

Gang Tattoos: Signs of Belonging and the Transience of Signs

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Nothing symbolizes gang members' commitment to their gangs more forcefully than the gang tattoo. These symbols proclaim the individual's allegiance to the group in a way that is both permanent and deeply personal-being written on the body itself. But in recent years, thanks to a combination of social and technological changes, the significance and the permanence of gang tattoos are both being challenged. As a result, it appears that the power of these signifiers has begun to erode.

Tattoos are thought to have existed since the beginning of mankind. The oldest tattoo ever found was on a man frozen in a glacier near Austria who was believed to have died in approximately 4000 B.C. Although it's not known whether the frozen Austrian was a criminal, for most of recorded history tattoos have been associated with unlawful behavior and the underworld.

The early Romans tattooed slaves and criminals as a means of identification. During the years 300-600 C.E. in Japan, criminals were sometimes tattooed as punishment for their crimes. Criminals in the Mediterranean region in the third century C.E. were often tattooed or branded with symbols indicating the crimes they committed; sometimes the victim's name was even emblazoned on the criminal's forehead.

But while society has often imposed tattoos in order to identify the tattooed as criminals, many people have also embraced these stigmatizing marks. Being an outlaw can be a source of pride as well as shame. Gang members in particular take pride in branding themselves as outside of the boundaries of conventional society. Until recently, tattooing was restricted to stigmatized members of society, including gang members, carnival workers and prisoners-categories that often overlapped. It is significant, however, that tattoos were not imposed on these groups, but chosen by them as a means of self-identification and, often, a symbol of belonging.

Tattoos have long been a means of identifying oneself with a group or culture. Gangs were one of the first groups to use tattoos as a means of denoting identity and affinity, but groups as diverse as the military, sports teams, and even the popular country group The Dixie Chicks have used matching tattoos as a visible sign of the members' bond with one another.

For gang members, however, tattoos are a way of both asserting membership in the gang and flaunting their lack of membership in straight society. For this reason, street gang members will often get tattoos on their hands and faces so as to permanently bar them from being a part of normal society. The larger and more prominent the tattoo, the harder it is to hide, the more impressive it is to other gang members. For this reason, two of the most widespread gang tattoos are often found on the most visible parts of the body: the hands and the face. For example, 18th Street gang member Sergio Ochoa tattooed the numbers "187" (the California Penal Code section which refers to murder) above his eye after being convicted of a 1990 killing of a rival gang member. A common tattoo among Hispanic gang members from many different gangs is the pachuco cross tattooed on the hand between the

thumb and index finger. Alternatively, the same area is often embellished with three dots in a pyramid shape, a symbol that stands for "mi vida loca," "my crazy life." Southeast Asian gangsters have adopted the same tattoo of the three dots, defining its meaning as "To O Can Gica," or "I care for nothing." In Cuban prisons the same tattoo declares that the wearer's criminal aptitude is in larceny.

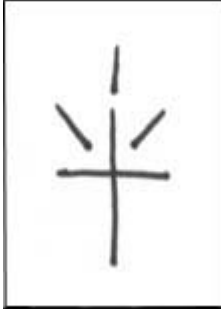


Figure 1 The pachuco cross is the simplest gang tattoo, and one of the most pervasive. It consists of a small cross with three lines or dots above it.

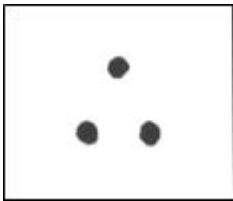


Figure 2 Three dots representing, "mi vida loca," or "my crazy life," and is commonly tattooed on the hands or face.

The social impact of such visible tattoos made many professional tattooists uneasy about providing them. In his book, *Bad Boys and Tough Tattoos: A Social History of the Tattoo With Gangs, Sailors, and Street-Corner Punks 1950-1965*, tattoo artist Samuel M. Steward says, "Ethical tattoo artists did not work on hands or faces, unless someone wanted a pachuco cross covered or had some other tattoo that had to be concealed.... I wouldn't tattoo the hand but many unscrupulous jiggers up the street would. From the moment a person got a hand tattooed, his life was enormously complicated. Such tattoos could not be removed from ordinary surgical methods as others can... "

The most common tattoo among gangsters of all nationalities is one that denotes the gang that they are in. This is seen as the mark of lifelong membership. The gang ethos of "blood in, blood out"-the idea that the prospective member must kill someone as the price of admission to the gang and cannot leave except by dying himself-is embodied in the tattoo as a sign of permanent belonging to the gang. Indeed, in some gangs the gang tattoo must be earned by completing a serious mission or hit for the gang.

Often gang tattoos will simply say the name of the gang that the wearer is in, usually in Old English lettering or script. Often the gang name will be slightly disguised by giving it an assigned number. For example, the Nortenos will often use 14, X4, XIV (all denoting the 14th letter of the alphabet, N) in their tattoos. Surenos affiliated with the Mexican Mafia (La eMe) use the number 13, X3, and XIII (for M, the 13th letter of the alphabet). The Vice Lords of Chicago are often recognizable by their tattoos of the number 312, which is the Chicago area code. The 18th Street gang of

Los Angeles, not surprisingly, uses the number 18. (Incidentally, they will sometimes beat their prospective members for 18 seconds as a way to "jump them in.")

Gangs also find other ways to identify themselves without using their full gang names. The Nortenos use the Spanish word for "fourteen," "catorce." The Surenos (Sureno means "southerner," for Southern California) sometimes use the Aztec language, Nahuatl, in their tattoos. "Kan," for example, means "South," and "Kanpol" means "Southerner." They will also use Aztec numerology to denote the number 13.



Figure 3 The Aztec number meaning "13" is sometimes used in tattoos by Surenos.

In addition to advertising gang membership, tattoos can tell other details about the bearer, including rank in the gang and number of "hits" or other services performed on the gang's behalf. Which side of the body the tattoo is on also carries significance. Tattoos can also tell more personal details about gang members' lives, such as memorials to deceased loved ones, the names and birthdates of their children, what country or region they are from, and how many of their loved ones have died while they were incarcerated. A common tattoo among gang members is a small teardrop below the eye. Although some take this symbol to mean that the bearer has killed someone, others use it to show that someone close to the bearer has died, especially if this occurred while the tattooed individual was incarcerated.

Tattoos are also used to express gang members' often fatalist philosophy of life. One popular tattoo among Hispanic gangsters is a depiction of the smiling and crying comedy and tragedy masks, meaning, "play now and pay later," or "my happy life, my sad life." Clock faces are also found within the intricate artwork that can make up a gangster's tattoos. If the clock has no hands, it symbolizes doing time in prison. The hands can be on specific numbers to signify the gang alliance; for example, a Norteno might be emblazoned with a clock face with one hand on the one, and the other on the four to signify "14." Tombstones are also common. Many gang members will get one tombstone tattooed for each year that they are incarcerated. The tombstones are inscribed with the year of freedom that was lost. Tombstones with "R.I.P." and a date show the loss of a loved one. Often these tattoos are reserved for fellow gang members who were killed in gang related violence. A tattoo of a cell window through which one can see the sun or birds flying signify that the bearer is waiting to get out of prison. A similar Russian prison gang tattoo depicts birds flying in the sun rising over the ocean's horizon, meaning, "I was born free and should again be free."

For gangs, the use of tattoos as a means of group identification can be a life or death matter. Nowhere is that more true than in the case of gangs within penal institutions, a world in which tattoos can be particularly important.

Upon being sent to prison, many people who were not previously members of gangs quickly find that their survival "on the inside" depends on their membership in a prison gang. "Certain tattoos inspire fear and respect and give the wearer an

abrasive edge," says Douglas Kent Hall in his book, *Prison Tattoos*. "In prison, that edge becomes reason enough for acquiring them. Inmates take risks for security. A few well-chosen motorcycle gang tattoos might make life in tough cellblocks a lot safer and easier. On the other hand, a convict caught wearing gang tattoos fraudulently may suffer serious disgraces and even get himself killed." Because of the high percentage of prisoners who are in gangs, much of the tattoo work done inside prisons should be considered gang tattoos.

Street gangs often have factions inside of prisons, and in fact many street gangs, such as the Surenos, Nortenos, and Aryan Brotherhood, have their roots in prison gangs. But while street gangs allow for diversity, prison gangs tend to be race-based. Street gangs generally revolve around a specific neighborhood or turf, so their racial makeup reflects that of their neighborhood. Of course the neighborhoods in which they are based are often segregated, leading to same-race gangs, but the focus of the gang is not primarily racial. Gangs inside prisons, by contrast, are sharply divided along racial lines and are often race-based in nature, such as the Mexican Mafia, Aryan Warriors, and Black Guerrilla Family.

As a result, whereas street gangs' tattoos are commonly neighborhood- or turf-affiliated, gang tattoos made in prison are often as race-based as the gangs they represent.

For example, many of the black prison gangs, such as the Black Guerrilla Family and its spin-off, 415, also known as the Kumi African Nation, use symbols of Africa-including pictures of the continent itself-in their tattoos. For example, a popular tattoo among members of the Kumi African Nation depicts a yero, or African Warrior, rising up out of an outline of the continent of Africa. In his left hand he holds a machine gun, and in his right he holds a flag bearing the numbers 415. These images reflect the African orientation of both the Black Guerrilla Family and the Kumi African Nation, which both encourage their members to learn Mau Mau history and words drawn from the Swahili language, which they use to communicate with each other in ways that will not be accessible to outsiders.

Two of the strongest Hispanic prison gangs-The Mexican Mafia (La eMe), and MRU-Mi Raza Unida (My United People)-use a symbol drawn from the Mexican flag, the snake and eagle as their emblem, and will usually incorporate this into their tattoos. The founder of MRU, Ernest Mercado, was allegedly killed outside of prison by a member of the Mexican Mafia for adopting the same snake and eagle symbol that the Mexican Mafia used and believed they had exclusive rights to. Many Hispanic gangsters are also tattooed with Aztec imagery, such as the popular image of an Aztec warrior carrying an unconscious maiden. This reflects their vision of their heritage; by the same token, some members of the Mexican Mafia have actually learned the Aztec language, Nahuatl, as a means to communicate privately with one another.

Within prisons, white gangs have a prominence that they do not enjoy on the outside. Because of their minority status within the penal system, many whites who would not otherwise consider gang membership or devote themselves to the "white race" feel compelled to join a gang for their own safety. Under those circumstances, visible identification as a member of the protecting gang in the form of a tattoo becomes an important way to guarantee personal safety.

The first white prison gangs emerged during the 1950s in the California prison system, a development that eventually led to the formation of the Aryan Brotherhood-one of the most famous and brutal prison gangs.

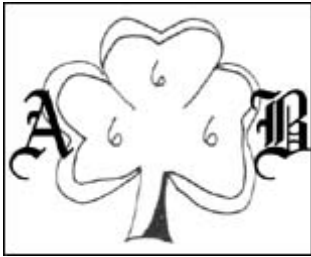


Figure 4 A common tattoo of the Aryan Brotherhood incorporates a shamrock, "666" (the "mark of the beast") and the letters "AB."

Many white gangs use Irish, Viking and German symbolism in their tattoos, regardless of the gang members' actual pedigree. The Aryan Brotherhood's common tattoos feature shamrocks, Nazi emblems such as swastikas and "SS" lightning bolts, Viking heads, and the slogan "Sinn Fein," which in Gaelic means, "we stand alone."

The importance of gang tattoos in prisons can be gauged by the trouble prisoners are willing to go to in order to get these signifiers permanently etched onto their skin, for getting a tattoo in prison can be a long and arduous process. Because of the health risks associated with unsanitary tattooing (such as the spread of disease via shared needles and far-from-sanitary inks), most prisons have banned the practice and are vigilant in preventing inmates from getting new tattoos while incarcerated. Nevertheless, prison tattooists and their customers manage to find a way to flout these regulations.

Tattoos in prison are done one of two ways. First is the freehand method. Using India ink or ink derived from "soot created by burning plastic eating utensils mixed with Prell shampoo and water," the tattoo is applied using a needle or piece of sharp wire in small dots. These tattoos are noticeably crude and can often appear childish. More ambitious prison practitioners are able to attain very professional-looking results using tattoo machines made out of, for example, a Walkman motor, a hollowed out pen, a guitar string or wire from a lighter, and a battery. These bits of everyday junk can be put together to create tattoos that are the equal of many high-quality commercial efforts.

During the tattooing process, however, both the tattooist and the recipient are under constant threat of being caught in the act by prison guards. If their activity is discovered while the tattoo is being created, or even if they are merely caught with tattooing tools, they face the likely prospect of being put in lockdown and losing all their privileges, and the tattooing paraphernalia will almost certainly be confiscated. The tremendous risk involved means that getting a detailed tattoo is a badge of pride for inmates. So great is the prestige of prison tattoos that gang members outside of prison will often use the same methods that inmates use rather than go to professional tattoo parlors. These homemade tattoos can be just as detailed and intricate as professional ones, even though the tools are often improvised. If tattoos show the street gang member's pride in his or her "outlaw" status, in prison a gang member's tattoos offer proof that he or she has flouted the rules and gotten away with it.

Today the role of tattoos is now facing a different kind of challenge: the adoption of tattoos as a standard accessory by large portions of mainstream society. True, few middle-class rebels have gone so far as to get facial tattoos, or tattoos on their hands-practices long common amongst gang members. But although gang members try to use tattoos to separate themselves from mainstream society, the effect that gang tattoos have had on the hipper strata of the middle class is undeniable. Teenagers who may have no idea of these symbols' original meaning are now wearing tattoos that were originally worn by gang members as badges of honor.

A case in point is the spider web tattooed on one's elbow. Among gang members, this tattoo was a code, readable by other gangsters in prison and on the outside, showing that the bearer had served serious time in the penitentiary. In some parts of the country the same tattoo meant that the wearer had killed a member of a minority group. In fact, James Burmeister was convicted in 1995 of killing a black couple, an act he committed solely because he wanted to wear the spider web tattoo that was popular among members of the Aryan Brotherhood. But while this tattoo holds powerful and specific significance for gang members, to the middle class that has co-opted the symbol it has no meaning beyond the idea that it is simply "cool." Thus Robert Van Winkle (formerly famous as the rapper Vanilla Ice) and Lars Frederiksen of the band Rancid both sport spiderweb tattoos. In a 1996 episode of *Melrose Place*, one of the characters gets drunk before going to tattoo parlor and wakes up the next day with a huge spider web tattooed on his elbow.

The spider web may be the most common prison tattoo to be assimilated by the middle class, but it is not the only one. People who have no affiliations to or interest in gangs have had themselves tattooed with Old English script on their chests, backs and arms, a style that used to be exclusive to gang members. These non-gang-member tattoo wearers believe they can imbibe the "gangsta" aura without having to lead a gangster life. Thus Dody Lira, a highly tattooed but law-abiding 25-year-old from Dallas, Texas, is proud to have several tattoos that are in the same style as gang tattoos, including a large tattoo of his own last name on the outside of his left calf in Old English lettering. "They have influenced me, by planting a symbolic badge that can be worn for everyone to see, for the rest of my life," he explained. "It all ties in with symbolism-they all stand for something; it's universally known." But he acknowledges that there are some gang tattoos he would not adopt, saying, "You see a dude with 187 on his forearm, he's probably a killer." Still, he sees no conflict between staying within the bounds of polite society while sporting gang-style tattoos. "Yuppies also drive Harleys," he explains. "That doesn't mean that they are beer drinking, wife smacking bikers."

Research has yet to be done on the effects of this middle-class enthusiasm for gang-style tattoo art, but it seems likely that tattoos may be losing their cachet as symbols of outlawry. It is even more probable that at least some gang members have started shying away from getting obvious gang-related tattoos in recent years because of the increased attention that law enforcement agencies are paying to tattoos as signs of gang membership.

Public demand for police crackdowns against gangs has given law enforcement new powers against suspected gang members and therefore drawn greater attention to signifiers of gang membership, particularly tattoos. With the advent of special sentencing provisions that provide harsher punishment for crimes that are gang-

related, law enforcement has a vested interest in being able to recognize and prove gang membership.

