Institutionalised Gangs and Violence in Chicago

John M. Hagedorn,
University of Illinois-Chicago,
Great Cities Institute

This report is part of an international research project on children and youth in organised armed violence (COAV) coordinated by Viva Rio, ISER (Instituto de Estudos da Religião) and IANSA (International Action Network on Small Arms). The study presents contextual comparisons of organised armed groups, and the involvement of children and youth within them, in ten countries across four continents. The history, structure and functioning of the groups themselves are discussed, as are the motivations, desires and day-to-day realities of their child and youth members, as well as the common threads in public policy used to deal with the problem. In so doing, the study is a starting point for the much needed discussion of a situation that is too often addressed by state force and repression.

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This report focuses on institutionalised street gangs in Chicago that have been present in poor Black and Hispanic urban communities for over fifty years. The report is divided into three parts. Part One gives a contextualised summary of these groups. Part Two takes a closer look at the human face of this phenomenon, with profiles of individuals involved. Part Three examines possible solutions to the problem, with an evaluation of relevant social programmes and policies.

Introduction and Methodology

This study combines quantitative analysis of US Uniform Crime Report homicide data by city with a variety of qualitative interviews from Chicago, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, and other US cities. The qualitative interviews include 14 new interviews conducted exclusively for this report using the study guidelines. Also used were interviews conducted for sister studies of the history of gangs in Chicago, and for the Harry F. Guggenheim funded study, "Violence, Gangs, and the re-division of space in Chicago," and transcripts of three series of Milwaukee interviews from 1986 to 1992.

Due to guidelines by the University of Illinois-Chicago Institutional Review Board, interviews for this report were carried out with informed consent from approved studies: "History of Gangs in Chicago" and "Violence, Gangs, and the re-division of Space in Chicago." Due to existing guidelines on those studies, only young adults were interviewed concerning their experiences in organized, armed violence as juveniles.

Chicago interviews for this study have taken place with young people in Chicago neighborhoods with the highest rates of violence: Lawndale, Garfield Park, Humboldt Park, Roseland, Robert Taylor Homes Housing Project, Logan Square, and the Back of the Yards. Three interviews were conducted in Garfield Park in co-operation with staff from Operation Ceasefire, a gang violence reduction project. Other interviews have already taken place in several other Chicago neighborhoods for the sister studies and material from those transcripts will be used in the final report for this study.

Interviews with Chicago gang members were conducted at various locations throughout Chicago and in the researcher's office at the University of Illinois-Chicago's Great Cities Institute. For this study, 14 interviews were conducted with young adults who were involved with armed violence as children: Five respondents were Mexican-Americans, one Puerto Rican, and eight were African Americans. Two respondents were female, 11 male. One interview was with three respondents together and another was with two.

In addition, interviews and primary source material on Chicago gangs were analyzed from a study of the history of gangs in Chicago and published on www.gangresearch.net, the researcher's website and historical archive. Prior interviews with 200 Milwaukee gang members were used as a comparative group in the search for common themes. Informal interviews with staff of Operation Ceasefire and Street Level Youth Media were conducted for the final section of this report.

All interviews were taped and transcribed and then analyzed using HyperResearch™, a qualitative software package.

I . CONTEXTUALISED SUMMARY OF COAV

Area of Study Profile

Chicago is the third largest city in the United States, with a population of 3,000,000. Chicago was the nation's manufacturing center for steel, machine tools, and meatpacking throughout the 20th century. After attracting millions of Eastern European immigrants in the early 20th century, Chicago became a beacon for African American migrants and Mexican immigrants who streamed into the city to work in higher paid, unionized manufacturing jobs.

