys are also involved with alternative sentencing strategies that are integrated into police gang suppression interventions. The alternative sentencing often involves placement in an education or job training program. A large national program, The Young Offenders Demonstration Project, that is a partnership of the Departments of Labor and Justice, has implemented such an intervention (Miller & MacGillivray, 2002). This program also includes an aftercare intervention to provide job training and placement for incarcerated young offenders, many of whom are gang members. This illustrates the growing importance of aftercare in the work of the corrections and parole components of the criminal justice system in reforming gang suppression strategies to be concerned also with the re-entry of the gang member to the community. These aftercare programs have become especially important as interventions against the sustained influence of prison gangs on the youth gang problem (Spergel, 1995).

Prevention Programs and Strategies

The importance of gang prevention lies in the theory that it is much more cost-effective to prevent youth from joining a gang than it is to intervene on these same youth at a later stage in their criminal career to reduce socially undesirable behavior. This is the same logic that legitimates much of the public investment in substance abuse prevention—it is more cost-effective for the individual and society if youth can be prevented from the abuse of drugs and excessive drinking than it is to treat these same youth when they have become addicted. The

scientific rationale is based on research that demonstrates that most gang members are already involved in delinquent activities of some sort before they join a gang and therefore the prevention of gang involvement needs to be placed in the general context of youth delinquency (Battin, Hill, Abbott, Catalano, & Hawkins, 1998; Esbensen, 2000; Thornberry et al., 2003).

Schools

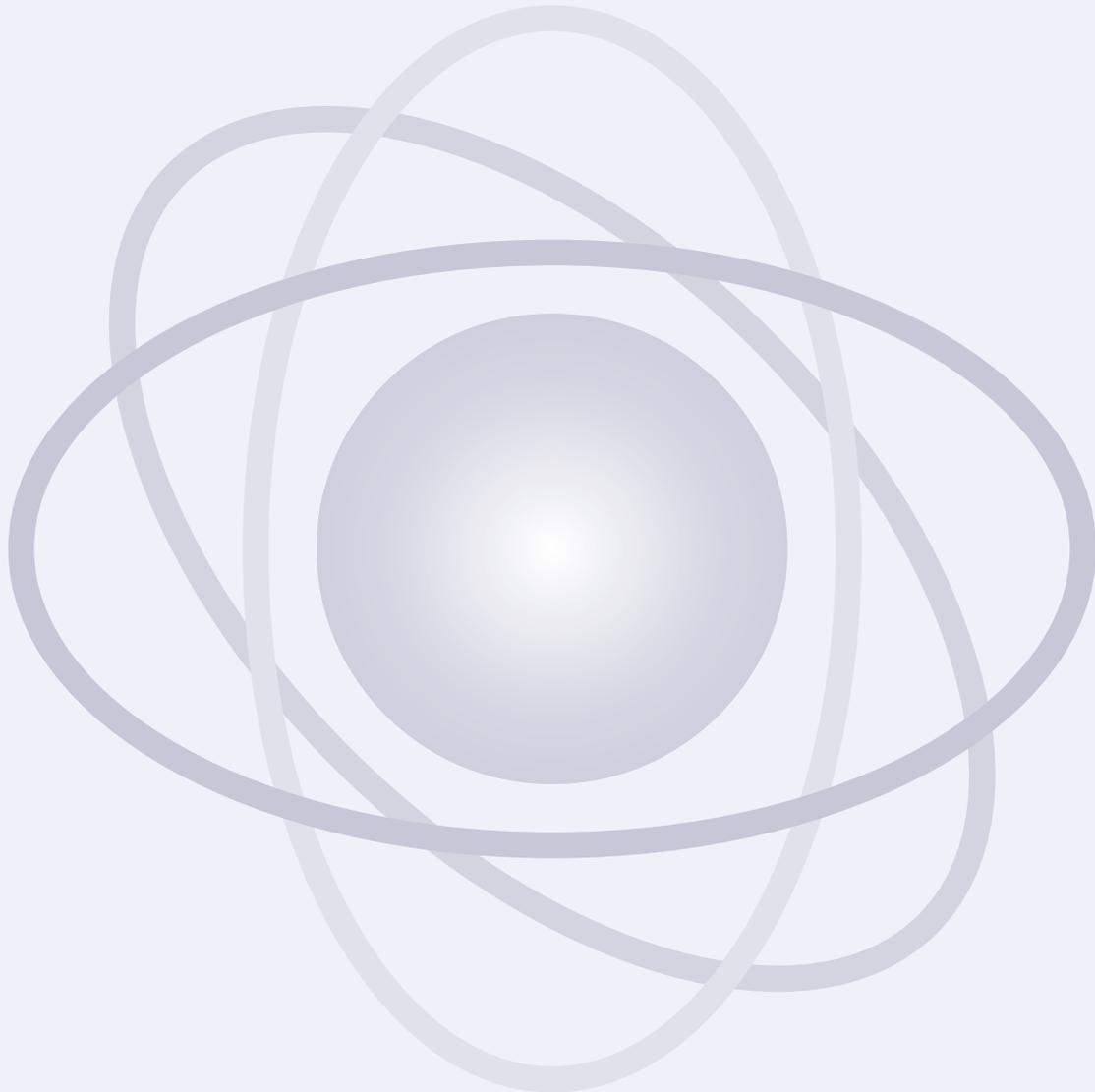
Schools have become a fertile ground for gang prevention where the average middle school has been documented to have 14 different drug, violence and other social problem programs (Esbensen, 2000). One national school-based gang prevention program, the **Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) program**, has received widespread attention and has been evaluated. The program is modeled on the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) and is an initiative that links the police to the schools. The nine week GREAT curriculum that is incorporated in the general curriculum introduces students to conflict resolution skills, cultural sensitivity and the negative consequence of gang involvement. The evaluation of the program has shown positive but statistically modest outcomes. Students reported lower levels of gang involvement and delinquency (Esbensen & Osgood, 1997, 1999). Clearly there is much more research and experimentation is needed in Hispanic school populations to find an effective curriculum of gang prevention, especially since Hispanic adolescents have such high rates of school drop-out.