Thus police in some states, including California and Florida, have started keeping detailed databases detailing particular gang tattoos as a means of identifying gang members. When suspected gang members are arrested or incarcerated, police will often take photographic evidence of specific tattoos and include that in the prisoners' permanent record, tagging them as gangbangers for the duration of their prison time and beyond.

In California, one of the nation's most comprehensive and severe juvenile justice laws was passed in March 2000 in the hopes of curbing juvenile crime. Proposition 21 allows youths as young as 14 to be prosecuted as adults and serve felony prison sentences for crimes deemed to be gang-related, even if they are otherwise relatively minor crimes, such as graffiti. The proposition also allows juvenile records that were previously confidential to be opened in the case of gang members, and allows gang-related nonviolent crimes to be eligible as "strikes" under California's "three strikes" law. As with sex-offender laws, it requires gang members to register as such in city and statewide databases. Most severely, it makes juveniles eligible to receive the death sentence for certain gang-related offenses.

Although the California law is the most punitive of this new breed of anti-gang juvenile justice laws, the Violent and Repeat Juvenile Offender Accountability and Rehabilitation Act of 1999 passed by the U.S. Senate encourages other states to pass similar laws. While these laws do not specify how a suspect's gang membership is to be proved, local law enforcement personnel have come up with a variety of methods for accomplishing this-and gang-related tattoos are regarded by police as a key indicator.

Some agencies use a point system, giving various weights to different criteria for determining gang membership. Whether a suspect uses gang hand signs, how he or she dresses, whether he or she appears in group photos with known gang members, whether he or she engages in writing gang-related graffiti-these are typical of the criteria used to evaluate whether someone is in a gang. Other than an open verbal declaration of gang membership, the indicator that is given the highest point value-that is regarded as the most damning evidence of being a member-is a gang tattoo.

Thus the very things that make tattoos appealing as signifiers of gang membership-their visibility and permanence-are also the factors that make them appealing to law enforcement as a way of identifying and punishing gang members.

This in turn has begun to challenge the permanence of tattoos. The increased interest in tattooing among the middle class has also spurred development of new techniques for removing tattoos. What was once permanent is now less so, although removing a tattoo is still a major undertaking. This has affected gang members as well as movie stars. There are now many popular community initiatives to provide free or low-cost tattoo removal to former gang members. Proponents of these plans say that youth in rehabilitation programs who have their gang tattoos removed are more likely to stay out of the gangs and off drugs. It also allows adults who had previously been barred the work force because of highly visible tattoos to support themselves and their families after removal of the stigmatizing gang insignia. Most of these plans ask that the recipients of the services pay for them by performing

community service of some sort, rather than paying for the procedure, which can cost as much as \$7,000 otherwise.

Dr. Tolbert Wilkinson, a Texas-based doctor, works with one of these programs contends that they are highly effective. He cites a survey conducted by the Bandera Police Department, which found that 95 percent of former gang members who had submitted to having their gang tattoos removed "are now drug-free and employed. "

A 14-year-old who has his gang's name tattooed across his forehead is committing himself to a lifetime of identification not only with a specific gang, but with the outlaw life. "Sometimes it makes [other people] afraid if they see these things [gang tattoos], and they don't know what to make of them," says Jim Foley, a physician who works with another de-tattooing program, the Minnesota-based "Getting Out." "And the kids have changed. They want to get rid of the mark, the tattoo, that's the stigma of the past."

Like many commitments, the commitment to a gang can fade. Now thanks to plastic surgery techniques, so can a gang tattoo.

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A History of California's Hispanic Gangs

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The Origins of Hispanic Street Gangs

Most people believe that Los Angeles' Hispanic street gangs can be traced to the early 1900s, but Hispanic street gangs of the early 1900's developed as a result of incidents that occurred more than 50 years earlier. In 1718, the Mission of San Antonio Balera was established on the banks of the San Antonio River in south central Texas. This mission later became known as the *Alamo*. The southwestern portion of the United States belonged to Mexico, but many Americans had settled in these areas. By 1835, the revolt by Texans against Mexican control of this area was in full swing. In February 1836, Colonel William Travis and 180 men took control of the Alamo from the Mexicans.

On March 6 of that year, Mexican president Santa Ana and approximately 3,000 Mexican soldiers attacked the Alamo in an effort to regain control. The Americans in the Alamo killed more than 400 Mexican soldiers during the battle. The Mexican army prevailed, and the few U.S. survivors surrendered to General Santa Ana who, to their surprise, ordered their executions. Those orders were carried out immediately. Word of this quickly spread throughout the resistance movement, and the rallying cry for the Texas forces became "Remember the Alamo." Anti-Mexican sentiment had begun, and continued to grow during the conflict.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed in 1848, marked the end of the war between the United States and Mexico. The United States paid Mexico \$15 million plus \$3 million in compensation for the northwest portion of Mexico. Today, that area is known as Nevada, California, Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, Texas and Colorado. Many Hispanic street gang members felt (and still feel) that the United States stole this part of Mexico from their ancestors. In reality, Mexico lost less than 1% of its population. The United States offered a naturalization program to those Mexican citizens affected by the treaty. All but about 2,000 Mexican nationals residing in the area became naturalized citizens of the U.S. Nevertheless, there was still a high degree of resentment by many U.S. citizens against any Mexican because of the memory of the Alamo. The California Gold Rush of 1849 immediately followed this treaty. These events set the attitude, social and economic conditions in Los Angeles during the early 1900's. Those conditions, along with the rapid growth of Los Angeles and other historical events, helped to shape and direct the actions of L.A.'s street gangs.

In the early 1900's, Los Angeles experienced the birth of the first Hispanic

street gangs. Mexican-Americans who lived in the "pueblo" of Los Angeles still felt displaced, even as naturalized citizens. Many of these new Americans were treated like second-class citizens by white Angelenos, and were told to go back to their home, Mexico. In the minds of Hispanics in Los Angeles, they were already home, but their home was now part of the United States because of the annexation. They now lived in a country that didn't want them, but they could not return to Mexico because they were U.S. citizens.

The Mexican immigrants also tended to live in the same areas, with family or other Mexicans who migrated from the same geographical areas of Mexico. These neighborhoods were often some of the poorest areas in rapidly growing Los Angeles. These conditions aided in the development of rivalries between various immigrant groups. A modern class distinction was also developing. Sgt. Joe Guzman, Los Angeles County Sheriff Department, an expert on Hispanic street gangs, correctly points out that Mexican street gangs formed in part due to economic conditions, prejudice and racism. Irish street gangs formed in the 1800s in New York as a result of these social conditions. In the early 1900s, similar social and economic factors were present in Los Angeles, giving rise to Hispanic street gangs.

The Los Angeles and El Paso Connection

During the early years of the 20th century, an underground drug and prostitution market developed between Los Angeles and El Paso, Texas. Early L.A. gang members started to mimic the dress style, mannerisms and language of the Mexican drug dealers and pimps that operated in these areas. During this time, the Mexican youths also became interested in swing music and started to use "Calo," a slang blending Spanish and English.

By the 1920s, El Paso, Texas had become a center for many immigrant Mexicans, much like Los Angeles. In fact, an underground travel route developed between the two cities. This route allowed El Paso trends to directly influence the L.A. street gangs. In El Paso, Texas, many of the Mexicans who went to prison were incarcerated in Huntsville. While in the Huntsville prison, they formed a prison gang called the *El Paso Tip*. El Paso Tip took its name from the area of Texas where the prison was located. Fellow gang members would greet each other by saying: "are you tipped up?" or "are you tipped?" According to Sgt. Richard Valdemar (a prison gang expert with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department), this phrase meant: "Are you from the El Paso area?" which referred to the location of the Huntsville prison. El Paso Tip would later become very influential in the Los Angeles street gang culture.

The Depression Era and World War II

The late 1920's saw the beginning of the Depression in the United States. Most Americans today do not identify with the term "Black Tuesday," which referred to October 24, 1929, the day the stock market crashed and brought the American economy down with it. The depression, while influential in the lives of America's Hispanic population, was less influential to the growth of street gangs than the subsequent economic recovery during the 1940s. The growth of the aircraft industry and other industrial jobs created a "work rush" which resembled

California's Gold Rush in the 1800's, and brought many people to California, including Mexican immigrants.

Also in the 1940's, according to Sgt. Joe Guzman, Mickey Garcia, a young boy from Pachuca, Hidalgo, Mexico migrated north and relocated in El Paso, Texas. He immediately joined a local Mexican street gang called the *Secundo Barrio*. Garcia also brought with him a unique style of dress, initially thought to have originated in Mexico. Garcia's dress style became an instant hit with all the young people, especially the local gang members. His fashion included a felt hat with a long feather in it, called a *tapa* or *tanda*. The pants were pleated and baggy, and referred to as *tramas*. The shirt was creased and called a *lisa*. A *carlango*, a long, loose-fitting coat, was worn over the ensemble. The shoes, called *calcos*, were French-toe style or *Stacy Adams* brand and were always shined. To complete the style, one had to have a long chain attached to the belt loop that hung past the knee, and into the side pocket of the pants. This outfit became known as the *zoot suit*, and was later referred to as the *pachuco* look. In the past, many angry parents would use the term *pachuco* to describe this popular dress style. The word, Pachuco, was derived from the town that Mickey Garcia's hometown: Pachuca, in the state of Hidalgo, Mexico. Garcia was not the first to wear the zoot suit in California or Texas. However, he may have been one of the first Mexican street gangsters to adopt this popular style of dress. Garcia's appearance certainly helped to spread the popularity of the zoot suit within the El Paso Mexican street gang population.

Remember the well-traveled route between Los Angeles and El Paso? Via that route, the pachuco style of dress was most likely re-introduced to the Los Angeles-based Mexican street gangs. It did not take long for the pachuco clothing to become popular with gang members. The zoot suit was already present in the L.A. area in the late 1930s, however, it was not adopted as a style of dress by the street gangs until the early to mid 1940s.

The *Maravilla* gangs started to form during the mid-to-late 1940s, and continued to grow well into the 1950s. The concept of protecting turf was expanded within the housing projects known as Maravilla, where the Maravilla gangs got their start. Competition for jobs, women and turf became issues for the youth that lived in this area, according to Sgt. Joe Guzman. Eventually, rivalries began to exist between people living in different housing projects. If conflicts arose, however, they were handled within the community, not by outsiders (law enforcement).

This mentality developed into an early form of claiming turf. When you claim turf, the next step is protecting it. These concepts were then adopted by the other Mexican street gangs and were rapidly accepted and put into practice. These housing projects evolved into some of the neighborhoods or *barrios* whose names are still familiar within the street gang culture. The origin of Mexican street gang turf wars can be traced back to those original housing projects. These behaviors also helped to create the current gang customs and practices.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, forcing the United States into World War II. These war years also played

a role in the historical formation of Mexican street gangs. On August 2, 1942, a young Mexican was beaten up and subsequently died from a fractured skull received in the attack. The killing of this young man, Jose Diaz, occurred near a popular swimming hole known as "Sleepy Lagoon," located on William's Ranch, which is now the city of Montebello, California. Police officers who investigated the crime blamed Diaz's death on a gang fight. The Los Angeles Police Department literally rounded up all of the usual suspects and arrested 24 members of the *38th Street* gang. The Los Angeles Grand Jury indicted 22 of the 24 suspects for the murder. The criminal trial was considered by the community to be a "kangaroo court." On January 13, 1943, 3 gang members were convicted of first degree murder, 9 members were convicted of second degree murder, 5 members were convicted of assault with a deadly weapon, and 5 members were found not guilty. The Mexican community responded with outrage, feeling that the trial was fixed and the convictions were based on race. However, the 17 convicted members of 38th Street were sent to state prison. Hispanic street gangs in Los Angeles changed forever as a result of those convictions. The jail sentences also acted like glue to unite the Hispanic community in a common cause, to fight against class distinction based on prejudice and racism, along with a fight against the establishment, including the police.

While in prison, the convicted 38th Street gang members never complained. They were given the worst jobs and treated unfairly because at that time, the prison population was mostly Caucasian. The 38th Street inmates kept themselves clean and shined their shoes. They cleaned and pressed their clothes, even though they were issued garments that were several sizes too large. The 38th Street members held tough and maintained their dignity while in prison. This behavior set a new standard for Hispanic gang members who were subsequently sent to jail. They demonstrated a type of gang pride and resolve that had never been seen before. These behaviors also elevated the incarcerated 38th Street members to the level of folk hero status within the Hispanic community. The street gang members especially held them in high regard.

The trial also caused the Hispanic community to develop an anti-white sentiment and created distrust for the government, especially the police. Anti-Hispanic sentiment also grew within the wider community because of this community response. The class distinction only became more prevalent because racially motivated abuse continued to be directed at Hispanics for many years. It did not matter whether they were U.S. citizens or undocumented immigrants. To many whites, they were simply "Mexican."

As the nation became more involved in the war effort, Los Angeles and San Diego became major deployment points for the U.S. military who were involved in the Pacific campaign. As a result, the military population in both cities increased dramatically almost overnight. During June 1943, the Zoot Suit Riots of Los Angeles began. The non-Hispanic community, especially the military personnel, felt that the Hispanic community was not contributing to the war effort. Their dissatisfaction was specifically directed at the young Hispanics and Hispanic street gang members who wore the zoot suit. The large, oversized suit only wasted valuable fabric

which could be used in the war effort. In fact, the zoot suit was considered contraband because the War Production Board did not sanction it. The War Production Board took the stance that it was the clothing designers' patriotic duty to design fashions that would use a minimal amount of fabric. This would conserve a valuable resource which was needed for the war.

In addition, many undocumented Mexicans never registered for the draft, nor did they enlist in the military. Lastly, the visiting military were very popular with the local women. The women were attracted to men in uniform. The gang members felt there was additional competition between these two groups (military men and local men) for the women. These factors only caused the anti-White sentiments and corresponding anti-Hispanic sentiments to increase. In reality, the perception that Hispanics were not supporting the war was inaccurate. Many thousands of U.S.-born Hispanics, some first and second generation, volunteered for service in the military. Many saw front-line action, and many sacrificed their lives for the people back home.

These attitudes on both sides, however, became the fuel necessary to spark conflicts between the military personnel and the Hispanic street gang members. There were major assaults on Hispanics who wore the zoot suit, including gang members, by military personnel, who were almost never arrested. The police would routinely only arrest the gang members who were involved in these confrontations. These conflicts forced the Hispanic street gangs to unite against a common enemy and to develop a uniform of their own.

One additional incident occurred during 1943 which impacted Los Angeles' Hispanic street gangs. On October 4, 1943, the California Appeals Court overturned the convictions of the 38th Street gang members for the murder of Jose Diaz. The appellate court found that the criminal trial's findings were in error because the defense attorneys were not allowed to present a defense for the accused. The appellate court also found that evidence had been falsified. The appellate court's findings only validated the community's concerns about the trial, and solidified the opinions of community members that the convictions were based on prejudice and racism. The incarcerated 38th Street gang members were welcomed back into the Hispanic community as heroes.

By the late 1940's, the number of Hispanic street gangs and gang members had increased. Hispanic youth found a certain solidarity in street gangs, believing their cause was just. Sgt. Joe Guzman points out in his research in this area that some gang members adopted heroes of the Mexican revolution, such as Emilio Zapata, as their heroes at the time. They identified with the phrase: "it is better to die on my feet than to live on my knees." The gangs were fighting against the establishment and the military. There were very few fights between Hispanic street gangs.

The Formation of the Mexican Mafia

The postwar era brought more change to Hispanic street gangs in Los Angeles. After the war, with no common enemy, the frustration and aggression of the gang members was aimed at each other. The Maravilla

gangs that formed in East Los Angeles developed the most notorious reputation for being violent and ruthless.