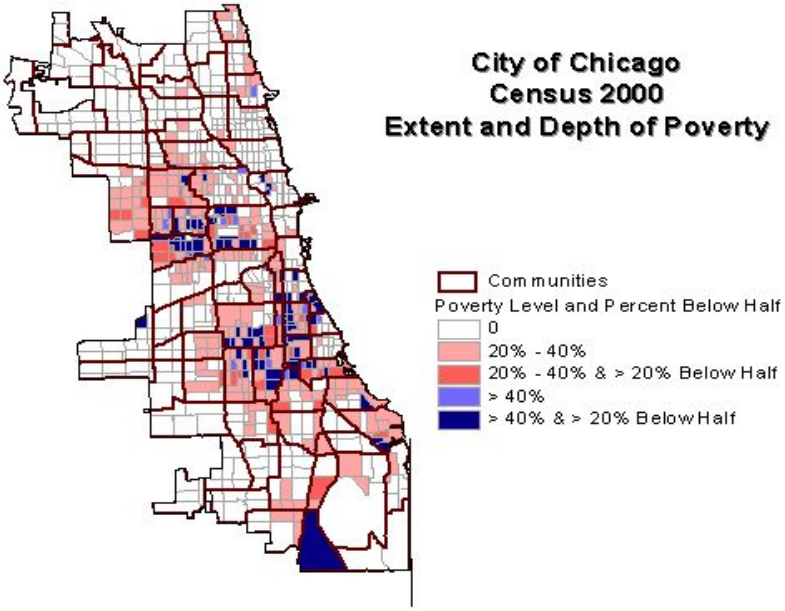
In Chicago, as in other large US cities, immigrant-based politics led to the formation of competing political machines. The Republican Party, based on older ethnic groups, business, and African Americans, lost out to the Democratic machine led by the Irish and supported by the Polish and Italian working class. Chicago's neighborhoods saw extensive mobility by ethnic groups with the exception of the city's black population, who were contained by segregation.

Chicago has always been a city deeply divided by race. The black ghetto, formed in the early years of the 20th century, did not disappear, but rather expanded, with most African Americans still living in areas at least 90% black.[1] Areas of black concentration are the areas of highest poverty, both in Chicago and the Midwest region. According to the US 2000 Census, about one in four African Americans in the Midwest, which includes former manufacturing centers Chicago, Detroit, and Milwaukee, live in poverty.

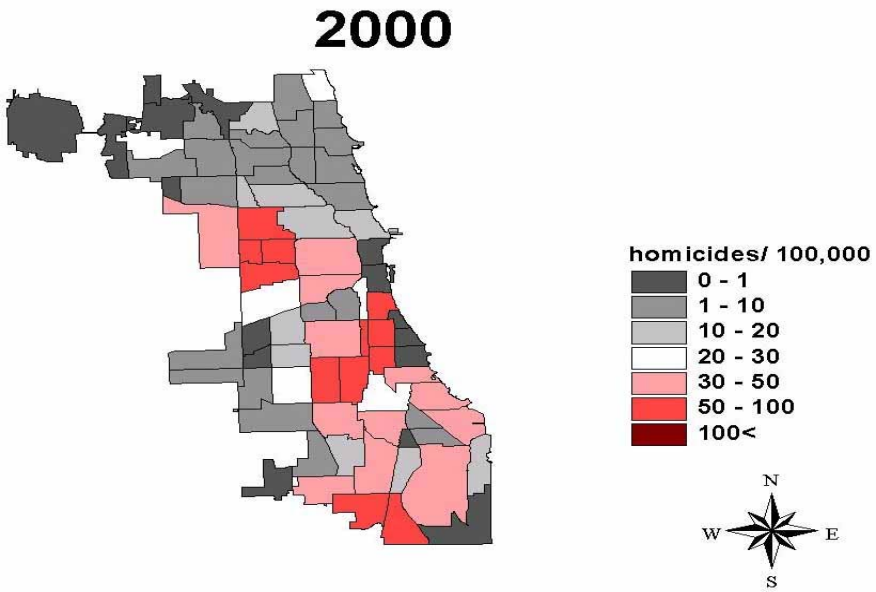
By the late 1960s, heavy industry in the Midwest began to relocate to the US Southwest and overseas where wages were lower and unions scarce. In 1971, Chicago's meatpacking stockyards closed and the steel industry crumbled as the Vietnam War wound down. De-industrialization gutted Chicago of its high wage industries and between 1967 and 1982 a quarter of a million (46%) of its manufacturing jobs were lost.[2]

Housing projects were constructed in the 1960s to provide housing for an expanding black population.[3] Tens of thousands of black families were crowded into housing projects built in segregated areas. Chicago housing projects, from their beginnings, were 98% black.[4] In the 1990s, gentrification and the movement of population made the land where the projects were built more valuable. The projects are currently being torn down, resulting in displacement of the highly concentrated, very poor, black residents.[5]

[1] http://www.gangresearch.net/Globalization/guggenheim/images/animsidelegend.gif
[2] Abu-Lughod, Janet L. 1999. *New York, Chicago, Los Angeles: America's Global Cities.* Minnesota, MN
[3] Venkatesh, Sudhit Alladi. 2000. *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto.* Harvard University Press.
[4] Hirsch, Arnold R. 1983. *Making the Second Ghetto: Race & Housing in Chicago 1940-1960.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[5]http://gangresearch.net/Globalization/guggenheim/housing/tribhousmur.html