Pre-Gang Membership

Because of the high drop out rates of Hispanic youth, prevention programs and strategies need to be developed for high-risk youth in the community who are not yet gang members. There are numerous examples of these prevention programs in Hispanic communities, but few are scientifically evaluated. The Boys & Girls Clubs of America developed the Gang Prevention Through Targeted Outreach program consists of structured recreation, educational and life skills trainings. The program targets both high-risk and at-risk youth and aims to change their attitude and improve their conflict resolution skills. The program included intensive case management with a highly developed system of data acquisition documenting activities and the dosage of services. A process evaluation showed some promise, but no strong evidence of efficacy has been published (Feyerherm, Pope, & Lovell, 1992).

Conclusion

It is becoming increasingly evident that progress in intervention and prevention program development is being hindered by the lack of science-based evaluation to provide a comprehensive understanding of both the process and impact of well-intentioned and well-funded programs. Without comprehensive evaluation efforts that are linked to these programs it will be difficult to know what works and what cannot work. There is a lot to be said for preserving the spirit of community engagement and mobilization in any intervention and prevention strategy. This is especially important in the Hispanic cultural context where a sense of collectivism, spirituality and familismo is a necessary “marketing” requirement for the specific program to be acceptable and relevant to the population. The main challenge, however, is to unite science-based evaluation thinking into the future programming in a way that is acceptable to the cultural sensibilities that are the basis of the community mobilization and that provide the starting point for intervention and prevention.



Chapter VIII

Working with Gangs: Basic Competencies

Working with gangs can encompass various approaches. Experts in the field agree on the importance of conducting outreach with this special population. However, before going into the field and contacting youth, individuals need to be aware of several important factors that will assist in developing positive relationships with these adolescents. For instance, much attention needs to be given to specifying gang member status and gang organizational types. In addition, standard operating procedures need to be implemented in order to safeguard the process of establishing relationships. These procedures will emerge in the course of fieldwork and are to be implemented “on the spot” in order to consistently maintain positive contacts. This chapter will identify the importance of maintaining a working alliance with gangs and community members including the competencies of visibility, trust and rapport. These competencies are needed to effectively implement intervention and prevention strategies among gangs and their members.

Acquiring Extensive Information on Gang Structure, Types of Memberships and Range of Activities

The first step is to broaden the base of prior knowledge by learning as much as possible regarding the types of members, cliques and ranges of gang activities. This step must be initiated by recognizing any prior bias or preconceived opinions about this population. Hidden populations, such as gangs, refer to subsets of a population whose membership is not readily distinguished or specified based on existing knowledge and/or sampling capabilities. These socially marginal groups have “low social visibility” often due to stigmatized or illegal behaviors and as such, are difficult to locate. For example, prior studies extensively documenting hidden populations frequently have focused on HIV/AIDS, illicit drug use, and to a lesser extent, burglary, robbery and gangs. These populations often elicit negative stereotypes. Obtaining cooperation from these groups for research purposes is critical, especially if it involves illegal behavior.

Acquiring extensive information requires identification of gangs and where the target groups congregate, such as public parks, public housing spaces, playgrounds, recreational centers, downtown areas, neighborhood businesses and specific neighborhoods. Involved in this process is the establishment of geographical parameters and ranges that will assist in identifying gangs within specific spatial boundaries. This is important to establish given the territorial rivalries one has to be aware of before working with gangs.

After identification of these areas, community outreach staff need to begin to collect data about distinct community and neighborhood areas. This is done by acquainting themselves with gang members and community and neighborhood influences, and collecting data on key gangs and gang activity. Extensive efforts should be made to gain access, entree, and rapport with these persons. Due to the delinquent, deviant, criminal, or déclassé nature of some gang activities, it is often difficult to accurately and reliably identify gang members and gain information. The goal is to identify all existing gangs in a targeted area, the size of membership, organizational structure, and primary activities.

Avoiding Institutional References

A second important factor in establishing alliances with gangs in your community is to attempt to initially avoid references from institutional representatives such as school, social service, and criminal justice officials. Individuals identified by these sources often represent only a certain segment of the targeted population. There is a strong possibility that individuals identified by these sources may not have ever been gang members or who may no longer be affiliated with any gang activity. Because data is often not available to verify the individual's gang membership status or the context of their selection, inclusion of these persons may create problems and call into question the legitimacy of your efforts.