As the number of street gangs grew, so did the tendency of these gangs to claim turf, and to settle their problems with action. Insults against a gang were not tolerated, and intense rivalries formed between gangs. Violence began to increase as gang members began to use guns more often. A new word entered the gang vocabulary: *drive-by*. The 1950s were to be a decade of rapid growth for Los Angeles. The suburbs became a popular place to live for many Angelinos. Man-made structures, like freeways and major interstate highways helped to define new geographical turf boundaries for many gangs. The new man-made boundaries also subdivided existing gang territories and created new gang *clickas* (cliques) or subsets of the original gangs. To further compound the issue, many families were moving away from Los Angeles to the smaller surrounding cities to avoid the ever-increasing inner-city gang violence. The 1950s urbanization also added to the street gang growth. This flight from gang violence became one of the first identified gang migration mechanisms. Families would move to prevent their children from joining street gangs or to save them from further involvement. For some families, it was too late. The relocated children moved away physically, but brought the gang mentality and philosophy with them. They joined local gangs in their new communities or created new cliques of the gang they were associated with in Los Angeles.

Throughout the 1950s, the number of gang-related violent crimes increased dramatically, as did the size and number of Hispanic street gangs. Law enforcement agencies increased their response to gangs, and many Hispanic gang members were sent to prison. This caused the demographics within the correctional system to change. Between 1956 and 1957, several Eslos, short for East Los Angeles, were doing hard time together at the Duel Vocational Institute in California. They formed the Hispanic prison gang known as La Eme, the Mexican Mafia, the first prison gang in California. Initially, the gang was formed for protection against other inmates and the prison staff.

In 1968 at San Quentin, a state prison in Northern California, an incident occurred which would forever change California's Hispanic street and prison gangs. There are at least two versions of this incident. Sgt. Joe Valdemar reports that an Eme member, "Pieface," shared a cell with Hector Padilla, a Hispanic from Northern California. Padilla's most prized possession was a pair of shoes which he shined and cared for every day. One day, while Padilla was out of the cell, Pieface stole his shoes. Pieface discovered that the shoes were too small to fit him. In an effort to win some points with La Eme, he decided to give the shoes to a higher-ranking member of the prison gang. Surprisingly, he chose Robert "Robot" Salas. The shoes fit the Eme gang member, and Pieface walked back to the cell area, only to find Padilla frantically looking for the shoes. Padilla recognized that Salas was wearing his shoes. An argument ensued, and Padilla, the real owner of the shoes, accused Salas of stealing them. This statement, of course, insulted the Eme gang member, and the fight started. Padilla was stabbed several times during the argument and died. Word of this spread quickly through the prison

system, especially among the Hispanic inmates.

Another version of the incident says that "Robot" Salas was the roommate of Padilla, rather than Pieface. In this version, Salas received the shoes as a gift and returns to his cell, which is of course shared with Padilla, and the fight occurs in the cell. However it occurred, the murder solidified the rivalry between northern and southern Hispanics, both in the prison system and on the street. The Hispanics from northern California formed Nuestra Familia (NF), another prison gang, in response to the conflict. NF was formed to protect the northern Californians from La Eme, whose membership was made up primarily of southern Californians.

Street and prison gang members from northern California began to use the number 14 as an identifier. It represented the 14th letter of the alphabet, the letter "N." The letter stood for *Norteno*, the Spanish word for northerner. The term *norte* was used to show that a person was from the north. Individuals from southern California were automatically considered rivals, both inside the prison system and on the streets.

Southern California gang members began using the number 13 as an identifier. The 13th letter of the alphabet is the letter "M," and the word for this letter in Spanish is "Eme." Southern California gang members started using words like *Sureno*, which means "southerner." Often, this term was abbreviated as *sur/SUR*. Gang members also started to tattoo themselves with the number 13 and with the terms *Sureno* or *sur* along with the name of their gang, to signify their origin in southern California.

Inmates in the state prison system were given bandannas in a railroad print, and could select from two colors: red or blue. Hispanic street and prison gangs from northern California claimed the color red to identify themselves. They used this color because most of the southern California Hispanics in state prison had chosen to wear a blue-colored railroad handkerchief. The Crips and Bloods were not the first gangs to use red or blue to identify.

Rival southern California Hispanic street gangs had one thing in common: they were enemies with anyone from northern California. This rivalry united them in jail and in state prisons. The same was true for northern Hispanic gang members, except their common enemy was any gang member from the south. Somewhere, while the dust was settling between these two groups, they began to visualize an imaginary line which divided the northern gangs from the southern gangs. This line turned out to be a gray area, rather than a clear line, in central California. However, gang members usually agreed that the division was located somewhere between the cities of Bakersfield and Delano.

The separation caused individual street gang rivalries between Hispanic gang members to be set aside while in jail. All southern California street gang members inherited a common enemy: any gang member from northern California. This separation united all the street gangs from the north against all street gangs from the south, while they were incarcerated, at least.

By this time, a common street code of conduct for Hispanic gang members had become:

- Do not cooperate with the police.
- Take care of business yourself (handle your own problems).
- Never snitch or inform on gang activity (be a *rata/rat*).
- No insult, no matter how small, goes unanswered.

Hispanic gang members also developed a set of customs and practices that became the rules of engagement for the street:

- Never commit crimes in your own neighborhood.
- Never involve innocent people, like women and children.
- Schools, as well as churches, stores and movie theaters, are neutral ground.

The penalty for violating these rules was to have all other gangs turned against the violating gang.

The 1970s and 1980s

By 1970, the firearm had become the weapon of choice for many Hispanic gang members. Many gangs added more members to become stronger and more formidable. The traditional *jump-in* ritual had started to become more violent. A few gangs also required a prospective member to commit a crime to earn membership. Hispanic street gang members now considered themselves the policemen of their neighborhoods. They felt (and still feel) they had a duty and sacred obligation to protect their turf. Most Hispanic gangs battled over turf violations. Incarceration became a status symbol for many gang members.

There was also a concerted effort among law enforcement, community members, and the judicial system, to curb gang violence. As a result, many gang leaders were sent to prison. The prison life mentality was taken to the streets by parolees, and taught to the younger street gang members. The philosophy became: "Only the strong survive to prey on the weak." The parolees were considered *veteranos* or veterans. They were given the utmost respect and given a position of high honor by the street gang members. The *veteranos* tutored the street gang members on the prison philosophy, the new code of conduct for the streets. This standardized the expected behaviors for street and prison gang members. These behaviors included the proper ways to dress, talk, act and conduct business.

The continued criminal justice attack on gang violence had an unforeseen result on the street gangs. The gang leaders that were sent to prison were the same people that kept the younger gang members in check. The *veteranos* were the mentors, and enforced the gang rules. When they were incarcerated, the *veteranos* lost their direct leadership of the gang. Their training and mentoring was stopped. The "old ways" began to lose impact with the younger gang members, who could basically do what they wanted when the leaders were incarcerated. In many gangs,

the younger members were basically bringing themselves up, maturing without any formal guidance.

By the mid to late 1980s, the traditional ways of the Hispanic street gangs had all but been abandoned. Hispanic street gang members had begun to commit crimes in their own neighborhoods. Non-gang members, particularly undocumented immigrants, had become a new class of prey for the Hispanic street gangs. The immigrants started to form their own gangs for protection against the established street gangs. This only increased inter-gang conflicts. Gang violence became commonplace on school grounds, and at malls, theaters, and churches. Innocent women and children were victimized by Hispanic gangs. There were no rules for the gangs, aside from "only the strong survive." Many citizens in the gang-controlled neighborhoods became reluctant to assist law enforcement with gang-related investigations because they feared gang retaliation as a real and constant threat.

In 1984, another type of Hispanic gang developed as an alternative to street gangs. The *Stoner* gangs formed, and much of the membership of these gangs was Hispanic. Based on heavy metal music and drug use, these gangs gained a quick, but not long-lasting, popularity. Stoner gangs shared many behaviors with more traditional Hispanic street gangs. Therefore, Stoner gangs were not immune to the violence associated with gang life. They just directed their violent tendencies toward other Stoner gangs and among themselves.

By the late 1980s, Hispanic gangs such as 18th Street, 38th Street, and Big Hazard began to sell drugs for profit. As a result, gang-related violence in the area dramatically increased, as did gang membership. In 1988, Los Angeles County reported 452 gang-related homicides and approximately 50,000 gang members in 450 different gangs. The gang violence became so common that many young Hispanics began to seek out an alternative to street gang membership. In the late 1980s, Los Angeles County experienced the rapid growth of *Tagger Crews*. The majority of members were young Hispanics who did not want to join a street gang, or those who had left a street gang. The taggers' focus was on graffiti vandalism. Initially, most of the crew members advocated non-violence.

The Tagger Crews grew quickly and began to infringe on Hispanic gang turf. This violated the codes of the street, and taggers became targets for gang retaliation. After being assaulted by street gang members, many taggers began to arm themselves with weapons for protection against future attacks. Tagger Crews were also heavily influenced by the street gang culture, and began to seek revenge for assaults. This attitude put the crews in an offensive position. Some Tagger Crews began to assault other tagger crews with their new firepower. A subset of the Tagger subculture evolved into *Tag Banging*, aggressively protecting their graffiti turf and maintaining ongoing rivalries. The Tag Bangers had become just another type of street gang, and were just as prone to violence as many of the Hispanic street gangs.

The 1990s and Beyond

By the early part of 1990, gang violence had escalated to another all-time

high. Los Angeles was considered by many as the "gang capital" of the country. By now, there were two major ethnic gangs prevalent in the United States: Hispanic gangs and African-American street gangs. These two races had co-existed for years, tolerating each other's presence on the streets of Los Angeles. Another alternative to street gangs also developed: *Party Crews*. These groups broke both racial and gender barriers for membership. However, the majority of members were young Hispanic males and females. Just like the Tagger Crews, the Party Crews tried to steer away from the violent nature of street gangs. However, because they existed side by side with street gangs, and because they were heavily influenced by the street gang culture, it did not take long before violent conflicts between these groups arose.

Although there was an attempt to educate community members on gang dangers, Hispanic gangs continued to grow in size and violence. In 1990, Los Angeles County reported approximately 690 gangs operating within the county. By 1991, there were an estimated 100,000 gang members and 750 different street gangs in L.A. County alone. Hispanic street gangs continued to account for a majority of the street gangs.

In 1992, the "Eme Edict" was passed down to the streets. Joe Morgan, the leader of the Mexican Mafia, issued orders to the Hispanic street gangs of Southern California. Gang members were told to stop committing drive-by shootings. Publicly, the order was issued to stop the gang violence. This was a service to the community by a prison gang to decrease gang violence, according to several Mexican Mafia members and associates. This edict resulted in a "gang truce" between Hispanic street gangs in Southern California. However, in later years, the ulterior motive of the edict, hidden within the cry to stop the gang violence, became more clear. The Mexican Mafia was attempting to extend its controlling influence on the street gangs. The edict was also an effort to coordinate drug sales by Hispanic gangs in Los Angeles and other surrounding communities.

There were some additional adaptations to Hispanic street gangs during the 1990s, as well. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, law enforcement agencies around the United States began to identify Surenos-affiliated gangs which were appearing as far away as Colorado, Utah, Arizona, Oregon, Washington, and even the Midwest. Some of these Hispanic gangs were multi-racial, and had broken the gender membership barrier. Many were not connected or related to Southern California street gangs, nevertheless, they claimed that status (Sureno).

By the mid 1990s, law enforcement agencies also began to document a change in the concept of gang respect. Respect no longer seemed to be based on age, experience, or knowledge. Respect, in the street code, was increasingly based on fear. This change was due to several factors. First, the decreasing role of adult leadership within the street gangs, dating back to the 1970s and 1980s contributed to the change in street values. It also was connected to the gun violence which was used by the street gangs as their primary method of solving disputes. The rapid increases during the late 1980s and early 1990s in the size of the individual street gangs, which now could count hundreds or even thousands of members, also impacted this issue, as well as the

increasing role of drug use and sales in the street gang culture. By the mid 1990s, the gang ethic of the 1950s and 1960s was almost totally gone, and new rules prevailed for street gangs.

For most Hispanic gang members, guns were (and still are) used to settle any dispute. The gun had become the instrument or tool used to get respect. This respect was sought by committing violent crimes and assaults with firearms. This behavior intimidated the victims, surrounding community, and gang populations. The most violence-prone gang members and gangs were the most feared, and therefore, the most respected.

The peak year for gang-related murders in Los Angeles County was 1995. Gang populations also reached an all-time high, approximately 150,000. Some estimates indicated there were over 1,500 different street gangs within the county. Fortunately, 1996 brought unexpected declines in the number of gang-related murders. For the first time in several years, gang violence seemed to be decreasing. Nationally, violent crime had also started a downward trend. The Mexican Mafia began to require Hispanic street gangs to pay them a tax on the sale of drugs. The imposed tax was supposed to help their comrades when they were in prison.

Some gangs did not pay the tax. These gang members felt that the drug money they earned was theirs, and would not be shared with the Mexican Mafia. This stance forced the Mexican Mafia, in order to maintain their status on the streets, to put the non-taxpaying gangs on a *green light* list. This simply meant that it was "open season" on any non-taxpaying gang. Previously, the Hispanic gangs had, under the truce conditions, been forbidden from retaliating against their traditional Hispanic gang rivals, Hispanic street gang members could now attack and kill a green light listed member.

Street gang members were also increasingly being used as muscle for the Mexican Mafia. The opposition to paying the Mexican Mafia tax grew so great that some Hispanic gangs started referring to themselves as *green lighters*. They became proud of the fact that their gangs were tax-free, and advertised it. In fact, some of these gangs started to use tattoos that said "tax free" and "green light." Occasionally, the gangs' graffiti also included the words "tax free neighborhood." A few gangs even referred to themselves as the "Green Light Gangs."

In 1997, gang-related murders in Southern California continued to decrease. Los Angeles County only had 452 deaths, and gang murders were decreasing throughout the entire state. Violence between Hispanic gangs was also decreasing. Overall, gang membership figures for Los Angeles county had also decreased slightly. Some Hispanic gangs established access to a "gang gun." These weapons could be shared by the entire membership. The gun would be hidden in a location well-known members, and retrieved easily. Also, by this time, some Hispanic gang members were also involved in arsons and bombings. Pipe bombs and molotov cocktails were commonly used.

By 1998, street gangs were reported to be present in every state across

the U.S., and on Native American lands. Street gangs, as a whole, had established a hold in rural American and in small to mid-sized towns around the country. Hispanic gangs could be found in almost every state. The Norteno-Sureno rivalry still continued to be a major cause for violent acts between the two types of gangs, and this rivalry was played out in cities across the western United States.

In the late 1990s, many members from the same street gang lived in different cities, and some lived in different countries. They would meet at a certain location within the city in which they operated. Traveling gang members that belonged to Hispanic gangs were not uncommon. Historically, Hispanic gang members had remained loyal to their original gang, no matter where they resided, and whether they were incarcerated or on the street. By the 1990s, this sentiment no longer held true for some Hispanic gang members. This type of gang member might belong to one gang in the city of residence, belong to another gang where he/she socialized, and might even pledge affiliation to a third gang while incarcerated.

By the end of 1999, Hispanic street gangs had become the fastest growing type of gang in the country. Many Hispanic gangs had established a multi-racial membership. There continued to be traditional, turf-oriented Hispanic gangs located in regions of the United States, but the concept of turf for some gangs had changed. For some Hispanic gangs, the concept of turf had become fluid. These gangs operated in an entire city, not just one neighborhood. These gangs also did not always use graffiti, to mark their turf's boundaries, in the same manner of traditional Hispanic gangs. There was no need to, since there were no turf boundaries to identify. Hispanic street gangs were reported to be active in every state.

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Special Report of the NGCRC: Preliminary Results of Project GANGMILL

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides information from Project GANGMILL, a research project by the National Gang Crime Research Center, that involved collecting data on $N = 3,489$ juvenile and adult offenders in seven states from 22 different correctional facilities. The report will describe how the larger national sample of $N = 3,489$ is pared down to $N = 2,865$ by means of intentional efforts to "validate" the data: that is, intentionally eliminating cases from the sample where deception or inconsistency was detected.

While a number of the items in this survey involved replicating previous findings, there are a number of new and innovative measurements as well which promise to provide new answers to ongoing questions about gang issues today. This is the first in what could be a series of analyses from this research initiative.