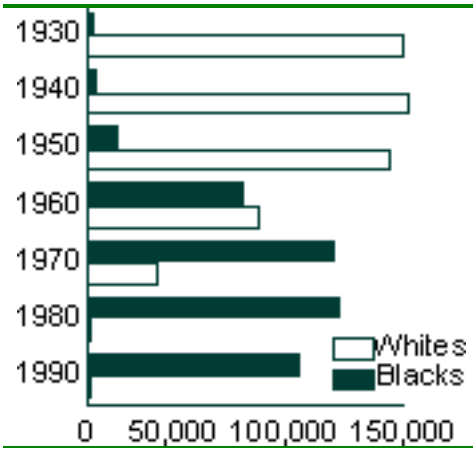
Violence in Chicago is concentrated in high poverty, African American neighborhoods. The highest areas of violence are the West Side neighborhoods of Lawndale and Garfield Park and the South Side's Englewood, Grand Avenue (where housing projects predominated), and Roseland.



Homicide rates in Chicago, 2000
Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports

Homicide is concentrated in very poor, African American areas of Chicago.[6] North Lawndale, for example, on Chicago's West Side, had a population of 120,000 in 1970 and has since lost more than two-thirds of its residents. Once a largely Jewish community with huge manufacturing plants, North Lawndale today is a devastated zone of vacant lots with a 99% black population and more than half of area children live in poverty.[7] In 2000, its homicide rates stood at about 60 per 100,000.

Another poor and high violence area, Roseland, on Chicago's far South Side was once the home for black steelworkers. As the steel industry closed, Roseland became mired in poverty. As the housing projects near the city's center were closed, many very poor public housing residents moved south to Roseland. Rates of violence have shot up in 2000 to a homicide rate of 34 per 100,000.



Englewood, another area of high rates of poverty and violence has over the decades also been the scene of 'white flight' (the movement of white residents to the suburbs as African Americans move in). In the 1980s alone, more than 10,000 people left Englewood which now has a household income of about half of Chicago's average and is more than 95% African American. Its homicide rate in 2000 was 60 per 100,000.

Englewood's White Flight
Source: US Census Bureau

Mexicans began immigration into Chicago during World War I, but deportations in the 1930s, during the Great Depression, reduced their numbers. After World War II, both Mexicans and Puerto Ricans immigrated to Chicago neighborhoods that extended from just south of the downtown 'Loop' to the city's western boundaries.[8] Mexicans displaced white ethnic groups in neighborhoods like the Back of the Yards, Pilsen, and Little Village and Puerto Ricans concentrated in the near North Side communities of Lincoln Park and Humboldt Park. These neighborhoods have levels of violence higher than predominately white areas but lower than in the black ghetto. Chicago's Chinatown is a small, comparably stable area just south of the central business district.

[6] http://www.gangresearch.net. Data from Chicago Homicide Dataset.
[7] 2000 US Census.
[8] For a map of changing ethnicity in Chicago, see http://www.gangresearch.net/Globalization/guggenheim/images/animsidelegend.gif

Brief Historical Analysis of the Situation

Gangs have long been a fact of life in most US cities. Gangs, in this report, refer to all kinds of organizations of the socially excluded, typically groups of children socialized to the streets.[9] Beginning in the 19th century with waves of European immigration into northern and eastern cities and Mexican immigration to Los Angeles and other cities of the Southwest, youth gangs formed from second-generation immigrant youth. Gang kids fought, but firearms were seldom used and it was mainly young adults who committed lethal violence.[10]

World War I created a desperate need for labor and Mexican and African Americans were recruited into northern industrial jobs vacated by white soldiers. The end of the war brought race riots throughout the United States, particularly in Chicago and other Midwest industrial centers, as white workers, the Ku Klux Klan, and others expelled African Americans from jobs and used terror to enforce segregation.[11] During the Great Depression, Mexicans were targeted for widespread deportations as jobs and housing became scarce. Black and Mexican youth formed small corner groups and often defended their neighborhoods against white gangs.[12]

Economic opportunities in government and in the market sector for most white youth resulted in the dissolving of their adolescent gangs or their re-direction once members found jobs as adults. However, some delinquent Italian youth graduated into the Mafia and some Chinese youth found illicit adult opportunities in tongs and Triads. On the other hand, Mexican and African American youth had a bleaker future, with both licit and illicit opportunity structures blocked.[13]