Another problem with using institutional references is that they are often inaccurate. For instance, they often overestimate gang members because their dossier's are not updated. Therefore, they tend to identify individuals as gang members who are inactive or have matured out of the gang, been incarcerated, or had left the "hood" for various reasons including joining the military. Also, because gangs are often located in ecologically dense inner city communities, gang member and non-gang members often interact with each other. Police often fail to distinguish differences between these two sets of individuals. Along with registration by association, (lack of) updating is likely to explain why the police gang unit's estimates of gang members tend to be so much higher than of community researchers.

In conclusion, while avoiding institutional references is a good practice and a fieldwork ideal, in specific situations where either the researchers have few contacts with the target group or certain institutions have exceptionally good relationships such that they are truly part of the community, the mechanical avoidance will be counterproductive. You must be open to the possibility that given individuals can play multiple roles in the community and can either speak officially with their institutional hats on or unofficially as bona fide community members. In these cases you might want to approach them outside of their institutional roles. Therefore, it is suggested not to automatically exclude such individuals as resource persons in the recruiting of focus group members.

Maintaining High Visibility

One of the most important strategies in making contact with gangs in your community is to maintain a high visibility among them. Individuals attempting to make contact and build rapport with highly exclusive and hidden populations such as gangs cannot sit behind their desks and expect this to happen. The mere introduction by a gatekeeper or other person trusted by gang members is often not enough, even though this is a strategy that is often used. They must work diligently to gain the confidence of the population through the high visibility of simply “being there” and reinforcing this presence by displaying that they are sincere and can be trusted. There is not one way in which to maintain visibility in social environments where gangs are present. However, there are suggestions of strategies to do this including:

- **Frequenting public hang outs** such as convenient stores, parks, street corners as a participant observer (i.e. customer, park user, etc). In doing this you have to be conscious of your presence so as to not become obtrusive in the behavior of the youth.
- **Frequenting public social activities** in the community including block parties, church festivals and city sponsored events which gang members attend.
- **Volunteering** time at local community social service agencies in the community. This should not be limited to agencies who are currently working with gangs.
- **Associating with community members** who are recognized and accepted by existing gang members.

An example of maintaining high visibility was that of a community research staff attempting to recruit members of one of the most active and violent Mexican American gangs in San Antonio. A local community agency had successfully negotiated a truce between this gang, whose turf covered a particular housing project and surrounding environments and several other gangs. As part of the truce, the agency organized a basketball league in which some of the gangs participated. These games were held twice a week during the evenings. The center was considered a neutral area relatively free of gang conflict. With the permission of the agency, a community researcher started working the basketball games as a scorer and referee. After several weeks, the community researcher became a familiar face to the gang members. A point was reached whereby gang members felt comfortable with the researcher’s presence. Subsequently, the agency occasionally invited the researcher to other scheduled meetings with the gang members such as the gang war council meetings. At the war council, issues related to the truce were discussed. Once this stage of the access process was accomplished, the researcher was able to go onto the next step of recruiting for the focus group.

Making Social Contact

As necessary as establishing visibility is, it is not sufficient to making contact with gangs in your community. One must establish social contact with gang members by becoming part of their social networks, to some extent. After establishing high visibility in the field, gang members may initiate contact with the fieldworkers curious about their presence. At this point of contact, the outreach worker must be able to describe his purpose for being in the field. After this initial contact, possibly several others, the outreach person may be more readily able to approach gang members on the streets. Subsequent contacts between you and the gang should follow. Once this has happened you have taken the first step in bridging the gap between yourself and the gang members. Your goal is to make enough contacts in order for you make to interact with them on their own turf and on their own terms. As one researcher stated:

“Once they knew me, I could go and talk to them at their own hangouts. Like this one gang was always at this corner building in the projects. When I spotted them there, I could now get out of my car and go rap to them. They wouldn’t all scatter, think I was a cop or narc.”
After two or three such meetings, the gang was relatively comfortable with the researcher.
The researcher was later asked to meet with him again and other members of the gang.

These types of contacts usually lead to more social interaction between outreach workers and members of the gangs. The increase in the frequency of face-to-face social contacts increases the imbeddedness of the project into the social network of the gangs. Increased frequency of interaction also involves an increase of the personal emotional ties between the project team members and the gang members. For instance, visits to gang members homes during life changing events such as birth of children, arrest and incarceration, and illness or death of family member are important in building trust and rapport. This demonstrates empathy and concern that they may not find among other adults in their lives. This will not only lead to making the hidden population more accessible for project, but will provide natural validity checks of gang member status of selected persons and of gang organizational type. Below are some suggestions of how to reinforce relations with gang members after initial contact has been made:

- *Visiting incarcerated individuals*
- *Visiting family members*
- *Providing references for social servies (i.e. GED classes, job training programs, etc.)*

Using Community Gatekeepers

The role of gatekeepers has been extensively discussed in literature on fieldwork. It is well established that identifying the proper gatekeeper is essential in gaining entree into the world of hidden populations including gangs. Gatekeepers serve multiple purposes in the process of making contact with gangs:

- *Identifying potential sites where gang members hang out*
- *Facilitating initial contacts with informants and gang members*
- *Providing initial information on the subject matter*

Often time, the gatekeepers selected are those that are most convenient - or easily accessible. This is particularly the case when working with gang members since gaining access to street gangs is so difficult. However, identifying gatekeepers by convenience will provides access to only a segment of the gang population. If used extensively, this process of convenience may jeopardize the information being generated.