OFFERING THE RESPONDENTS COMPLETE ANONYMITY

The research design used here offered the respondents complete anonymity. Instructions during the collection of the data included the routine statement: "please do not put your name on this survey" to enhance the role of anonymity in the data collection procedure. This, combined with the fact that the respondents simply put their completed survey in a stack or collection box in a group context, allowed them a concrete assurance that their survey would not be "singled out" and linked to them in anyway.

DATA COLLECTION

The data for Project GANGMILL was collected during the time frame of 1998-1999. The data was collected at N = 22 different correctional institutions in N = 7 states. The distribution by site is described in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Distribution of Cases From the N = 22 Sites

N = in

(1) Wisconsin: State Juvenile Sample

Correctional Institution 230

(2) Sedgwick County Jail

Wichita, Kansas 486

(3) Juvenile Detention Center

Wichita, Kansas 18

(4) Juvenile Detention Center

Downey, California 234

(5) Ireland Youth Dev. Center

Milledgeville, Georgia 166

(6) Atlanta Youth Dev. Center

Atlanta, Georgia 97

(7) Monmouth Co. Jail

New Jersey 37

(8) Lorenzo Benn Youth Dev. Ctr.

Atlanta, Georgia 92

(9) Female Youth Dev. Ctr.

Macon, Georgia 72

(10) Indian River Youth Corr. Inst.

Ohio 243

(11) Maumee Youth Center

Ohio 95

(12) Youth Opportunity Center

Ohio 25

(13) Juvenile Corr. Inst.

Riverview, Ohio 164

(14) Scioto Juv. Corr. Center

Ohio 120

(15) Mohican Youth Center

Ohio 118

(16) TICO Youth Facility, Ohio 112

(17) Ohio River Valley Youth Facility 128

(18) Youth Facility, Highland Hills

Ohio 235

(19) Ottawa Co. Juv. Det. Center,

Michigan 48

(20) Juvenile Det. Center

Kalamazoo, Michigan 6

(21) Ottawa Co. Jail, Michigan 77

(22) Kent Co. Juv. Det. Center

VALIDITY ANALYSIS

This project was designed to be able to detect inconsistent and deceptive response patterns from offenders completing the survey. The purpose of this validity control was to be able to purge the overall sample of those cases in the sample where the offenders exhibit a deception pattern.

Two phases of validity analysis were undertaken for the research reported here. Starting with a sample size of N = 3,489 phase one will purge N = 173 of the cases due to deception among the respondents, and phase two of the analysis will purge another N = 451 due to inconsistent response patterns. Thus, a total of N = 624 cases are purged statistically in this two stage process, leaving a total of N = 2,865 cases that pass scrutiny for purposes of validity.

Phase One. Phase one involved simply eliminating from the sample any respondent who admitted to engaging in a kind of deviant behavior that did not exist. In short, Project GANGMILL had a series of questions dealing with the occult/satanic worship, and one of these was designed simply to capture the "false confessor". The "false confessor" is someone who in survey research on offenders has a tendency to want to falsely represent their level of dangerousness; this kind of person over-reports their deviance as a kind of statement about "self".

In phase one, there was a question on the survey (ITEM28) which read as follows: "Have you ever participated in a red snapperSatanic ceremony? ___Yes ___No ___Don't know what it is". There is no such thing as a "red snapper Satanic ceremony". It was an item placed after the other three occult/satanic items to be able to simply capture the kind of offender who has the tendency of the "false confessor".

There were N = 173 respondents in phase one, who claimed they had participated in a "red snapper Satanic ceremony". These cases in the national sample were purged during phase one of validity analysis.

Phase Two. Phase two of the validity analysis involved comparing the responses of two identical items. One of the items was placed in the very beginning (ITEM6) of the survey and the other item was placed at the very end (ITEM92) of the survey.

Table 1 presents the results of this cross-tabulation of responses to the phase two validity check.

Table 1

Phase Two Validity Analysis:

Crosstabulation of Responses to Two Identical Variables

Designed to Capture Inconsistency Among Offender Respondents

My parents do not

Do your parents regularly attend church.

regularly attend False True

church? NO 336 1329

YES 1111 115

As seen in Table 1, there are two "inconsistency patterns": (1) the N = 336 who on the one hand indicated early in the survey that "no" to the question do their parents regularly attend church and then towards the end of the survey indicated "false" to the statement "my parents do not regularly attend church", and (2) the N = 115 respondents who early in the survey responded "yes" that they parents do regularly attend church, but then later in the survey declared as "true" the statement that their parents do not regularly attend church.

This procedure from phase two therefore detected a total of N = 451 additional respondents who manifested inconsistency.

Thus, overall, from both phases of validity analysis a total of N = 624 respondents in the offender sample indicated direct deception or inconsistency in their responses and were therefore statistically purged from the sample.

DESCRIPTIVE FINDINGS

Below we summarize the basic descriptive statistical findings from Project GANGMILL. The order of presentation will follow the exact same item order in the survey instrument itself. Where appropriate, significant differences that exist for some of these factors in relationship to gang membership are also reported.

AGE

The age of the offenders ranged from a low of eleven (11) years of age to a high of 85. It is important to note the distinction with respect to current age of the respondents in terms of what is legally, in most states, considered "juvenile" versus "adult". In most cases "juvenile" means, legally, someone 16 years of age or under. In places like Illinois, someone 17 years of age or older is basically charged as an adult if they are arrested.

Thus, in the present sample some 45.5 percent would be considered juveniles (16 years of age or under). And 54.5 percent would be considered adults (17 years of age or older).

SEX

Some 88.1 percent (N = 2494) of the sample were male; and 11.9 percent (N = 37) were female.

HALF WERE BULLIES

The survey asked "did you ever bully someone in school", and 51.6 percent (N = 1464) of the respondents indicated "yes".

This factor did vary significantly by gang membership: while 42.8 percent of the non-gang members were bullies, nearly two-thirds (67.4%) of the gang members reported being bullies.

ABOUT TWO-FIFTHS HAD BEEN BULLY VICTIMS

The survey also asked "were you ever bullied by someone in school", and here some 39.1 percent (N = 1109) indicated that they had in fact been bully victims.

Being a bully victim also varied by gang membership in the predictable direction: non-gang members were more likely to be bully victims (41.4%) than gang members (36.3%).

MANY BELIEVE BULLYING LEADS TO GANGBANGING

The survey asked "do you think bullying in school can lead to gangbanging", and some 60.9 percent (N = 1725) indicated "yes".

The tendency here was for gang members to indicate a higher percentage for "yes, bullying in school can lead to gangbanging" (65.8%) than for those who were not gang members (58.3%).

UNDER HALF REPORT THEIR PARENTS REGULARLY ATTEND CHURCH

One of the validity or consistency items, the survey asked "Do your parents regularly attend church", and here some 45.8 percent (N = 1290) indicated "yes". Thus, just over half (54.2%, N = 1526) indicated "no".

This factor did vary by gang membership: non-gang members appeared to have more church-attending parents. Some 48.7 percent of the non-gang members indicated their parents regularly attend church compared to 40.4 percent among gang members.

ABOUT A THIRD HAVE STOLEN FROM AN EMPLOYER

The survey asked "have you ever stolen anything from an employer that you ever worked for", and some 31.9 percent (N = 903) indicated "yes". Obviously, the majority (68.1%, N = 1932) indicated "no". It is important to note that this tendency has not been adjusted to first examine job history: whether the person has ever even had a job of any kind. This may, in fact, best be examined statistically by controlling for age (i.e., in terms of those of working age). It is also hypothesized that it may vary significantly by whether the offender is a gang member or not, which is one of the tests that will in fact be covered in this report.

TWO-THIRDS BELIEVE STRONG FAMILIES STOP GANG INVOLVEMENT

The survey asked "do you feel strong family support and involvement would prevent people from joining a gang", and some 67.2 percent (N = 1861) answered "yes". Thus, about a third (32.8%, N = 909) answered "no". This factor may gain greater importance once it is tested in relationship to actual gang membership within the sample.

This factor did vary by gang membership. Among the non-gang members, some 71.6 percent felt strong family involvement would prevent people from joining a gang; compared to only 60.4 percent among gang members.

A THIRD REPORT LOW LEVELS OF PARENTAL SUPERVISION AS YOUTHS

The survey included the true/false question "When I was growing up I really did not have much adult supervision from my parent(s) or guardian". Some 34.8 percent (N = 972) indicated "true".

This factor did vary significantly by gang membership. Among the non-gang members some 30.4 percent reported low levels of parental supervision as youths, but this rises to 42.1 percent among gang members.

ABOUT ONE OUT OF TEN HAVE FORCED SOMEONE TO HAVE SEX

The survey asked "have you ever forced someone to have sex with you" and some 9.6 percent (N = 273) answered "yes". Obviously, this factor will take on greater significance when it is examined in relationship to the gender of the respondents.

ABOUT ONE OUT OF FIVE HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF FORCIBLE SEX

There are more victims of forcible sex than there are victimizers, it would appear in the offender population based on this tendency; previously confirmed in a number of previous studies along these lines. It will, obviously, take on greater importance when it is examined in relationship to gender as well.

The survey asked "have you ever been forced by someone else to have sex with them", and some 19.2 percent (N = 544) answered "yes".

A HIGH RATE OF INCEST AMONG THE OFFENDER POPULATION

The survey asked "have you ever had sex with someone in your immediate family", and some 8.5 percent (N = 239) answered "yes". This factor is expected to vary to the gender of the respondent.

MOST FEEL IT IS NOT FAIR TO FORCE YOUTHS UNDER 13 TO JOIN GANGS

The survey asked "do you think it is fair to force kids younger than 13 years old to join gangs". Some 81.7 percent (N = 2294) indicated "no". Some 10.3 percent (N = 289) gave the response of "sometimes". And some 8.0 percent (N = 224) answered "yes".

This did vary by gang membership. While 87.8 percent of the non-gang members indicated a "no" response, this reduced to 72.7 percent among gang members.

SOME THIRTY PERCENT HAVE BEEN REFERRED FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

The survey asked "have you ever been referred for Special Education Services", and some 30.2 percent (N = 851) indicated "yes". Obviously, the larger share of the sample (69.8%, N = 1963) were not referred for Special Education Services.

There was a slight tendency for gang members to have a higher rate of referrals for special education (34.1%) than when compared to non-gang members (27.6%).

VAST MAJORITY CONSIDER THEMSELVES AS "GOOD READERS"

The survey asked "do you consider yourself to be a good reader", and some 84 percent (N = 2377) answered "yes". Thus, only 16 percent (N = 452) answered "no" in this regard. This factor may take on greater import in relationship to the age of the respondents.

There was no difference in comparing this factor by gang membership.

TYPE OF PROGRAMMING RECEIVED IN SCHOOL

The survey asked "where were you being taught when you were in school" and gave the respondent five response modes: regular classes, Resource Room, Special Education Classes, Alternative Program, and Home. The results show that most were in regular classes (73.9%, N = 2036). Only 1.5 percent indicated "resource room". Some 13.4 percent (N = 370) indicated "Special Education Class". Some 8.7 percent indicated "Alternative Program". And only 2.5 percent (N = 69) indicated "Home".

ABOUT ONE OUT OF TEN HAVE ROBBED OR BURGLARIZED A COMPANY THEY HAVE WORKED FOR

The survey asked "have you ever robbed or burglarized a company that you ever worked for", and some 11.3 percent (N = 318) reported "yes". Thus, some 88.7 percent (N = 2484) reported they had not ever robbed or burglarized a company that they had worked for.

NINE OUT OF TEN BELIEVE IN GOD

The survey asked "do you believe that God created the Universe and that you are accountable to Him for what you do in life". Here, consistent with previous findings of this nature among the American confined offender population, some 90 percent (N = 2498) indicated "yes". Thus, only 10 percent (N = 277) indicated "no" for this item.

There was no difference on this factor in relationship to gang membership.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PROGRAMS FOR PREVENTING GANG ACTIVITY?

The survey asked "which of the following types of programs do you think is the one single best way of preventing gang activity". Five specific options and one "other" category were provided as response modes. Some 14.7 percent (N = 387) indicated "after-school social clubs". Some 3.1 percent (N = 81) indicated "tutoring programs". The single largest tendency, constituting half of the sample, some 49.2 percent (N = 1299) indicated "sports programs". Only 1.4 percent (N = 37) indicated "school newspaper/yearbook". And some 16.9 percent indicated "other".

THE DEVIL MADE ME DO IT: AN EMPIRICAL TEST

The survey included the question "do you believe the Devil has ever had an influence on your behavior". Some 58.9 percent (N = 1644) answered "yes". Some 22.2 percent (N = 621) answered "no". And some 18.9 percent (N = 528) answered "not sure".

A THIRD OF THE OFFENDERS IN THE SAMPLE EXPECT TO GO TO HELL

The survey included a short vignette style of an item that went like this: "if you died five minutes from now, and for the sake of argument I want you to assume that God is real, and God was looking at the "BIG BOOK" that recorded all of your good deeds as well as all of your bad deeds (crimes, violence, etc), where do you think you would really go, to heaven or to hell?"

Some 66.8 percent (N = 1783) indicated they expected to go to heaven. And a third (33.2%, N = 886) expected to go to hell.

There was a difference on this factor in relationship to gang membership. Among non-gang members some 28 percent expected to go to "hell", compared with 42.9 percent among gang members.

INVOLVEMENT IN WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

The survey included the question "have you ever threatened or assaulted someone while working on a legitimate job". Some 13.9 percent (N = 391) answered "yes".

A FOURTH HAVE SOLD DRUGS AT THEIR WORKPLACE

The survey asked "have you ever sold drugs while working on a legitimate job". Here some 26.1 percent (N = 736) answered "yes".

AGE FIRST ARRESTED FOR ANY CRIME

The survey asked the respondents to indicate the age at which they were first arrested for any crime. The data ranged from a low of six years of age to a high of 60. Some important tendencies, however, are evident: over half (58%) reported first being arrested at 13 years of age or younger.

LOW LEVEL INVOLVEMENT IN SATANIC WORSHIP CEREMONIES

The survey asked "have you ever participated in any Satanic worship ceremonies". Some 6.9 percent (N = 192) indicated "yes". Some 14.5 percent (N = 402) indicated "don't know what it is". And the single largest portion of the sample (78.5%, N = 2174) indicated "no".

SOMEWHAT HIGHER LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT IN BLACK MAGIC AND THE OCCULT

The survey asked "have you ever dabbled in black magic or the occult". Here some 10.8 percent (N = 298) indicated "yes". Some 15.7 percent (N = 432) answered "don't know what it is". And some 73.5 percent (N = 2024) answered "no".

VERY LOW LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT IN "CONE OF POWER" SATANIC CEREMONIES

The survey asked "have you ever participated in a cone of power Satanic ceremony". A "cone of power" ceremony is a real and genuine type of Satanic ceremony. Only 2.6 percent (N = 72) of the sample indicated "yes", that they had participated in such a ceremony. Some 20.7 percent (N = 566) indicated "don't know what it is". And 76.6 percent (N = 2090) answered "no".

Immediately following this item was the deception detection item that asked "have you ever participated in a red snapper Satanic ceremony". That item was used during validity analysis to eliminate cases from the national sample.

ETHNICITY IN THE SAMPLE

The ethnic or racial distribution of the sample is indicated in Table 2.

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage Distribution

For Race/Ethnicity in the Sample

Race/Ethnicity Number Percentage

African-American 1102 41.3%

Hispanic/Latino/Mexican/Puerto Rican 253 9.5%

White/Caucasian 987 37.0%

Asian/Chinese 37 1.4%

Native American Indian 83 3.1%

Bi-racial 204 7.7%

As seen in Table 2, the two largest groups are African-Americans and caucasians; representing 41.3% and 37% of the sample respectively.

VICTIMIZING A PREVIOUS EMPLOYER: ONE OUT OF TEN REPORT THIS

The survey asked "have you ever returned to the place of business of a former employer to commit a crime". Some 11.6 percent (N = 319) indicated "yes". The largest share of the sample, however, 88.4 percent (N = 2430) answered "no".