African American gangs, at least in Chicago in the first half of the 20th century, were unconnected to the gambling and prostitution networks dominated by adults in the black ghetto. Jobs were just too hard to find and were occupied by the fathers of youthful gang members and other male adults.[14] Policy, a form of gambling where the customer bets on a daily 'number'[15] was a leading employer of Chicago African American males through the 1940s. Illegal gambling

[9] "While gangs begin as unsupervised adolescent peer groups and most remain so, some institutionalise in barrios, favelas, ghettos, and prisons. Often these gangs become business enterprises within the informal economy and a few are linked to international criminal cartels. Most gangs share a racial or ethnic identity and a media-diffused oppositional culture. Gangs have variable ties to conventional institutions and, in given conditions, assume social, economic, political, cultural, religious, or military roles." From Hagedorn, John, edited, Gangs in Late Modernity in *Gangs in the Global City*. University of Illinois Press. In Press.

[10] Bogardus, Emory. 1926, *The City Boy and his Problems.* House of Ralston: Rotary Club of Los Angeles; Thrasher, Frederic. 1927, *The Gang*, 1927 ed. University of Chicago.

[11] Tuttle Jr., William M. 1996 [1970]. *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*. Illinois Press.

[12] Thrasher, ibid.

[13] Russo, Gus. 2001. *The Outfit: The Role of Chicago's Underworld in the Shaping of Modern America*. Bloomsbury Press; Hirsch, Arnold R. 1983. *Making the Second Ghetto: Race & Housing in Chicago 1940-1960*. Cambridge University Press.

[14] http://gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/gangs&ghetto/Perkins.htm

[15] Policy or the 'numbers' is a form of gambling similar to the contemporary lottery. People place bets on a number, sometimes picked randomly or chosen from the published attendance at racetracks. Prior to the legal lotteries of today, the number or 'policy'' was nationally popular, especially in black communities. A large number of 'runners,' area 'captains,' and other employees were needed to run this enterprise on a daily basis.

was controlled in all areas of the city by the urban political machine in alliance with Italian organized crime,[16] but there was little violence accompanying gambling and prostitution.

The end of WWII brought renewed northern and westward migration of African Americans as well as increased Mexican immigration and the first influx of Puerto Ricans. Racial tensions rose everywhere as blacks and Hispanics crowded into urban ghettos and *barrios*. The US industrial job machine was slowing down and unemployment climbed in central cities at the end of the 1950s.[17] At the same time, black and Hispanic demands for civil rights and an end to segregation rose into mass protest. Gang members participated in the civil rights struggle in various ways while also clashing with militant political groups like the Black Panthers, who competed with the gangs for young recruits. The US government, in a program code-named COINTELPRO, seeded antagonism between gangs and political groups, and at times provoked armed confrontations.[18]

The 1960s ended with a 'white backlash' and 'war on crime' that moved the leadership of the gangs from the streets to the prisons. Most gangs in the US by that time were predominantly black and Hispanic. The more prosperous white majority often supported law and order policies that targeted minority gang members and street criminals. While left wing organizations, like the Black Panther Party, were smashed on the street, gangs in cities like Chicago maintained their organizations while in prison.[19] For the first time, gangs in prison established lines of communication with their neighborhood branches. Gangs in Chicago and Los Angeles began calling themselves 'street organizations' in the 1960s, underscoring their role within the very poor and socially excluded. Gangs maintained a racial identity with strong nationalist, Muslim, and other religious influences.[20]

The decline of the US industrial economy began to devastate black communities across the US.[21] Particularly in industrial cities like Detroit and Gary, Indiana, with heavy concentrations of African American workers, homicide rates skyrocketed as jobs disappeared and concentrated poverty increased. Riots by blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans testified to intolerable conditions of police brutality and joblessness.[22] The gangs in large cities began to deal in narcotics and other underground economic activities, sometimes displacing Mafia-run enterprises.[23]

Immigration from Central America and South Asia increased as US military interventions supported anti-Communist ruling elites in Indochina, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. Gangs of Vietnamese, Salvadoran, and other South Asian and Central American youth formed in cities