Gang members themselves have proven to be the best gatekeepers in gaining access to this population. Using this type of gatekeeper will provide direct access to the gang without “go betweens” such as friends, parents, and social agencies. However, be aware that the gang member you make contact with may not be the most influential of that specific gang. Often times these initial gatekeepers are a way in which the core members of the gang will screen you and your intentions. As previously discussed, however, making these contacts is a lengthy process that will vary from city to city and will depend on your visibility and social contact.

In dealing with younger gang members (12 – 16 yrs old), parents and relatives of gang members may play an important gatekeeper role. Contact with these parents is often facilitated by the provision of services to the family through a social service agency. Also, contact with these parents may result from strategies described above, but are focused more on the parents. In either case, developing rapport and trust with the parent may be a means by which to get to the adolescent gang member. This may be an especially effective tactic used with a highly exclusive Hispanic community where *familismo* is a dominant characteristic. Familismo is described as placing a strong value on maintaining intergenerational positive relationships with immediate and extended family members. Relating to family as gatekeepers initiates relationships with younger or older siblings of the gang member.

Community agencies are another source of gatekeepers for this particular segment of this population. In some cases, these can be very effective in gaining entree, particularly if the agency has established good rapport and trust with gang members. On the other hand, if an agency has a bad reputation with gang members, using them as gatekeepers can be ineffective.

Individual personal contacts also function as effective gatekeepers. Having individuals who are indigenous to the local community will provide you with an extensive personal and familial network from which to draw potential gatekeepers. Some of these individuals work in social agencies and are knowledgeable about the subject and will be able to identify gang members. One problem with relying on personal contacts is the tendency to become overly dependent on these sources. This often deters from developing other contacts. Additionally, the personal contacts may only provide access to persons that are within their own limited social networks. This sort of gatekeeper bias may particularly be a factor in a city with a small population given the familiarity of residents (i.e. everybody knows everyone else).

Thus, it is important to identify gatekeepers from diverse positions in the social structure of the community. In overview, gatekeepers may include:

- Gang members
- Parents of gang members
- Relatives of gang members (e.g. aunt, uncle)
- Personal contacts
- Previous clients (if service provider)
- Community agency contacts.

Gender Differences in Accessing

Most adolescent gangs will have a ratio of two to seven females to males. While males are typically self-identified gang members, females are distinct in that they are integrated into gang life through various roles. Some distinct types of women associated with gangs are identified:

- Girlfriends (wives, common-laws, mother, sweethearts)
- Good girls (sisters, relatives, neighbors, childhood friends, etc.)
- Relatives (sisters, cousins)
- Hoodrats (party girls, sluts, bad girls)

Methods for working with females may prove to be slightly different than for males reflecting their different social position and organization. Often entree to female participants is through boyfriends, family members and male gang members. This is important because different strategies from those mentioned above may need to be used for these females.