RELIGIOUS SOCIALIZATION IN THE OFFENDER SAMPLE

The survey asked "what religion were in RAISED in by your parents". Some 23.7 percent indicated "Catholic". Some 16 percent indicated "Protestant". Some 3.7 percent indicated "Muslim/Islam". And the single largest proportion of the sample answered "other" (56.6%). We have some insight into this for purposes of interpretation: it appears that many of those indicating "other" would assume that their denomination (Baptist, Lutheran, etc) were simply something other than "Protestant". That is, the offenders seem to lack religious cognition with regard to this issue of classification.

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN THE OFFENDER SAMPLE

The survey asked "what religion do you claim as your own today". Here we see 21.1 percent identifying themselves as "Catholics". Some 14.7 percent as "Protestants". Some 5.2 percent as "Muslims or followers of Islam". Some 41.9 percent again indicated "other". And 17.1 percent indicated "none". It was within the "other" category that the survey included a blank line for the respondents to "write in" the religion they identified with today. Here we found that the typical entry was "Baptist" or some other Christian denomination: the respondents apparently did not know these were classified as "protestant" religions. Thus, it is recommended that future research on the religious socialization and preferences of offenders steer clear of this quagmire of classification and approach the issue more analytically in terms of a wide range of "specific identity options".

Thus, researchers are urged to avoid trying to simply responses from offenders where we may be looking at a more complex issue of cognition: use a long list of possible religious denominations to "choose from". Because only in this way would it be possible to derive a more accurate estimate about religious classification in the offender population.

HAVING CLOSE FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES WHO ARE GANG MEMBERS

This is considered to be one of the most "tell tale" questions in gang research today, because an answer to it often betrays gang affiliation. It does not ask "are you a gang member", which would be a self-report on the deviance of the respondent. Most normal respondents underreport their levels of deviance to researchers. Thus, by asking about the deviance of peers and friends, it is possible to more accurately measure the actual deviance of the respondent.

The survey asked "how many of your close friends and associates are gang members" where the response mode options included: zero, one, two, three, four, five or more.

The results for this item are provided in Table 3.

Table 3

Frequency and Percentage Distribution

For Number of Close Friends and Associates

Who are Gang Members in the Offender Sample

How many of your close

friends and associates

are gang members? Number Percentage

0 1153 42.5%

1 92 3.4%

2 122 4.5%

3 133 4.9%

4 55 2.0%

5 or more 2711 42.6%

As seen in Table 3, our sample is almost evenly divided in terms of those at the far extreme regarding this measurement of integration into gang life. Some 42.5 percent report having no gang friends; while 42.6 percent report having five or more such gang friends.

This factor of association with gang members is the single best known surrogate measure of actual gang membership.

A FIFTH CLAIM THEY WOULD LIKE TO BE IN A PROGRAM THAT WOULD HELP THEM TO GET OUT OF THE GANG

The survey included the yes/no item: "I would like to be in a program that helped me get out of my gang". Some 77.8 percent (N = 1682) answered no; many presumably because they were not in a gang. But some 22.2 percent (N = 480) answered "yes". It will be interesting to revisit this factor in actual gang analysis within the sample.

FIGHTING BEHAVIOR: HIGH GENERALLY IN THE OFFENDER SAMPLE

The survey included a question known to be a predictor of gang membership. It read "How many physical fights have you been in during the last twelve (12) months". The response mode choices were: zero, one, two, three, four, and five or more.

Table 4 provides the results for this item.

Table 4

Frequency and Percentage Distribution

For Number of Physical Fights

The Respondents Were Involved in During the Last Year

How many physical fights

have you been in during the

last twelve (12) months? Number Percentage

0 770 28.4%

1 366 13.5%

2 367 13.6%

3 284 10.5%

4 177 6.5%

5 or more 744 27.5%

As seen in Table 4, again we find the sample divided almost evenly at the polar extremes of this measure of involvement in violence. Some 28.4 percent of the sample had been involved in no such physical fights; while 27.5 percent had been involved in five or more physical fights. It is almost as if a corrections classification system could evenly divide the sample into three nearly equal groups in terms of this aspect of "violence potential": (1) those with low to no level of fighting behavior (28.4% of the population), (2) those with some (1 to 3 fights) violence (37.6%), and (3) those with high levels (4 or more) of this violence potential (34%). This variable is also a known predictor of gang membership according to previous research.

NUMBER OF TIMES SUSPENDED OR EXPELLED FROM SCHOOL

The survey asked "how many times have you been suspended or expelled from school". The response mode choices were: zero, one, two, three, four, and five or more.

Table 5 provides the results for this item.

Table 5

Frequency and Percentage Distribution

For Number of Times Suspended or Expelled

From School in the Offender Sample

How times have you been

suspended or expelled

from school? Number Percentage

0 413 15.1%

1 258 9.5%

2 257 9.4%

3 247 9.1%

4 133 4.9%

5 or more 1420 52.1%

As seen in Table 5, here we get a different kind of distribution entirely, where the sample becomes evenly divided in terms of the high end of this kind of predictor of gang involvement. Half of this offender population (52.1%) report having been suspended or expelled five or more times in the past.

AS EXPECTED: HIGH LEVEL OF INTEGRATION INTO THE DRUG SUBCULTURE IN THIS OFFENDER SAMPLE

The survey included the question "how many of your close friends and associates use illegal drugs" and the response mode choices were: zero, one, two, three, four, and five or more. Again, drug use is a measure of deviance, and normal people have the tendency to underreport their deviance. However, within the offender population generally it is well known that the best measure of actual deviance is not self-report, but rather what "friends and associates" do: reporting on the deviance of one's friends and associates therefore may give a better indication of true levels of involvement in the drug subculture. Basically, what the question measures is level of integration into the drug subculture by having "drug using friends".

Table 6 provides the results for this item.

Table 6

Frequency and Percentage Distribution

For Number of Close Friends and Associates

Who Use Illegal Drugs in the Offender Sample

How many of your close

friends and associates

use illegal drugs? Number Percentage

0 420 15.6%

1 108 4.0%
2 120 4.5%
3 120 4.5%
4 57 2.1%
5 or more 2685 69.3%

As seen in Table 6, again the distribution is skewed towards the high end of this aspect of deviance: over two-thirds of the offender sample are reporting five or more such "drug using friends".

TWO-FIFTHS HAVE SOLD CRACK COCAINE

The survey asked "have you ever sold crack cocaine"? Some 57.2 percent (N = 1592) responded "no". While some 42.8 percent (N = 1193) indicated "yes".

ONE-FIFTH HAVE USED CRACK COCAINE

The survey asked "have you ever used crack cocaine"? Some 80.1 percent (N = 2237) indicated "no". Some 19.9 percent (N = 555) indicated "yes".

CRACK USE NOT MUCH HIGHER THAN METHAMPHETAMINE USE

The survey asked "have you ever used crank (methamphetamine)", and some 81.8 percent answered "no". Some 18.2 percent (N = 507) reported "yes". Thus, it is a kind of drug abuse just slightly below the level reported for using crack cocaine.

LOW PERCENTAGE SELLING CRANK OR METHAMPHETAMINE

The survey asked "have you ever sold crank (methamphetamine)" and here some 17.4 percent (N = 483) answered "yes". Thus, there would appear to be a significant difference in comparing offenders in custody who have sold crack cocaine versus "crank" (meth), and it may be useful to undertake racial comparisons along these lines as well.

A MEASURE OF EXTREME VIOLENCE: FIRING A GUN AT A POLICE OFFICER

The survey included the question "have you ever fired a gun at a police officer". Some 84.5 percent (N = 2340) indicated "no". But some 15.5 percent (N = 429) indicated "yes", that they had previously fired a gun at a police officer. This is believable, as there are numerous situations in larger cities where gun fire is reported by police officers (i.e., shots fired) and fortunately the bullets never hit the intended victim (i.e., stray shots). Still, it is perhaps the highest level of deviance or criminal violence a person can engage in, and is unquestionably a measure of extreme violence potential.

SOME 37.8 PERCENT REPORT HAVING JOINED A GANG

The survey asked "have you ever joined a gang" with yes/no response modes. Some 62.2 percent of the offenders indicated "no", that they had never joined a gang. Some 37.8 percent (N = 1042) reported "yes", that they had previously joined a gang.

At this point in the survey instrument, most of the subsequent questions relate specifically to "gang life" and "gang behavior", or aspects about their gang organization. It is not until the very last page of the survey that questions about "correctional life" appear. Thus, in questions hereinafter about "gang life", we have selected for analysis only that subgroup (N = 1042) who are self-reported gang members.

THE AGE AT WHICH THEY JOINED THE GANG

The survey asked at what age they joined the gang, and the data showed a range from age 1 to 26 years of age. The tendencies were very pronounced for this variable: half (48.5%) had joined on or before the age of 12; some 69.2 percent had joined on or before the age of 13; some 83.2 percent had joined on or before the age of 14; some 92.4 percent had joined on or before the age of 15. Only 7.6 percent joined after the age of 16.

TYPE OF GANG JOINED

The survey asked the respondents to write in the name of the gang they joined: some N = 987 gang names showed up, some were obviously the same, just spelled differently ("Gangster Disciples", "Gangsta Disciples", "GDs", "GDN", etc). There is no particularly value in presenting this long list of well known gangs including the gamut of gangs in America today.

Suffice it to say that this list included well known Crip and Blood sets; various "People" and "Folk" gangs; motorcycle gangs; and white racist extremist gangs (Aryan Brotherhood, KKK, etc).

GANG CLASSIFICATION BY TYPE OF GANG ALLIANCE

The survey did ask the respondents what type of gang they joined where the response mode options were: Crips, Bloods, People/Brothers, Folks, Surenos, Nortenos, and Other. Table 7 provides the distribution for this variable.

Table 7

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Type of Gang Alliance

Among the Subsample of Gang Members in the Offender Sample

Type of Gang Number Percentage

Crips 229 24.4%

Bloods 104 11.1%

People/Brothers 47 5.0%

Folks 312 33.2%

Surenos 77 8.2%

Nortenos 15 1.6%

Other 155 16.5%

As seen in Table 7, Crips/Bloods are nearly proportional (35.5%) to the representation of People/Folks (38.2%) in this sample of gang members.

TWO-THIRDS ARE STILL ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THEIR GANGS

The survey asked the follow-up question "are you currently a member of any gang". The results indicated that two-thirds (66.8%, N = 669) are in fact still active gang members. A third (N = 333, 33.2%) indicated they are not currently members of the gang (i.e., inactive or former gang members).

The names of the specific types of gangs that they currently belonged to basically paralleled the same gangs they originally joined.

RECURRENT TREND: HALF HAVE TRIED TO QUIT THE GANG

A tendency that has shown itself to be identical in nature to previous gang research is the trend in the current data where about half of the gang members have actually tried to quit gang life. The survey asked "have you ever attempted to quit the gang", and some 45.1 percent (N = 460) indicated "yes". Similarly, the other half (54.9%, N = 559) indicated "no", that they had not tried to quit the gang.

TWO-THIRDS HAVE HELD SOME TYPE OF LEADERSHIP POSITION IN THE GANG

The survey asked "have you ever held rank or any leadership position in your gang". Some 66.9 percent (N = 685) indicated "yes". A third (N = 339, 33.1%) indicated that they had never held any rank or leadership position in their gang.

FOR MOST GANG MEMBERS: VIOLENCE WAS INVOLVED IN THEIR INITIATION INTO THE GANG

The survey asked "was any violence involved in your initiation into your gang". Some N = 286 (27.9%) indicated "no", thus indicating that they did not have to commit violence or receive some type of ritualistic violence (e.g., beating-in) to join their gang. However, over two-thirds of the gang members (N = 738, 72.1%) reported that violence was in fact involved in their initiation into the gang.

ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF THE GANG MEMBERS REPORT THEIR GANG HAS A SPECIAL LANGUAGE CODE

Comparable to previous research of this nature, most gangs today appear to have their own specialized linguistic code. These are phrases and coded words that have special meaning only to the members of the gang. Some use encryption methods as well; it is even more common to have words or slogans that have "double meanings" so that gang members can communicate to each other in the presence of others and still conceal the meaning of their communication to each other.

The survey asked "does your gang have a special language code". Some 35.9 percent (N = 363) indicated "no". Yet 64.1 percent (N = 648) indicated "yes", that their gang did in fact have such a special language code.

TWO-THIRDS REPORT THAT THEIR GANG HAS WRITTEN RULES ITS MEMBERS

The survey asked "does your gang have written rules for its members". Some 30.1 percent (N = 301) indicated "no". Yet some 69.9 percent (N = 699) indicated "yes", that their gang does in fact have written rules for its members.

ABOUT HALF REPORT THEIR GANG HOLDS REGULAR WEEKLY MEETINGS

The survey asked "does your gang hold regular weekly meetings". Some 42.9 percent (N = 424) indicated "no". Some 57.1 percent (N = 565) indicated "yes", that their gang does in fact hold regular weekly meetings.

ABOUT A FOURTH REPORT THEIR GANG REQUIRES REGULARLY WEEKLY DUES

The survey asked "does your gang require its members to pay regular weekly dues". This was a more restrictive question from previous research that inquired into whether a gang required just "regular dues" or something equivalent to "monthly dues". "Weekly dues" was intentional to be able to identify the kind of gang that both meets on a weekly basis and expects "dues paid" on a weekly basis.

The results show that 23.2 percent (N = 229) of the gang members in the sample indicate that their gang requires its members to pay regularly weekly dues. Most (N = 759, 76.8%) responded "no" that their gang does not require regular weekly dues (this leaves open the possibility for monthly or other equivalent types of support to the gang but on a less frequent basis than weekly).

MOST VOLUNTARILY JOINED THE GANG, THEY WERE NOT "RECRUITED"

Those who volunteer for a gang are generally more "hard core" or more highly committed to gang life, and as a profile are less likely to try and quit the gang: that is the message from previous research.

The survey achieved remarkable internal consistency with regard to this type of variable because two different versions of the same question were included in Project GANGMILL. The first version of this "volunteering vs. being recruited" survey question will be addressed here. A second question is addressed later in the item order, towards the end of the survey and basically generates the same kind of trend (i.e., most volunteered to get into the gang, they were not "recruited").

This first item on entry to the gang was a true/false statement: "I volunteered to join my gang, I was not recruited to join". Some 72.9 percent (N = 730) indicated "true": that they volunteered to get admittance to their gang. Some 27.1 percent (N = 272) responded "false": signifying that they may have been recruited into the gang (but it also leaves open the possibility of being "born into the gang", or "being raised into the gang" through gang-corrupted family structures, etc).

MOST REPORT THEIR GANG HAS ADULT LEADERS WHO HAVE BEEN IN THE GANG FOR MANY YEARS

There are many juveniles and youths involved in gangs today, but a fundamental fact of "gang life" in America today seems to be that most of the gang leaders are older adult hardened criminals. The survey sought to test this directly.

The survey asked "does your gang have adult leaders who have been in the gang for many years". Only 12.8 percent (N = 127) indicated "no". Most of the gang members in this study (N = 868, 87.2%) indicated "yes": that their gang has adult leaders who have been in the gang for many years.

CULTS VS. GANGS: ARE THE GANG MEMBERS FREE TO DO WHAT THEY WANT TO, OR DO THEY DO WHAT THE GANG EXPECTS OF THEM?

The survey was designed to test a growing concern about American gangs today: the issue of whether members are so tightly controlled that they basically do what the cult leader orders them to, or whether they are free to engage in any activity they so desire (i.e., a non-cult environment).

The survey included the question: "which best describes you: ___ Whatever the gang expects of me, I do ___ I do whatever I want regardless of what the gang expects me to do". The data suggest about a fourth of

the gang members in America today describe their gang more like a cult: where they lack the freedom to do what they want to do, and are tightly restricted by the requirements of their gang organization.

The results showed that 23.6 percent (N = 222) responded "whatever the gang expects of me, I do". While in three-fourths of the cases (N = 718, 76.4%) the gang member indicated "I do whatever I want regardless of what the gang expects me to do".

ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE OF GANG MEMBERS WHO HAVE NO POLICE RECORD

A problem for gang research has always been the issue of gang members who lack any criminal record: i.e., they have never been arrested for any offense. It is easy to comb through corrections and law enforcement arrest files to get a rough approximation of how many gang members may exist in a particular jurisdiction, but this does not give an accurate estimate of the actual gang population in America because not all gang members get arrested.