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[16] Russo, ibid.; Ianni, Francis. 1975. *Black Mafia*. Simon & Schuster.
[17] Wilson, William Julius. 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged*. University of Chicago.
[18] Perkins, ibid.; Fry, John R.. 1973. *Locked-Out Americans: A Memoir*. Harper & Row.
[19] Jacobs, James. 1977. *Stateville*. University of Chicago Press.
[20] Moore, Joan W. 1978. *Homeboys: Gangs, Drugs, and Prison in the Barrios of Los Angeles*. Temple University Press; Thomas, Piri. 1967. *Down These Mean Streets*. Vintage Books; Clark, Kenneth B. 1965. *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power*. Harper & Row.
[21] Wilson, ibid.
[22] Curtis, Lynn A., ed. 1985 *American Violence and Public Policy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
[23] Fry, ibid; http://gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/gangs&ghetto/TimuelBlackx.html; Ianni, ibid.

where these refugees fled.[24] By the 1990s, the break-up of the Soviet Union resulted in immigration from Eastern Europe and the organization of mafias and other types of Eastern European gangs.

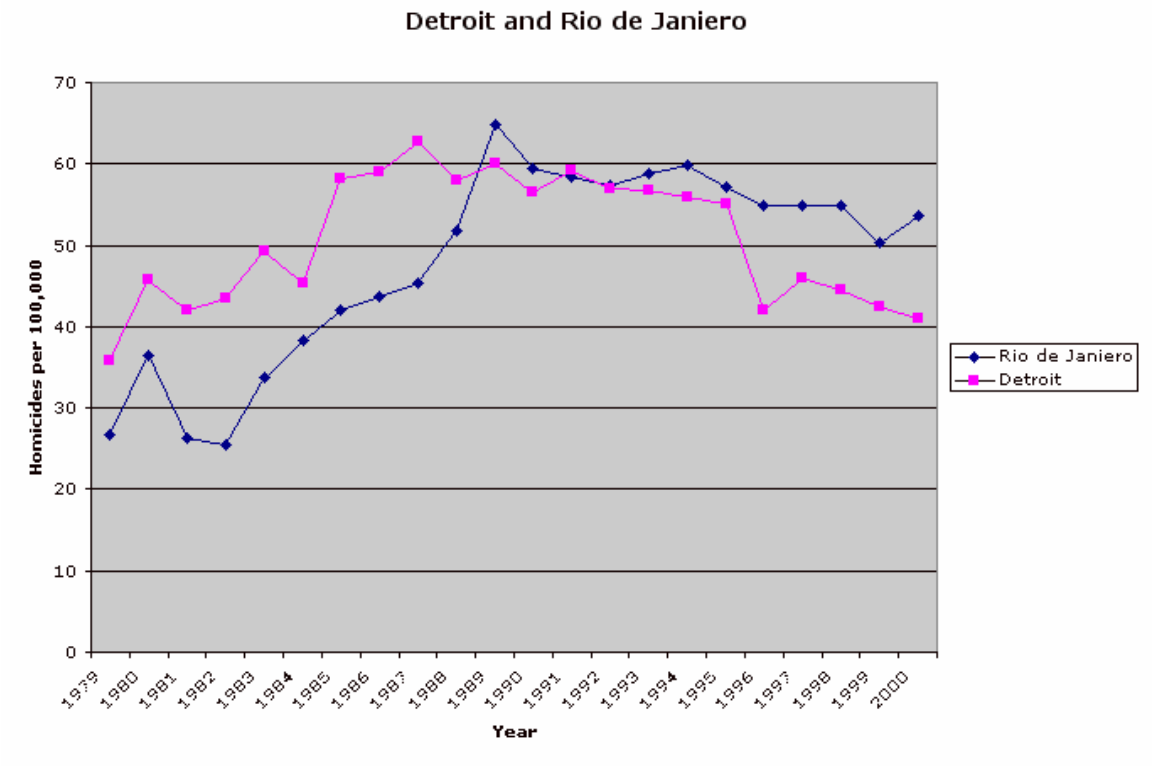
As US-backed policies of modernization failed to raise living standards in much of the Third World,[25] international trafficking in drugs, long dominated by the Sicilian Mafia in co-operation with French and US intelligence agencies, was replaced with new drug organizations in Colombia and elsewhere.[26] These suppliers found new markets in black and Hispanic communities for cocaine, traditionally a predominately white middle class drug. Gangs seized the opportunity to make money and used their armed might to settle disputes and carve out or dominate markets for drug sales.[27]

While the biggest market for cocaine and other drugs continued to be better-off whites, drugs became the most profitable part of the underground economy in US cities and one of the leading employers of black and Hispanic youth.[28] In US poor minority communities, as in the Third World, the informal economy, including the profitable trade in drugs, became a permanent part of the economic and social landscape.[29] US street culture, often mimicking gang clothing, drug dealer lifestyles, and the promotion of "gangsta" rap, was diffused through the mass media all over the world.[30]

Trends of violence in the US since the 1960s

Urban violence in the United States varies widely by cities and over time. The consistently high homicide cities, like New Orleans, Washington D.C., and Detroit, are among the most violent cities in the world with homicide rates at similar levels as Rio de Janeiro.