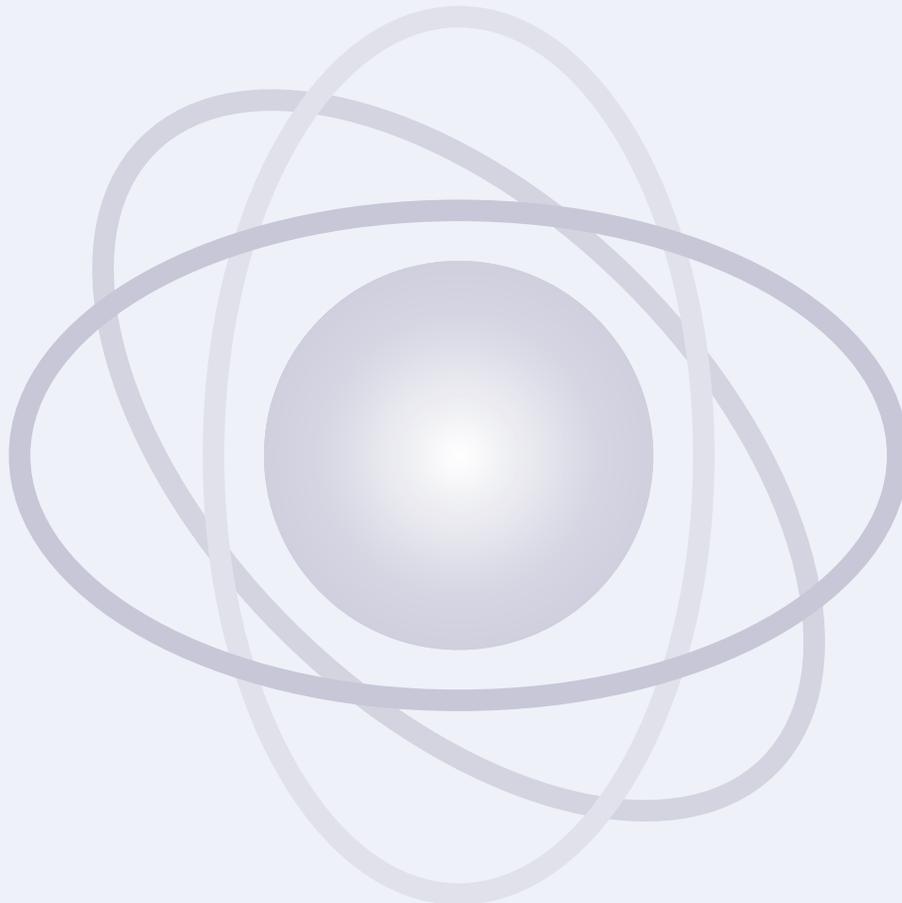
Maintaining Your Safety

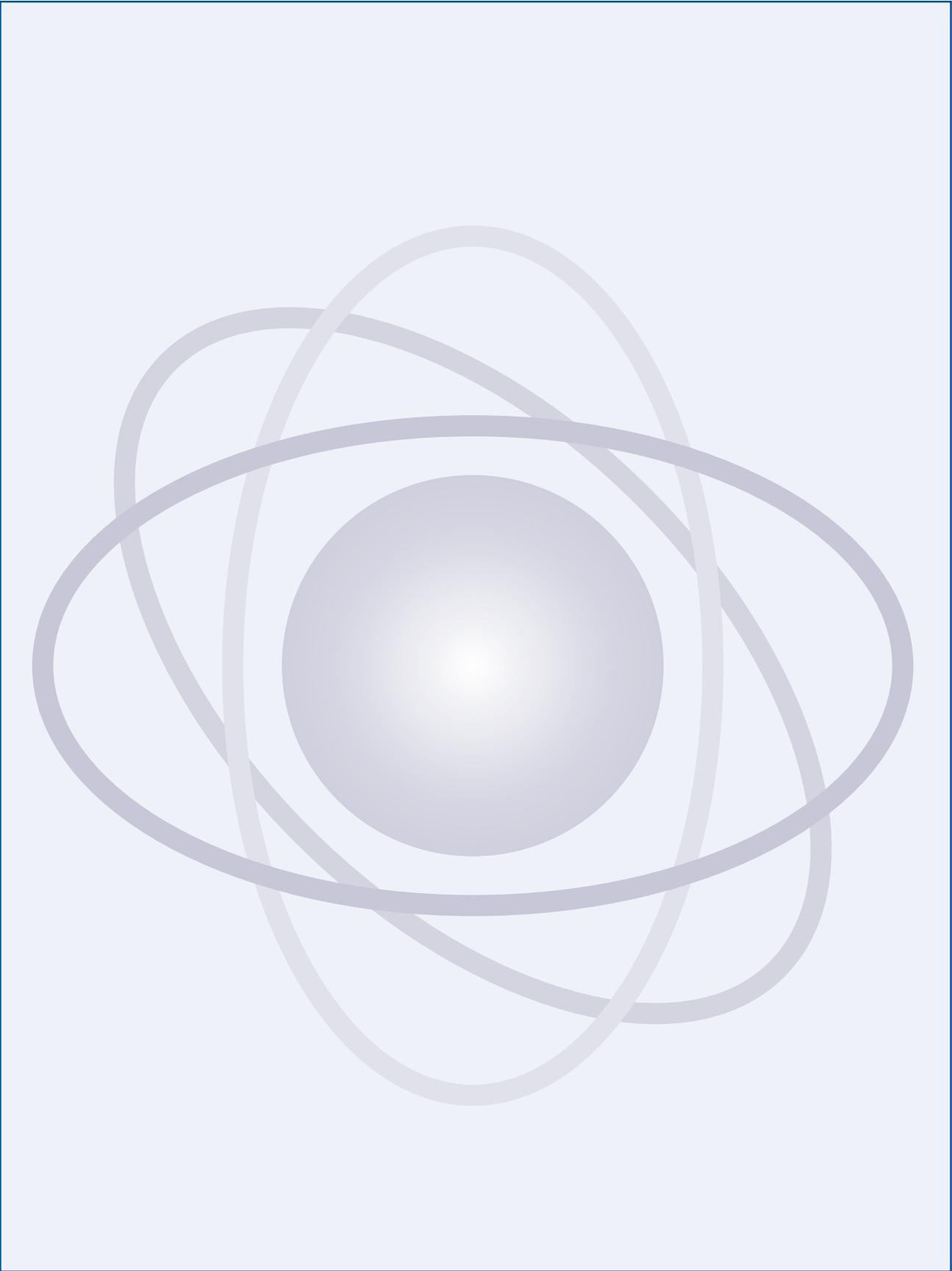
In conclusion, when conducting field work to make contact with gangs it is important to be aware of strategies to maintain your safety while in the field. Three rules for protecting the safety of field workers in inner city studies of socially disapproved behavior are:

- Never wear anything worth stealing into the field
- Never indicate the least interest in drug trafficking
- Never talk back to a police(wo)man, regardless of what he/she is doing
- Never put yourself in a situation where illegal activities may be taking place

Furthermore, to ensure your safety attempt to employ other techniques including:

- Be familiar with the risks of street culture
- Carry proper credentials (i.e. ID's) and cell phones
- Sign in and out using a form that documents times and locations you will be visiting
- Be well informed of safety zones that may include police substations