The present study was designed to give an estimate regarding this issue of gang members with "clean records". This kind of research question is of critical importance for a number of reasons. So the survey asked "estimate what percentage of all of the members of your gang really have a clean police record (i.e., they have never been arrested for anything in their entire life)". The results showed great variability, ranging literally from a low of zero percent to a high of 100 percent. As for our best estimate regarding this factor, the mean or statistical average for this factor was that 19.5 percent of gang members in America fit this profile: and, in theory, could pass screening processes for sensitive jobs such as working in law enforcement.

A THIRD OF GANG MEMBERS REPORT THEIR PARENTS ARE UNAWARE OF THEIR GANG MEMBERSHIP

Concealing gang membership from parents is a routine necessity for some gang members; for others, perhaps from more dysfunctional families, gang membership is less of a concern. The survey asked "do your parents know that you are a member of a gang". The results showed that a third of the gang members (N = 334, 33.9%) responded "no": that they had effectively concealed their gang membership from their parents. Thus, their parents in these cases of gang membership concealment could be expected to show up at court or a police station vigorously protesting any claim from the criminal justice system that their child was responsible for a "gang crime".

However, the data also show that in two-thirds of the cases (N = 651, 66.1%) the parents were in fact aware of the gang membership of their children: according to these gang members anyhow.

It will be seen, shortly, that a separate item measuring almost the same variable in the survey resulted in almost identical response patterns from the sample under analysis here. This was another type of internal validity precaution taken in the survey instrument, and the results for the present sample indicate high validity.

DO GANGS SELL CRACK COCAINE? WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Some time ago the professional criminological gang research literature included a piece of federally funded gang research from a very prominent and well-known gang researcher which basically claimed --- although limited to the Los Angeles scene --- that gangs not involved in crack sales. Obviously, while that particular piece of research has never enjoyed critical commentary, ongoing research by the NGCRC has tended to show quite the obverse: that gangs are routinely involved in the sale of crack cocaine, including in Los Angeles.

The survey asked "has your gang ever sold crack cocaine". The results showed that 82.2 percent (N = 825) of the respondents responded "yes": that their gang has sold crack cocaine. Only 17.8 percent (N = 179) indicated "no": that they gang had never sold crack cocaine.

ABOUT HALF OF THE GANG MEMBERS HAVE A PERMANENT GANG TATTOO

If you expect to be able to identify gang members by inspecting them for permanent tattoos that are clearly "gang signs" or "gang symbols", what the present research indicates is that you will be able to identify only about half of the gang members in your jurisdiction that way.

The survey asked "do you have a permanent gang tattoo". The results showed that 54.9 percent (N = 559) had no gang tattoo. Some 45.1 percent (N = 460) did in fact have a permanent gang tattoo.

THE VALIDITY QUESTION: SECOND MEASUREMENT OF PARENTAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THEIR GANG MEMBERSHIP

The second question about whether their parents knew they were gang members was included at this point in the item order of the survey instrument. The question asked "do your parents know that you are a member of a gang", and it was therefore identical to a the item located three questions before in the same instrument.

The results are highly consistent with the previous item: two thirds of the respondents (65.8%, N = 650) indicated "yes" that their parents were aware of their gang members; while a third (34.2%, N = 338) indicated "no" (i.e., that they have been able to conceal their gang membership from their parents.

AN INTERESTING FINDING: TWO-THIRDS WOULD GIVE UP GANG LIFE FOR A STEADY SECURE JOB OPPORTUNITY

The survey asked "would you consider leaving the gang for a steady, secure job opportunity". Some 68.9 percent (N = 670) answered "yes": they would consider leaving the gang for such an employment opportunity. Still, 31.1 percent (N = 302) would not give up gang life even if they were offered a steady, secure job opportunity.

A THIRD REPORT VIOLENCE IS USED AGAINST MEMBERS OF THEIR OWN GANG

The survey asked "do you use violence against members of your own gang". The results showed that 65.8 percent (N = 644) responded "no". Yet a third of the respondents (N = 335, 34.2%) indicated "yes".

OVER A THIRD HAVE BEEN "VIOLATED" BY THEIR OWN GANG

Most of the time, a "violation" means a physical beating or some other type of ritualized violence against members of the same gang; typically, because the member violated a "rule" of the gang. But there are cases where the violation also encompasses "fines" and sanctions other than violence.

The survey asked "have you ever been violated (i.e., physically punished with violence) by members of your own gang". Here some 36 percent (N = 356) reported "yes": that they had been previously violated.

THE ULTIMATE INTERNAL SANCTION AGAINST MEMBERS OF A GANG: KILLING ONE OF THEIR OWN MEMBERS

The survey asked "has your gang ever killed one of its own members". Most of the respondents (71%, N = 687) said "no". But 29 percent (N = 281) indicated "yes": that their gang had in fact killed one of its own members.

THE UNEXPLOITED METHOD OF GETTING GANG MEMBERS TO QUIT THEIR GANG: THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY

It is often said that the power of informal social control exceeds that of formal options, at least in terms of impact on offenders. The survey therefore included the item: "the only person who could convince me to leave a gang is (check ONE only) ___My family ___My crew ___My teacher ___My minister ___My girlfriend/boyfriend ___Other".

The option for "my family" revealed the greatest potential likelihood for convincing a gang member to leave the gang: 43.5 percent (N = 357). Only 5.5 percent indicated "my crew"; less than one percent (0.9%) indicated "my teacher"; and only 3 percent indicated "my minister". Thus, ministers and teachers combined would have only a negligible role to play in convincing gang members to leave their gang in comparison with the role of their own families. Some 21 percent indicated "my girlfriend/boyfriend"; and 26.1 percent indicated "other".

HALF OF GANG MEMBERS THINK A "GANG ANONYMOUS" PROGRAM COULD WORK

The survey include the true/false statement "a gang anonymous group could be influential in helping gang members become ex-gang members". Some 45.8 percent responded "false". Yet 54.2 percent (N = 518) responded "true": indicating their belief that perhaps something like GANGANON could work in helping gang members sever their ties to gang life.

HALF REPORT THEIR GANG ONLY SPEAKS IN ENGLISH

The survey included the true/false statement "my gang speaks only in English". Some 48.7 percent (N = 484) responded "false". The other half (51.3%, N = 509) responded "true".

THE FAMILY AS AN ACCOMPLICE TO THE GANG PROBLEM

Not atypically gang members have a sibling or close family member in the same gang; or even in rival gangs. Thus, the potential previously discussed about using the family to encourage gang members to quit the gang must be viewed in light of the extent to which the actual families of gang members have such a potential for "good" as opposed to being an accomplice to the gang problem itself.

The survey included the true/false statement: "some of my family are also in my gang". The results suggest gang life really is a "family affair": some 61 percent (N = 610) responded "true", that they have family in their gang. Some 39 percent (N = 390) responded "false": that they do not have family in their gang.

MOST WILL FIGHT ANOTHER GANG OF THE SAME RACE

The survey included the true/false statement: "my gang will fight another gang of the same race". Only 11.1 percent (N = 109) responded "false". The vast majority of respondents (88.9%, N = 875) indicated "true": that their gang would in fact fight another gang of the same race.

HALF REPORT THEIR GANGS HAVE USED INCENDIARY OR EXPLOSIVE DEVICES

The survey included the question "Involving gang activities, has your gang ever used Molotov cocktails or explosives". A half of the respondents (51.4%, N = 497) answered "yes". The other half (48.6%, N = 470) indicated "no".

GANG IS EASIER TO LEAVE BEHIND THAN THE FAMILY OF THE GANG MEMBER

Over the years any gang expert is going to be approached by a worried parent who just discovered their child was in a gang and asks the expert "what should I do?" Those gang experts who operate under a "zero tolerance approach" tend to counsel the parent to the following effect: tell the gang member he/she must decide immediately (1) the family, or (2) the gang; and if they pick the gang, then go live with the gang: they would be forbidden from coming back to the family residence until they give up gang life. The present research would suggest that was indeed very good advice.

The survey included the question "which do you think would be easier to leave behind forever (CHECK ONE ONLY): ___Your gang ___Your family ___Both equally easy to leave behind forever".

What the results show is that 78.4 percent (N = 746) indicated "the gang" would be easier to leave behind forever. Only 9.5 percent indicated their "family" would be easier to leave behind forever, and clearly there are such gangs like the Aryan Brotherhood where the only way to leave the gang is through death. And finally, some 12.2 percent felt both their family and their gang would be equally difficult to leave behind forever.

JUST OVER HALF HAVE HELD A LEGITIMATE JOB BEFORE

The survey asked "have you ever held a legitimate job working for an employer that was not connected to any gang". Some 59.3 percent (N = 582) indicated "yes", that they had previously held such a legitimate job. Still, some 40.7 percent indicated they had never held a legitimate job before.

It will be useful to use this variable as a baseline for examining gang member activity in the workplace as represented by other employment-related variables in the present study.

ALIENATION IN THE GANG: BROKEN PROMISES

It seems theoretically sound to assume that gangs, like other groups and organizations that people affiliate with, are capable of generating alienation: bad feelings among its members. Several questions addressed this issue of alienation inside the gang.

The survey included the true/false statement: "when I first joined my gang it promised to help meet my financial needs and to watch my back, but once I became a gang member it didn't seem to care what happened to me".

Some 70.4 percent (N = 694) responded false: thereby indicating they were not alienated by false promises made at the time of initially entering the gang.

Yet some 29.6 percent (N = 292) answered "true": indicating that they had in fact experienced such "false promises", and in this fashion also indicated some extent of alienation in their gang life.

ALIENATION IN THE GANG: DISTRUST OF GANG LEADERS

Another related question about alienation inside the gang was the true/false statement: "gang leaders are real slick, they use you to get all they can out of you, so really, they're just like all the other rip-off organizations in society". Three-fourths (74.5%, N = 733) felt this was false. But a fourth of the respondents (25.5%, N = 251) indicated "true" to this question about alienation from gang leadership.

THE SECOND QUESTION ON JOINING VERSUS BEING RECRUITED

At this stage in the item order of the survey instrument we find the second question about joining versus being recruited. The survey included the true/false statement: "I was recruited to join my gang. I didn't ask

to join". Some 71.6 percent (N = 706) indicated "false". Thus, about a fourth (28.4%, N = 280) said that this was true.

THE THIRD QUESTION ON GANG ALIENATION

The survey included the true/false statement: "Gang leaders don't always do what they say they will do, I have lost respect for my gang leaders". Some 72.5 percent (N = 696) responded "false", indicating that there were not alienated in this respect from their gang. Yet 27.5 percent (N = 264) answered "true", indicating some degree of alienation from their gang leaders in this respect.

HALF REPORT THEIR GANG HAS SOLD METHAMPHETAMINE

The survey asked "has your gang ever sold crank(methamphetamine)". Some 46.5 percent (N = 449) said "no". But 53.5% (N = 517) answered "yes". It would seem that this establishes the sales of illegal meth drugs well within the realm of contemporary gang activity in the USA today.

SHOULD THE SECRET SERVICE BE CONCERNED ABOUT GANGS?

The survey included the true/false statement "my gang has members who produce quality counterfeit United States Currency". Three-fourths (74.8%, N = 693) indicated this statement was false. Yet a fourth (25.2%, N = 233) gave a "true" response to this item.

ABOUT A FOURTH REPORT VIDEO PIRACY IN THEIR GANG

The survey included the true/false statement "my gang has members who produce and sell illegal copies of the latest movies made in Hollywood". Three-fourths (76.2%, N = 725) answered "false". But about a fourth (23.8%, N = 227) gave answered "true" to this statement.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONNECTION AND AMERICAN GANGS

The survey included the true/false statement "my gang has members who have connections with crime figures in foreign countries". Half (50.4%, N = 471) indicated this statement was false. But the other half (49.6%, N = 463) indicated that this was true.

THE SERIES OF QUESTIONS ABOUT CORRECTIONAL LIFE

At this point the respondent is on the very last page of the survey instrument, and there are a series of questions here about their adjustment to the correctional institution; or their behavior inside the correctional institution. These "correctional environment" factors will be briefly presented: and in this case represents the larger sample, not just gang members.

NUMBER OF DISCIPLINARY REPORTS RECEIVED IN THEIR CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION

The survey asked "how many disciplinary reports have you had while in this facility? (CHECK ONE CHOICE ONLY) ___0 ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4 ___5 or more". About two-fifths (41.2%, N = 1036) reported having no such disciplinary reports while in custody. Some 11.1 percent reported having one; 9.1 percent had two; 6.3 percent had three; 4.9 percent had four; and 27.4 percent had five or more. It is hypothesized that this behavior of correctional adjustment will vary significantly by gang membership.

OVER A THIRD HAVE BEEN IN A PHYSICAL FIGHT WHILE INCARCERATED

The survey included the question "have you been in a physical fight with anyone while in this facility". Most (63.1%, N = 1651) indicated "no" that they had not been in such a physical fight. Yet 36.9 percent (N = 964) indicated "yes", that they had in fact been involved in a physical fight in their correctional facility.

ABOUT A FIFTH REPORT HAVING STARTED A FIGHT WHILE INCARCERATED

This higher level of aggressiveness, starting a physical fight with someone while incarcerated, like all measures of violence or disruptiveness inside a correctional facility, is expected to vary significantly with gang membership based on previous research along these lines. The survey included the question "did you start a fight or attack someone while in this facility". Some 80.6 percent of the inmates answered "no". But 19.4 percent (N = 506) answered "yes": that they had in fact started a fight or attacked someone while incarcerated.

INMATES CARRYING HOMEMADE KNIVES AND IMPROVISED WEAPONS BEHIND BARS

The survey asked "have you carried a homemade weapon (knife, etc) while in this facility". The majority of the inmates (90.5%, N = 2362) answered "no". But 9.5 percent (N = 247) answered "yes". This behavior is also expected, obviously, to be significantly related to gang membership within the same inmate population.

INMATES WHO HAVE THREATENED STAFF IN THE FACILITY

The survey asked "have you threatened any facility staff member or officer while in this facility". Most (83.3%, N = 2170) answered "no". But 16.7 percent (N = 434) answered "yes", and obviously this level of aggressive inmate behavior is expected to vary significantly when we compare gang members and non-gang members in this inmate population.

LOW LEVEL OF ATTEMPTED DRUG SMUGGLING BEHIND BARS

The survey asked "have you tried to smuggle in any illegal drugs while in this facility". Only 8.9 percent (N = 226) responded "yes" to this question. But it is expected to vary by gang membership given the fact that gangs tend to dominate the drug rackets behind bars today in American correctional institutions.

GANG-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ABOUT CORRECTIONAL ADJUSTMENT

At this point in the item order of the survey instrument a series of questions were included that sought to measure specific aspects of gang life. These factors are addressed now.

FIGHTING WITH RIVAL GANG MEMBERS BEHIND BARS

The survey asked the question "have you fought with any rival gang members while in this facility". Some 27.6 percent of the gang members indicated "yes".

HALF OF THE GANG MEMBERS STILL COMMUNICATE WITH THEIR OUTSIDE GANG FRIENDS

The survey asked "have you communicated by telephone or letter with your gang friends on the street while in this facility". Some 49.4 percent answered "no". But 50.6 percent answered "yes".

ABOUT HALF REPORT GETTING AIDE FROM THEIR GANG WHILE INCARCERATED

The survey asked "has your gang sent you any money or helped you in any way since you have been in this facility". Some 53.5 percent answered "no". But 46.5 percent indicated "yes".

ONE OUT OF FIVE GANG MEMBERS BEHIND BARS TEND TO PROSELYTIZE

The survey asked "have you helped to recruit anyone into your gang while in this facility". Most (79.2%, N = 774) answered "no". But a fifth of the gang sample (20.8%, N = 203) answered "yes".

NEARLY HALF OF THE GANG MEMBERS BELIEVE THEY MAY HAVE KILLED SOMEONE INTENTIONALLY OR UNINTENTIONALLY

Gang members commonly shoot at rivals and others, often never knowing if they "hit" anything, because they flee the scene. So the survey included the question "do you think you may have ever killed someone intentionally or unintentionally when you got mixed up in gang violence". Some 54.7 percent answered "no". But 45.3 percent (N = 424) answered "yes", indicating they believed that they may in fact have intentionally or unintentionally killed someone while involved in gang violence.

THE SECOND VALIDITY ITEM ON PARENTAL CHURCH ATTENDANCE

The second question on parental church attendance appeared at this point towards the very end of the survey, it was a true/false statement: "my parents do not regularly attend church". Some 45.7 percent answered "false"; and some 54.3 percent answered "true".

RACIAL VARIATIONS IN DRUG USE AND DRUG SALES: CRACK VS. CRANK

Very significant differences ($p < .001$) emerged in comparing sales and usage patterns for the two drugs crack and crank along racial lines. Table 8 summarizes this significant variation.

Table 8

Significant Differences by Race in the Use and Sales

of Two Illegal Drugs: Crack and Crank

(Percentage Distribution by Race)

Crack Crack Crank Crank

Race: Sold Used Used Sold

Black 62.6% 11.2% 4.8% 10.8%

Hispanic 39.6% 29.2% 29.7% 27.4%

White 21.8% 25.9% 27.6% 19.6%

Asian/Chinese 37.8% 24.3% 24.3% 29.7%

American Indian 62.1% 25.6% 24.3% 17.0%

Bi-racial 48.7% 16.2% 21.7% 24.7%

The percentage of offenders in the sample having sold crack varies is highest for Blacks and American Indians, both groups at about 62 percent. Usage of crack, however, is lowest for Blacks (11.2%) and highest actually in the Hispanic/Latino group.

Crank or methamphetamine shows a different pattern. The significant difference in sales and use is that Blacks are far less likely to sell it (only 4.8% report selling meth) and use it (10.8% among Black offenders in the sample).

When we examine the pattern of sales by the gang, using only the subsample of gang members in the study, we see somewhat higher trends in regard to the sales of both crack and crank.

Table 9 therefore examines the gang member sample using two special questions directed at gang members: does their gang sell either crack or crank?

Table 9

Significant Differences by Race in Whether Their Gang Sells

Crack and Crank Among Gang Members in the Sample

(Percentage Distribution by Race)

Does Your Gang Does Your Gang

Sell Crack Cocaine? Sell Crank (meth)?

Percentage Yes Percentage Yes

Race:

Black 87.9% 41.7%

Hispanic 81.6% 64.4%

White 72.3% 56.4%

Asian/Chinese 73.6% 42.1%

American Indian 70.3% 62.9%

Bi-racial 87.2% 66.3%

The differences by race in Table 9 are quite revealing: while sharp differences do exist, it would not be accurate to say that any particular racial category in this instance of gang sales of the two drugs completely dominates or has achieved hegemony or a monopoly on either of these two illegal drugs. As an income-producing crime, sales of the two drugs by their gangs is clearly an activity that cuts across racial boundaries. One of the most interesting trends is in the Bi-racial category: in this instance both drug markets are highly penetrated. Similarly, the Hispanic/Latino group also shows high sales patterns in both drug markets.

GANG MEMBERS ARE MORE PROBLEMATIC IN THE WORKPLACE

While employers routinely hire offenders, some recent research by Wang (2000) suggests there may be concern however about gang members in the workplace. From the analysis undertaken here, that concern may be well founded. Table 10 presents the results of this analysis comparing gang members and non-gang members in the offender population.

Table 10

A Comparison of Gang Members and Non-Gang Members

In the Offender Population Regarding Workplace Crime and Violence

Ever Joined a Gang?

No Yes

Have you ever stolen
anything from an employer
that you ever worked for?

NO 1186 681

YES 516 361

% Yes 30.3% 34.9%

Chi-square = 6.41, p = .01

Have you ever robbed or
burglarized a company
that you ever worked for?

NO 1554 855

YES 137 171

% Yes 8.1% 16.6%

Chi-square = 46.6, p < .001

Have you ever threatened
or assaulted someone
while working on a

legitimate job? NO 1530 813

YES 156 216

% Yes 9.2% 20.9%

Chi-square = 74.4, $p < .001$

Have you ever sold drugs

while working on a

legitimate job? NO 1363 649

YES 330 384

% Yes 19.4% 37.1%

Chi-square = 103.7, $p < .001$

Have you ever returned

to the place of business

of a former employer

to commit a crime? NO 1533 849

YES 145 166

% Yes 8.6% 16.3%

Chi-square = 36.8, $p < .001$

Table 10 reveals that gang members are much more likely to be a problem in the workplace than their non-gang member counterparts in the offender population. Gang members are twice as likely to rob or burglarize the establishment, as well as twice as likely to pose a problem with regard to violence in the workplace (e.g., threatening or assaulting someone).

FEMALE GANG MEMBERS VASTLY OUTNUMBERED BY THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS

Females constituted 11.9 percent of the national sample and in this regard they tend to mirror their same proportion in the type of correctional institutions used for data collection in the present study. At the juvenile and jail level females are generally found in greater proportion than their representation in the ranks of the adult prison population. In the adult prison inmate population, females generally constitute only 5 to 6 percent of the population, a tendency that has held up in the USA at least since statistics were first compiled.

Still, it is necessary to report on gang density among the female inmate population, and therefore the results of the test of gender by gang membership is reported in Table 11.

Table 11

Distribution of Gender by Gang Membership

Ever Joined a Gang?

No Yes % Yes

Gender: Male 1464 936 39.0%

Female 230 100 30.3%

Chi-square = 9.31, p = .002

Table 11 shows that the gang density levels for females are certainly much higher than found in the open population (high schools, community surveys, etc), that both the percentage and actual numbers of gang members are for the most part male in composition. Still, inside correctional institutions, what the gang problem for females may signal is a change in the prison inmate culture that has traditionally been attributed to female inmates in America. With the gang problem, prison culture changes dramatically.

So while Table 11 confirms what most gang experts have known for some time (e.g., gangbanging is primarily a male enterprise), females do continue to play an active role in gangs today.

FORCIBLE SEX AND INCEST

It was reasonable from previous research to hypothesize that forcible sex patterns and incest would vary significantly by gender. The analysis reported here looked first at gender and then at the effects of gang membership as well. Table 12 presents the findings for ever forcing someone to have sex by gender.

Table 12

The Distribution of Forcing Someone to Have Sex

by Gender of Respondent

Among a Large Sample of Confined Offenders

Gender of Respondent

Male Female

Have you ever forced

someone to have sex

with you? NO 2230 317

YES 251 17

% Yes 10.1% 5.0%

Chi-square = 8.63, p = .003

As seen in Table 12, about one out of ten of the male inmates have forced someone to have sex with them, compared to only one out of twenty of the female inmates. It is in Table 13 that we see the pattern of over half of the female inmates reporting they have been victims of forcible sex.

Table 13

The Distribution of Having Been Forced by Someone Else

To Have Sex With Them in Relationship to Gender

Among a Large Sample of Confined Offenders

Gender of Respondent

Male Female

Have you ever been

forced by someone

else to have sex

with them? NO 2116 151

YES 356 185

% Yes 14.4% 55.0%

Chi-square = 314, p < .001

As seen in Table 13, while 14.4 percent of the male inmates have experienced forcible sex on the "victim" side of the relationship, this rises to 55 percent for the female inmates. This is a very remarkable and significant difference by gender.

Incest experiences are also shown to be higher among female inmates. These results are provided in Table 14. As seen in Table 14, some 7.8 percent of the male inmates report such incestuous relationships, compared to 12.2 percent among the female inmates.

Table 14

The Distribution for Incest by Gender

Among a Large Sample of Confined Offenders

Gender of Respondent

Male Female

Have you ever had
sex with someone in
your immediate
family? NO 2273 295

YES 193 41

% Yes 7.8% 12.2%

Chi-square = 7.39, p = .007

These same factors were examined in relationship to having ever joined a gang. Having been forced to have sex with someone, and the incest measure, were both not significant in relationship to gang membership. But the forcible sex measure was significant and is reported in Table 15. Table 15 shows that forcing someone to have sex is in fact higher among gang members (12.4%) than among non-gang members (7.8%).

Table 15

Distribution of Forcing Someone to Have Sex

by Gang Membership in a Large Sample of Confined Offenders

Ever Join a Gang?

No Yes

Have you ever forced

someone to have sex

with you? NO 1575 904

YES 135 129

%Yes 7.8% 12.4%

Chi-square = 15.6, p < .001

THE OCCULT/SATANIC DABBLER IN RELATIONSHIP TO GANG MEMBERSHIP

These have often been conceived of as being two separate types of "threats" inside correctional institutions and in the public as well. Actually, the research reported here shows there is substantial overlap. Further, it will be shown that gang members are actually more likely to report such involvement than non-gang members. Early analysis on this issue was reported elsewhere (American Jails Magazine, Feb., 2000).

Table 16 shows the distribution of having ever participated in a Satanic worship ceremony in relationship to gang membership. This shows that while among non-gang members some 5.4 percent report having

"dabbled" in Satanic practices, this rises to 9.1 percent among gang members. The response mode of "Don't know what it is" is appropriate in this kind of survey item, because Satanic worship ceremonies are a kind of advanced and specialized deviance, which even among confined criminal offenders may be something that many are simply no even remotely familiar with.

Table 16

Distribution of Involvement in Satanic Practices

By Having Ever Joined a Gang

In a Large Sample of Confined Offenders

Ever Join a Gang?

No Yes

Have you ever participated

in any Satanic worship

ceremony? NO 1346 789

YES 91 94

% Yes 5.4% 9.1%

DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS 245 141

Chi-square = 14.2, p = .001

Related to the deviant subculture of Satanism is the dabbling in "black magic" and the occult. Here again, the wealth of the prevailing literature on this issue, while admittedly not research based as in the present investigation, has tended to suggest that this, like devil-worship, etc, has nothing to do with and no relationship whatsoever to gang membership. Our research challenges such previous theoretically-based proclamations about this issue and provides strong evidence of how this kind of "hard core deviance" is in fact related to gang membership.

Table 17 provides the results of the test examining the variable "have you ever dabbled in black magic or the occult" in relationship to having ever joined a gang. As seen in Table 17, while some 8.9 percent of the inmates who have never joined a gang report this kind of previous involvement in "black magic" or the occult, this kind of deviant activity actually rises to 13.8% in the gang member population. So anyone who suggests that these types of deviance (occult vs. gang involvement) are unrelated needs to reconsider their myopic analysis, or begin to look at the kind of investigation strategy reported here.

Table 17

Distribution for Involvement in Black Magic and the Occult

in Relationship to Having Ever Joined a Gang

In a Large Sample of Confined Offenders

Ever Join a Gang?

No Yes

Have you ever dabbled

in "black magic" or

the occult? NO 1247 739

YES 150 141

%Yes 8.9% 13.8%

DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS 278 141

Chi-square = 17.3, $p < .001$

Those who investigate deviance and crime know that language betrays the value system and shows exposure to the type of socialization a person has had. In other words, knowledge of "gang language" itself is often an indicator of exposure to the risk of gang involvement, simply because there are some key words and phrases that the meaning of which tend to be known only to those inside these types of deviant or criminal organizations. For example, "Crippin ain't easy but it sure is fun" is a phrase Crip gang members often use, and it is not an elaborately encoded message. But the cognitive knowledge of what the significance of the intentional spelling error of "glocc" means when they really mean "glock" would show a subtle encoding cognition of how Crip gang members have a bizarre superstitious behavior in avoiding the spelling of any word where a "c" is followed by a "k": because it would signify, in their minds, "crip killer".

For the symbolism and encoded messages found in "slogans" of gangs, or those involved in the occult, and even those involved in political extremism/terrorism, it is possible to field test this matter. One could go anywhere in the general population and perform this kind of field experiment described here. For example, on a military base, on a Post Board in a highly travelled area for foot traffic, one could put up the symbols: "7 4 Run It, B.O.S., with a little Star of David", which translated means "Gangster Disciples run it, the Brothers of the Struggle, folks gang". There are three kinds of persons who will walk past this visual indicator of a gang message: (1) the person who walks by and sees it and keeps going without any indication of understanding what it means is someone who has probably never been exposed to gangs and the meaning of their symbols, (2) the person who walks by and kind of does a "double-take", looks at it again, is someone who might be knowledgeable about gang-life, it could be someone who works in law enforcement and has a legitimate knowledge of these symbols, it could be someone who understands the symbols from growing up in a neighborhood where the symbols were used, it clearly would indicate the symbols "have meaning" for such a person who looks again at the message, and finally (3) there is the person who walks by and not only does a "double take", by looking again at the message, but looks around and makes sure no one is in imminent distance to observe them, and they write over the Gangster Disciple message with their own gang symbols.

Let us examine this issue now in relationship to a real example of hard-core deviance: knowledge about what a "cone of power ceremony" is. The astute reader will recall that this variable about "have you participated in a cone of power Satanic ceremony" was followed up with a question that measured a non-existent such ceremony which was used to eliminate cases felt to be deceptive in the present research. In the deviant subculture of satanism, there really is a "cone of power" ceremony, and that is what it is called. The basic thrust of such a "cone of power" satanic ceremony, is that those involved meet in a group, in a circle, with special colored candles, etc, and they try to invoke the Devil (i.e., Satan) to punish their enemies, etc.

Table 18 presents the results for having ever participated in a "cone of power" satanic ceremony in relationship to having ever joined a gang.

Table 18

Distribution for Involvement in Cone of Power Satanic Ceremonies

in Relationship to Having Ever Joined a Gang

in a Large Confined Offender Sample

Ever Joined a Gang?

No Yes

Have you ever participated

in a "cone of power"

Satanic ceremony? NO 1267 783

YES 27 39

% Yes 1.6% 3.8%

DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS 359 195

Chi-square = 14.3, p = .001

As seen in Table 18, there is in fact a low level of this extreme aspect of deviance even inside the confined offender population in the United States. However, what is most interesting about the results presented in Table 18 is that this type of person who has had a genuine exposure to this kind of deviant activity, is actually more likely to be a gang member as well. There are not many in the offender population who fit this profile of having participated in a "cone of power" Satanic ceremony, but among those who have been involved in this extreme form of deviance, they are actually more likely to have been in a gang as well. As seen in Table 18, among those who had never joined a gang, only 1.6 percent report having participated in a "cone of power" ceremony; but this rises to 3.8 percent among those who are gang members.

As a postscript to this issue, we can report that we had more than a small problem with getting approval to use the survey instrument because of the fact that it included such questions about Satanism. For years we had been asking questions about sex, incest, violence, killing, and various forms of deviance (drug abuse, etc) and crime, but some of the facilities we had traditionally been able to use for data collection purposes objected to the inclusion of such questions about Satanism. For example, the second largest juvenile detention center in the United States had always participated in our surveys because we provide valuable "free service" to these same facilities in the form of useful research reports custom-tailored to their use, that they can use. But at this particular temporary juvenile detention facility the chief psychologist who reviews research access in this case, after years of previous access, denied our access because we would not remove the questions about Satanism. Before accepting the fact that we would not have access to that facility because of the devil worship questions, we posed the question to the psychologist "would it be okay to substitute questions about torturing animals for the devil worship questions" and the psychologist replied

"that would be fine". Obviously, we did not actually agree to the substitution of items. So our advice to other researchers is that if you are going to use such questions about satanism or the occult, expect to experience obstructions and closed doors where you previously found easy access for purposes of data collection. You may end up concluding it is not worth dealing with this kind of research taboo if it limits your access to the larger gang population.

GANGBANGING INSIDE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Gang members are able to continue to gangbang inside correctional institutions is what the literature tends to show. Thus, the present study examined the extent to which security problems inside correctional institutions can be accounted for by the confined gang members in these same facilities. Much of what we report here is very consistent with previous findings along these lines: gang members inside the correctional population pose risks and threats far above those represented by inmates who are not gang members.

Table 19 examines disciplinary reports in relationship to gang membership. Disciplinary reports are a useful measure of the extent to which inmates pose problems of security, but there are actually better measures that we will also be examining here as well.