Chapter IX

Policy

In Chapter seven, an overview was provided of intervention and prevention strategies that have been implemented to reduce gang activities and to provide alternative opportunities for joining a gang. These programs and issues raised in this manuscript begin to set the stage for a discussion of the Hispanic gang problem in a manner that will be useful for planning appropriate policy and organizational structures. The challenge for current policymakers is to create new and innovative policies and practices that are relevant to an ever changing adolescent Hispanic gang member population. In developing appropriate policies, discussions should focus on the extent and nature of the gang problem, resources, community involvement and organizational structures. Spergel (1995) identified four basic strategies that have been historically used for dealing with youth gangs by primarily city, state, and federal government agencies. Each of the four approaches have been “implemented through an array of evolving and changing policies, organizational and program arrangements, services and procedures (p. 171).” They include:

- 1. Local community organizing and mobilization** – based on the idea of countering social disorganization by mobilizing communities and coordinating available resources with an emphasis on using indigenous leaders (i.e. ex-delinquents). The focus was to restore a sense of local community through participation and support from individuals that will lead youth to conventional behaviors (p.172).
- 2. Social intervention** – a key assumption of this approach was that youth gangs can be redirected to fit the expectations of the larger society. The norms and values of the gang can be changed with the assistance of outreach supportive strategies including gang programs, peer counseling and group development activities and crisis intervention (p. 174).
- 3. Social and economic opportunities provision** – a key assumption of this approach was that structural strain, lack of community resources, and relative deprivation are key to the development of gangs. The basis was for efforts initiated by foundations or federal agencies to change social institutions and establish programs for gang youth (p. 176).
- 4. Suppression, including formal and informal methods of social control** – law enforcement (police and prosecutors) to protect communities is a key goal of this assumption. The development of information systems, surveillance, and tactical patrols by specialized units directed at gangs (p 177).
- 5. Organizational or institutional change and development.** – the last strategy modifies and elaborates on each of the four above.

Local Community Organizing And Mobilization

This approach was originally a response to the rapid population and institutional changes that were contributing to the formation of delinquent groups and gangs in the early part of the twentieth century. This was the period of U.S. history that experienced great waves of immigration from Europe. These groups were experiencing problems of cultural and social adaptation. This problem was acute among the immigrant youth who were raised in the U.S. who were often in conflict with more traditional parents. The emphasis was on local communities taking on the responsibilities in organizing collaborative responses to the delinquent problem. As been stated, emphasis was on community mobilization and coordination of available local resources, with an emphasis on using indigenous leadership, even ex-delinquent group members or ex-convicts.

These strategies were less successful among blacks and Hispanics in the 1940s and 1950s with communities that were not as cohesive as earlier immigrants. That is, the earlier stable base of local community or grass-roots organization characteristics of efforts to deal with the delinquency problem in white communities did not exist. Often specialized outreach organizations were established but from outside the communities. These organizations often had conflicting interests and led to clashes with each other and with the community itself. This trend continued into the 1960s and 1970s when the shift moved away from gangs and delinquents to a focus on housing, education, jobs, and empowerment of citizens in low-income areas. During the 1980s the strategy of community mobilization in response to delinquency shifted from the delinquent or “bad” citizenry to “good” local citizenry. The focus was no longer on the youth gang member or criminal but on the criminal event.

The contemporary community mobilization approach now incorporates the development of a coalition of justice agencies with schools, community groups, and even gang members themselves. The emphasis is on community or problem-oriented policing, with law enforcement in key positions. These include programs such as the weed and seed programs that deal with problems of drugs and gang violence with close cooperation with various youth agencies and grass-roots organization.

This approach may be effective in Hispanic communities that have well developed community-based organizations and agencies. In this sense, various coalitions of Hispanic groups such as churches, neighborhood groups, parent organizations and Hispanic small businesses partner with governmental agencies and the gang members themselves in tackling the problem. This strategy may have difficulty being effective in communities of recently arrived Hispanic immigrants or areas of cities with high levels of concentrated poverty. It is likely to have more success in more established economically moderate communities with more mainstream citizenry. This might prove especially effective in areas where there is an emerging problem rather than one that is well established. Citizens in these communities who have some political clout will be important in mobilizing resources for social services.

Social Intervention

An important policy strategy which was used before the more recent law enforcement efforts and continues to be successfully used is that of the social intervention which focuses on providing social services as a way to deal with gangs. While some of the earlier programs during the 70's and 80's have declined, more recent highly innovative programs have emphasized prevention and intervention for young at-risk populations. It is these recent social intervention programs that are important for Hispanic gang populations in communities across the U.S.

One of the new social intervention approaches is identified as **crisis intervention and youth empowerment** which proposes to work with hard core gang members on their own terms within their respective context. In this approach individuals are not to be judgmental to youth who need help and social support with different aspects of their lives including personal, school and employment issues. Furthermore, individuals using this approach have limited contact with law enforcement and other agencies working with youth and to a certain degree are “protective of gang youth” (p 257). It is within this approach that “truces” and peace efforts among gangs are emphasized in inner-city neighborhoods. One of the important features of this approach is maintaining contact and communication with what is identified as a highly isolated and stigmatized population of adolescents. However, there are setbacks with this approach related to inadequate field supervision, indigenous individuals (i.e. former gang members) and limited contact with law enforcement. This has resulted in a continual crisis of confidence in relationships with other agencies. Given this, much of this work is focusing on prevention efforts with younger youths.