Table 19

Distribution of the Number of Disciplinary Reports

by Gang Membership Among a Large Sample of Confined Offenders

Ever Joined a Gang?

No Yes

How many disciplinary reports

have you had while in

this facility? 0 739 278

1 165 112

2 137 86

3 68 84

4 68 52

5 or more 323 357

Chi-square = 128, $p < .001$

Basically, what Table 19 shows is that while half of the non-gang member inmates (50.8%) have had one or more disciplinary reports during their stay, that among gang members in the same facility some 71.4 percent have had one or more disciplinary reports. Now admittedly, all of the disciplinary problems in

correctional institutions cannot be explained by gang membership, but the tendency is for gang membership to significantly differentiate this aspect of adjustment to the correctional institution.

Fighting behavior among inmates inside a correctional institution is widespread due to the nature of such environments. But our research shows that this is a behavior that is in fact significantly differentiated by gang membership among the same inmates. Table 20 shows the results of this test.

Table 20

Distribution of Being in a Physical Fight With Anyone

While Confined in a Correctional Institution

by Ever Being a Gang Member

in a Large Sample of Confined Offenders

Ever Join a Gang?

No Yes

Have you been in a

physical fight with

anyone while in this

facility? NO 1133 480

YES 431 517

% Yes 27.5% 51.8%

Chi-square = 154.1, $p < .001$

As seen in Table 20, gang members are nearly twice as likely to report having been in a physical fight while in confinement when compared to their non-gang member counterparts in the inmate population. This is a very significant difference between these two groups of confined offenders. In other words, gang members are much more likely to be involved in fighting behavior than inmates who are not gang members.

Somewhat more serious than simply being involved in a fight is the issue of actually starting a fight or intentionally initiating a violent attack against another person while in custody. This analysis in terms of comparing gang members and non-gang members in the inmate population is provided in Table 21. Again, the results are quite dramatic and statistically very significant.

Table 21

Distribution of Starting a Fight or Attacking Someone

By Having Ever Joined a Gang

in a Large Sample of Confined Offenders

Ever Join a Gang?

No Yes

Did you start a fight

or attack someone while

in this facility? NO 1370 691

YES 191 304

% Yes 12.2% 30.5%

Chi-square = 130.5, $p < .001$

As seen in Table 21, gang members are more than twice as likely to initiate violence within the correctional population when compared to inmates who have never joined a gang. Those who have never joined a gang are showing a rate of 12.2 percent for starting a fight or attacking someone while in the correctional facility. This rises to 30.5 percent for inmates who have ever joined a gang. The difference is very significant ($p < .001$).

There are an incredible number of felony and misdemeanor crimes that occur inside American correctional institutions that are simply never registered, nor reported, nor ever show up in the FBI's Uniform Crime Report. One reason, at least at the state level, is that often state laws require the prison system to pay for the prosecution: i.e., reimburse the county in which the correctional institution is located if a prosecution is initiated. This provides a financial disincentive for the prosecution of many crimes behind bars. Inmates receive, therefore, administrative sanctions: time in segregation, loss of privileges, loss of good time, etc. No one really knows how much "crime" goes on among inmates behind bars.

An inmate who carries a concealed weapon such as a "shiv" or a "shank" is an example of a crime that occurs in a correctional institution. Table 22 tests whether this kind of self-reported crime is related to gang membership. As seen in Table 22, this relationship is very significant ($p < .001$), suggesting gang members are much more likely to engage in this kind of offense pattern behind bars than non-gang members. These results show that among inmates who have never joined a gang, only 4.5 percent report having carried such an improvised weapon, compared to 16.9 percent for gang members.

Table 22

Distribution of Carrying a Homemade Weapon

By Having Ever Joined a Gang

in a Large Sample of Confined Offenders

Ever Join a Gang?

No Yes

Have you carried a

homemade weapon

(knife, etc) while

in this facility? NO 1490 826

YES 71 168

% Yes 4.5% 16.9%

Chi-square = 109.2, $p < .001$

More common, apparently, than carrying illegal weapons behind bars is the offense pattern of threatening correctional officers or other staff inside correctional facilities. Table 23 examines this factor of "threatening staff members" in relationship to gang membership. Again, as seen in Table 23, gang members are more than twice as likely to engage in this type of disruptive behavior behind bars than are non-gang members. While some 10.3 percent of those who had never joined a gang reported threatening staff, this rises to 26 percent among gang members.

Table 23

Distribution of Threatening Facility Staff

By Having Ever Joined a Gang

in a Large Sample of Confined Offenders

Ever Join a Gang?

No Yes

Have you threatened

any facility staff

member or officer while

in this facility? NO 1396 734

YES 162 259

% Yes 10.3% 26.0%

Chi-square = 108.2, $p < .001$

Finally, the crime of attempting to smuggle illegal drugs into the correctional facility is examined in Table 24 in relationship to gang membership. This one act would actually constitute two separate felony crimes:

drug possession and the introduction of contraband to a correctional facility. Table 24 shows that among inmates who had never joined a gang, that 4.7 percent report trying to smuggle in illegal drugs. But this rises to 14.9 percent among gang members.

Table 24

Distribution of Attempting to Smuggle Drugs Into the Facility

By Having Ever Joined a Gang

in a Large Sample of Confined Offenders

Ever Join a Gang?

No Yes

Have you tried to

smuggle in any illegal

drugs while

in this facility? NO 1437 844

YES 71 148

%Yes 4.7% 14.9%

Chi-square = 78.0, $p < .001$

ALIENATION INSIDE THE GANG: ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL TO DIVERT MEMBERS FROM THE GANG

Gang life is organizational life, and there is no organization that does not have "problems", including the problem of alienation. The purpose of this section is to provide an analysis of whether aspects of this alienation inside the gang, or alienation from the gang, is a variable that might be exploited by larger society in terms of tertiary prevention/intervention: getting them to "drop their flag", getting them to quit the gang. Here, obviously, we are focusing on the subsample of gang members only.

The "broken promises" aspect of gang alienation was measure in the survey by the true/false survey item: "When I first joined my gang it promised to help me meet my financial needs and to watch my back, but once I became a gang member it didn't seem to care what happened to me". Table 25 examines whether this "broken promises" variable could account for differences in whether the same gang members would like to be in a program that would help them get out of the gang.

Table 25

Distribution of Experiencing the "Broken Promises" Alienation

by Whether The Same Gang Members Would Like to Be

in a Program That Helped Them Get Out of the Gang

in a Large Sample of Confined Gang Members

When I first joined my

gang it promised to help

meet my financial needs

and to watch my back, but I would like to be in a program

once I became a gang member that helped me get out

it didn't seem to care of my gang.

what happened to me. No Yes %Yes

FALSE 459 188 29.0%

TRUE 150 117 43.8%

Chi-square = 18.5, $p < .001$

Table 25 shows that this aspect of alienation from the gang might be exploited for purposes of a tertiary level of gang intervention (i.e., getting members to quit their gang). There are few known methods to achieve gang dismemberment. There are programs in operation that can assist AFTER someone actually quits the gang (e.g., gang tattoo removal programs, etc), but there are few known that are reporting any success in getting members to quit the gang. Such persons involved in working with gangs can take encouragement from the findings reported here: it would appear that it is feasible to achieve some remarkable results where the program goal is to get members to defect from their gang. What Table 25 shows is that among those gang members who have not reported this aspect of "gang alienation", some 29 percent would still like to be in a program that helped them get out of the gang. But this rises to 43.8% for those gang members who report this "broken promises" aspect of gang alienation.

It is simply interesting that about a third of those who have joined a gang would be interested in a program that helped them get out of the gang. Some time ago the Illinois Department of Corrections, in a new strategy to deal with the gang problem behind bars, created a "gang free correctional institution". What it might allow for is for gang members to deactivate or to become inactive, but there has been no evaluation of this kind of initiative.

Table 26 shows another kind of "gang alienation" in relationship to whether the gang members would like to be in a program that helped them to get out of the gang. This is the "exploiting leader" aspect of gang alienation, kind of like having a "bad boss". The way this was measured in the present research is through the true/false survey item as follows: "gang leaders are real slick, they use you to get all they can out of you, so really, they're just like all the other rip-off organizations in society". If you read a book that portrays the social-reality of gang life today, such as Felix Padilla's The Gang as an American Enterprise, a study of Chicago's Latin Kings, you find many examples of this kind of alienation: the tendency for gang members to feel that they are just being exploited, that is that the gang is just another "competitive sector employer" offering low wages and few benefits.

Table 26

Distribution of The Exploitive Leader Aspect of Alienation

in Relationship to Interest in Getting Out of the Gang

in a Large Sample of Confined Gang Members

Gang leaders are real slick,

they use you to get all they can I would like to be in a program

out of you, so really they're that helped me get out

just like all the other rip-off of my gang.

organizations in society. No Yes % Yes

FALSE 480 202 29.6%

TRUE 126 103 44.9%

Chi-square = 18.1, $p < .001$

What Table 26 shows is that among gang members who do not feel their leaders exploit them, some 29.6 percent would still like to be in a program that helped them get out of their gang. However, this rises to 44.9 percent among those gang members who express this "exploitive leader" aspect of gang alienation.

A related type of "gang alienation" is where the gang member loses respect for the leaders of his/her gang. This is the situation where someone lives under an incompetent leader: the leader says he will do something, but then does not do it. Gang members expect their leaders to manifest the slogan "my word is my bond". The survey instrument included the true/false item: "gang leaders don't always do what they say they will do, I have lost respect for my gang leaders". This aspect of "gang alienation" is examined in Table 27.

Thus, Table 27 reveals that among those gang members who have experienced this "incompetent leader" aspect of gang alienation, some 45 percent would like to get into a program that helped them to get out of the gang.

Table 27

Distribution of the "Incompetent Leader" Aspect of Gang Alienation

in Relationship to Interest in Getting Out of the Gang

in a Large Sample of Confined Gang Members

Gang leaders don't always do I would like to be in a program

what they say they will do, that helped me get out

I have lost respect for my of my gang.

gang leaders. No Yes %Yes

FALSE 458 192 29.5%

TRUE 134 110 45.0%

Chi-square = 19.1, $p < .001$

Where these aspects of "gang alienation" take on additional significance is when we simulate inducing defection from the gang under the scenario where society could offer them a "legitimate alternative" (i.e., steady, secure job opportunity). Now obviously it may be a difficult task indeed to both prepare gang members to enter the world of work and actually secure job placements for them. But what is also plainly evident is that they have an enormous level of interest in this "alternative to gang life". And, further, it would seem that level of interest in giving up gang life in favor of legitimate employment exists far in excess of our society's ability to actually intervene in this regard. Still, there are a number of programs in America today that are based on offering some type of employment services to gang members. It is not clear that these programs use "contract programming" or some type of commitment from the gang member to actually "give up" gang life. It may be more reasonable to assume that counseling in such programs could achieve the same net result however.

Table 28 examines the "broken promises" aspect of gang alienation in relationship to whether the gang member would leave the gang for a steady, secure job opportunity.

Table 28

Distribution of the "Broken Promises" Aspect of Gang Alienation

by Whether Gang Members Would Quit the Gang for a Job Opportunity

in a Large Sample of Confined Gang Members

When I first joined my gang

it promised to help meet my

financial needs and to watch

my back, but once I became a Would you consider leaving the

gang member it didn't seem gang for a steady, secure job?

to care what happened to me. NO YES %Yes

FALSE 229 431 65.3%

TRUE 66 216 76.5%

Chi-square = 11.7, p = .001

What is absolutely remarkable about the findings in Table 28 is that somewhere between two-thirds to three-fourths of all gang members in America today might be tempted to give up gang life if some kind of unique social engineering scheme could be put in place to lure them away under the hope of getting them a steady, secure job opportunity. Of course, this potential to systematically dismantle American gangs must be balanced against the earlier findings about how gang members are actually a greater threat to the work place itself. It is therefore an amazing paradox: the one thing that would seemingly on the surface at least eliminate the lion's share of the gang problem in America today is the same thing that gang members have a history of abusing.

The exploitive leader aspect of gang alienation also has a remarkable effect on whether they would consider leaving the gang for a steady, secure job opportunity. These results are shown in Table 29, where there is a twenty percentage point spread. Some 63.2 percent of those who do not feel alienated from "exploitive leaders" in their gang would still defect from the gang if provided a steady, secure job. But this rises to 84.3 percent for those gang members who express alienation from exploitive leaders.

Table 29

Distribution of the "Exploitive Leader" Aspect of Gang Alienation

by Whether Gang Members Would Quit the Gang for a Job Opportunity

in a Large Sample of Confined Gang Members

Gang leaders are real slick,

they use you to get all they

can out of you, so really, Would you consider leaving the

they're just like all the gang for a steady, secure job?

other rip-off organizations NO YES %Yes

in society.

FALSE 259 445 63.2%

TRUE 37 199 84.3

Chi-square = 36.5, p < .001

Table 30 provides the last test along these lines, by examining the effect of the "incompetent leader" aspect of gang alienation on whether the gang members would defect if given a job opportunity. Again, a very significant difference emerges in comparing gang members who do experience this kind of "gang alienation" in terms of whether they would consider leaving the gang for a real job. Some 86 percent of the gang members expressing this kind of gang alienation would consider leaving their gang is what we find in Table 30.

Table 30

Distribution of the "Incompetent Leader" Aspect of Gang Alienation
by Whether Gang Members Would Quit the Gang for a Job Opportunity
in a Large Sample of Confined Gang Members

Gang leaders don't always Would you consider leaving the

do what they say they will gang for a steady, secure job?

do, I have lost respect for NO YES %Yes

my gang leaders.

FALSE 251 418 62.4

TRUE 35 216 86.0

Chi-square = 47.3, $p < .001$

The effects of race and gender might be considered as factors limiting the extent to which gang members would either ever attempt to quit gang life or consider leaving the gang for a steady, secure job opportunity. However, we undertook a race by gender analysis on the very items and we can in fact report that there is no significance that could be found in this regard. In other words, race and gender do not significantly differentiate either actual attempts to leave the gang or whether they would consider leaving the gang for a steady, secure job. In fact, we further tested race and gender in terms of whether the same gang members "would like to be in a program that helped them get out of the gang", and again, no differences emerged.

PROPOSING A GANG DISATTACHMENT PROGRAM

What all of this tends to suggest is the merits of an initiative that could be implemented in a correctional setting on an experimental basis. The primary goal of the program would be to erode existing bonds and ties to their gang. The method of accomplishing this goal would be to first have a type of modern training program that provided portable skills in an area of the economy where ex-inmates might "fit in", so as to make it a realistic endeavor. Most importantly, the program would emphasize larger societal fears and concerns about "gangs" and "gang members" and how gang membership is something that mitigates against occupational success in American society. Thus, in theory at the same time offenders would be learning skills and developing "hope" for their future, they would be confronted with the hard reality that they should rethink their commitment to gang life.

To evaluate such an initiative, the program would have to be offered to all inmates: then simply identify those that were gang members, and within this gang member sample carry out random assignment to achieve a treatment and control group. Two phases of follow-up would be required: (1) institutional life adjustment, and (2) post-release adjustment.

While millions have been spent in vocational training for inmates over the last four decades, much of that initiative was designed with the assumption that training alone would be an effective solution to the ongoing problem of inmate recidivism. While there have been both mixed and promising results on such initiatives, the present proposal is not properly classified as a purely vocational training initiative. Rather, it would simply use vocational training as a springboard or organizational platform for gang disattachment. It is readily possible to conceive of both expensive and inexpensive variations on this kind of proposal. A low, or no cost, model would involve the use of a Task Force of volunteers where at least a minimum intensity level of the proposal could be achieved.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study began by surveying $N = 3,489$ offenders from 22 different correctional institutions in 7 states. By dropping cases that were suspected of inconsistency or deception through validity analysis that was built into the survey design, the usable sample was reduced to $N = 2,865$ respondents. About a thousand of these were gang members ($N = 1,042$). This large size of gang member and non-gang member subsamples allowed for making comparisons along the lines of various issues addressed in this report.

This has been a preliminary report and much further analysis is already underway by individual researchers involved in the study. Thus, further reports can be expected from this research in the future.