A second type of social intervention is focused on **family and parent focused programs** which deal with the breakdown of the family and gang membership. The emphasis is on developing coping mechanisms, conflict resolution and family structure processes that will prevent adolescent delinquency. Home contact and parent support are identified as part of this approach. The assumption of this approach is that parent-gang youth relationships require distinct intervention techniques than more traditional parent child relationships. For example the implementation of the Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT) Model among a population of Mexican American gang affiliated drug using adolescents and their parents was found to reduce behavioral problems, reduce affiliation and identification with gangs, and lower drug use (Valdez, 2004).

Finally, Spergel (1995) argues that a social intervention approach needs to take into consideration **new contexts**. For instance, providers need to operate out of organizations that provide a wide array of services to youth, parents, and the community as it relates to gangs. School liaisons are important for communities in order for them to understand the gang problem and improve the situation at schools. Overall, teams from diverse professions need to be created so as to deliver a range of outreach services across agencies that can be accurately evaluated for their effectiveness.

Social and Economic Opportunities Provision

National and local policies and programs in the provision of social opportunities are focused on providing education, training, and job development and placement for gang youth in communities. These programs, according to Spergel, should avoid isolating youth from mainstream educational, social and job development opportunities.

An important approach to providing educational social opportunities is to **restructure schools** in terms of school to work transitions. This restructuring is associated with the isolation and stigmatization associated with gang membership in community schools. This typically leads to school failure, lower expectations from school staff and administrations and eventually dropping out. Often times, as is the case with Hispanic youth; lack of cultural sensitivity leads to inappropriate understanding of youth which may lead to separation into special classes.

Model programs have been identified for different types of youth in different contexts for this school restructuring approach. In the U.S. these model programs have emphasized community based and system change. These are focused on increasing adolescent's school attachment and improving the relationships between schools and communities. In doing this, the bonds between home and school are strengthened and dealt with in collaboration, especially during the younger years. For those adolescents in later grades who are more prone to gang membership, parent education becomes a primary concern. Schools can become community education facilities for adults during off-hours especially for those with children at risk. Education models on adolescent gang youth focus more on the school to work linkage by building collaborations with businesses in order to integrate these youth into mainstream society. Learning and work experiences may lead to identification and attachment to work rather than to the gang.

Another approach to the social opportunities strategy in reducing gang membership is **job placement** of gang youth. For youth in disadvantaged communities, the gang is a substitute for employment in the formal economy. Job training and placement require the participation of not only the youth but the family as well. This may be accomplished by the link between service delivery agencies for the family and focused case management for higher risk adolescent gang members. Research has found that a majority of gang youth would like to find employment but the lack of jobs, training, and in many cases discrimination and racism, become barriers to the adolescents. Job training and placement programs need to be integrated into other policy programs in order to resolve the gang problem at the national and local level.

Suppression, Including Formal And Informal Methods Of Social Control

The gang in the late 1980s and 1990s was the target of a dominant police suppression approach. This corresponded to a decline of community and youth-outreach efforts and social services approaches. A vigorous law enforcement policy became a key strategy to “protect local communities.” As a result, gang members were arrested, prosecuted, and removed from society and served long prison sentences.

Criminal Justice System: The Police

What exists today in cities with a defined gang problem is specialized law enforcement strategies directed to youth gang problems. A vigorous “lock-em up” approach is the key action of police departments. This strategy consists primarily of enforcement, adjudication, and prosecution of gang supervision members. This was accomplished by informational systems, surveillance procedures, and tactical patrols by specialized police “gang units.” State legislatures provided increased resources for improved coordination of local justice efforts.

Specialized Informational Systems

One of the major assumptions of many criminal justice systems is that street gangs are criminal organizations and must be attacked through a multi-agency gang tracking and identification system. This is based on their perception that gangs are organized beyond the immediate neighborhoods unto the state and national levels. In consequence, extensive departmental and interagency computer information tracking systems have been developed. These systems are interlocked with each other (law enforcement) and with county and state probation and corrections departments in many parts of the US. In many cities, interagency gang task forces are organized that serve as a coordinating board not only for law enforcement and supervisory authorities, but also for school and community-based agencies concerned with gang problems.

Police Anti-gang Tactics

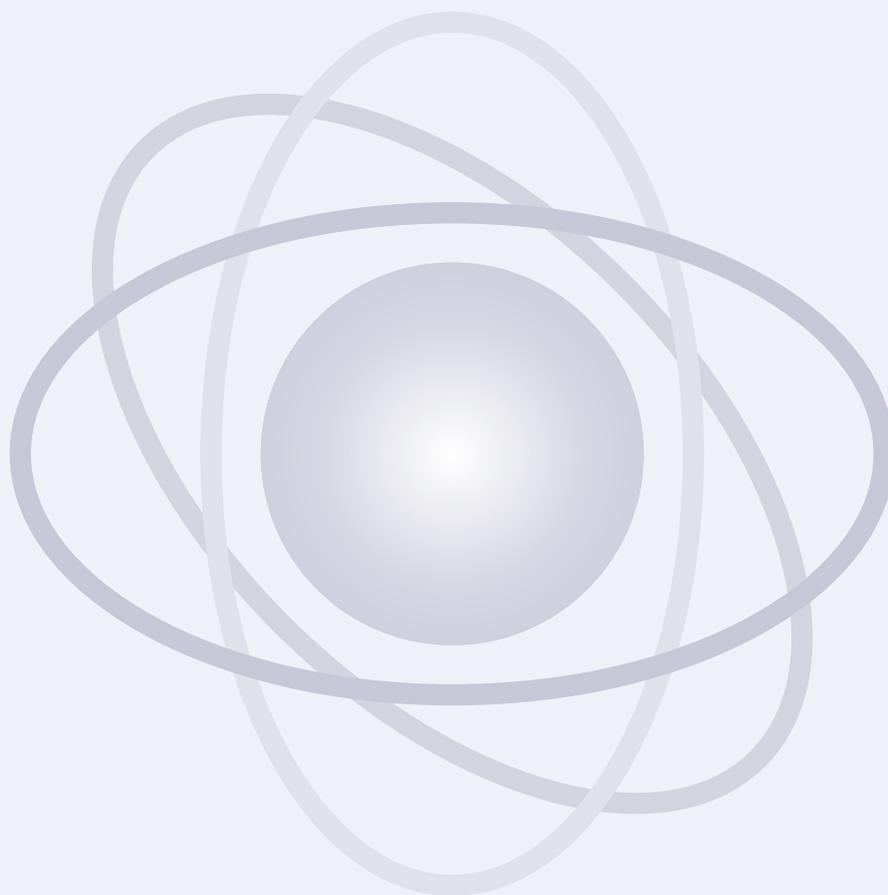
Police anti-gang tactics include street sweeps, saturation policing, selective enforcement intensified gang narcotics investigations, implementations of gang free zones and anti-graffiti units. The FBI, DEA, BATF and the INS have established their own gang units. The INS has developed gang units in some jurisdictions, arresting hundreds of immigrant gang members and launched deportation proceedings for many.

Prosecution, Defense, and the Judiciary

Since the 1980s, some large and medium sized cities have created hard-core gang vertical prosecution units, which pay attention to gang members. Under vertical prosecution, usually one prosecutor handles a case from its inception until its disposition in the criminal justice system. Vertical prosecution organizations perform a variety of law-related and community leadership functions with respect to gang problems. Highly qualified prosecutors and special investigators are selected. It emphasizes proactive prosecution, particularly for the serious, violent, or drug-related gang cases involving leaders and core members. This approach is based on the premises that effective deterrence is to incapacitate offenders through incarceration. If the case involves juveniles and adults, the cases will be handled by the prosecutors. Gang members are prosecuted under special federal, state and county laws aimed at gangs. These include federal RICO statues, California Street terrorism Enforcement and Prevention (Step) Act of 1988, and state drug kingpin statues against gang members.

Critics of vertical prosecution suggest that prosecutors do not have sufficient understanding of barrio, of ghetto life and the peer pressures that lead a youngster to accompany a group of youths in a drive-by shooting. Extreme sentences by prosecutors are requested for, and sometimes accorded to, naïve, impressionable juveniles who happen to be present on such occasions and may not even gang members (Hicks 1988). Judges also need more discretion in the sentencing of those who violate the drug laws, such as exist in California drug courts. Mandatory sentencing minimums need to be balanced with social work and treatment options for gang members. These changes in policy would shift the emphasis away from a wholesale punishment approach, usually in the form of incarceration, to a refined rehabilitation approach involving creative applications of drug treatment, job training, and probationary social work. Despite the increased efficiency of vertical prosecution, it has not been accompanied by a general decline in gang activity or reduction in gang crime or gang crime arrests in the community.

Finally, something not addressed by these suppression policies is the consequence of long-term sentences and prison overcrowding for the gang offender or the community in which the offender returns. While there is growing recognition that the gang problem is best addressed through broadened governmental and community efforts, police and prosecutors still favor prosecution and punishment over a more comprehensive approach.



Glossary of Terms

Barrio: refers to lower income neighborhood populated by Hispanics.

Turf: domain or territory claimed by a gang.

Machismo: a measure of combination of manliness, fearlessness and self-sufficiency; certain behaviors associated with term include displays of physical courage and daring, heavy drinking and restrictions on women's freedom of movement.

Macho: among gangs it means aggressive, audacious, daring manful, potent and virile

Flaco: literally means skinny in Spanish, often given as nickname

Maton: slang for killer

Veterano: refers to experienced gang member; like a war veteran

Cholo: term used among gang members and other persons to identify Mexican Americans associated with street-oriented life style that includes distinct clothes and language.

Cholization: process of becoming a "chollo".

Familismo: refers to core family values which emphasize commitment to the family as a unit.

Respeto: refers to behaviors that Hispanic have toward persons in position of authority, the elderly and general behaviors with their families and friends.

Colectivismo: Collectivism, holds group as the primary, or entity in itself, individuality becomes secondary.

Movidas: behavior that conducted in a discrete manner usually focused on illegal or illicit activity.

Chicano: person of Mexican descent living in the United States; could refer to a politically oriented person who places high value on culture associated with being a Mexican American.

Locura: madness, craziness, with will to do audacious things.

Un Hombre Noble: Intervention model developed for high-risk Mexican American male youth

Compadre: Spanish label for the godparent of a child; implies inclusion of godparent into family network; it is often used for drinking partners, "buddies", or good friends.

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