[24] Vigil, Diego. 2002. *A Rainbow of Gangs: Street Cultures in the Mega-City*. University of Texas.
[25] Portes, Alejandro, Manuel Castells, and Lauren A. Benton (eds.). 1989. *The Informal Economy: Studies in Advanced and Less Advanced Countries*. The Johns Hopkins Press.
[26] McCoy, Alfred W. 1972. *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*. Harper & Row.
[27] Davis, Mike. 1990. *City of Q.uartz*. Vintage; Padilla, Felix. 1992. *The Gang as an American Enterprise*. Rutgers University Press; Venkatesh, Sudhir Alladi. 1997. "The Social Organization of Street Gang Activity in an Urban Ghetto," *American Journal of Sociology* 103(1):82-111.
[28] Venkatesh, Sudhir Alladi, and Steven D. Leavitt. 2000. ''Are we a family or a business? History and disjuncture in the urban American street gang." *Theory and Society* 29:427-462; Hagedorn, John M. 2001. Gangs and the Informal Economy in *Gangs in America*, edited by Ron Huff. Sage.
[29] Hagedorn, ibid.
[30] Castells, Manuel. 1997. *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Volume II: The Power of Identity*. Blackwell.

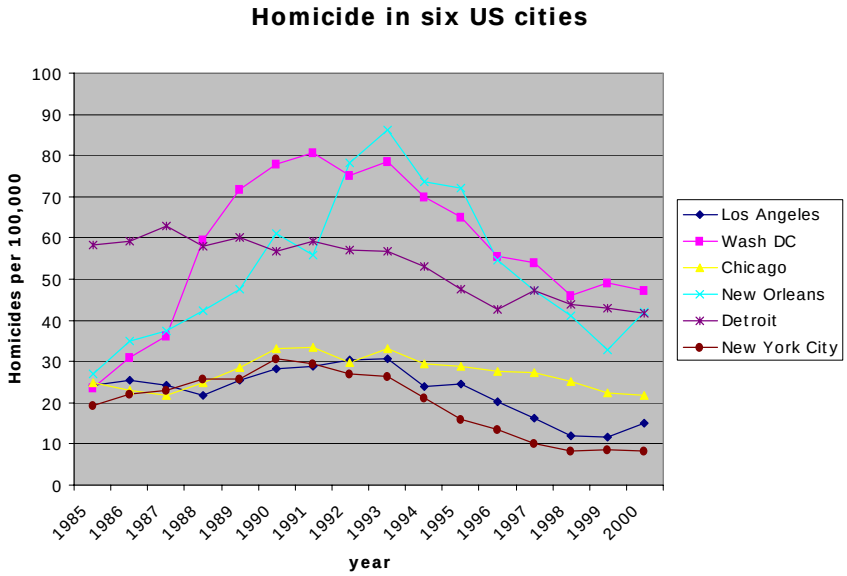


Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports, COAV

All major US cities have seen homicide rates drop in the 1990s. But in New York City, Boston and many other 'new economy' US cities they have dropped to historic lows. Overall, the US homicide rate has been in decline since the middle of the 1990s. Chicago's homicide rate, however, has seen little change over the past decade. Los Angeles saw a major drop in homicides, similar to New York and other cities, but has seen its rate sharply fluctuate over the past five years.

Thus one cluster of US cities, including Detroit, Washington D.C., and New Orleans, are as violent as any cities in the world outside of Colombia, while a second group, including Chicago and Los Angeles, have rates similar to Mexico City, Lima, Peru, and Moscow. A third set of cities, led by New York and Boston, are declining toward European levels. San Juan, Puerto Rico has homicide rates comparable to Chicago, while overall homicide rates on the island are nearly three times the US average. Homicides peaked in Puerto Rico in 1994, with local drug wars driving the overall island average up to about 25 per 100,000 residents, comparable to Brazil at the time. Since then, overall homicide rates in both Puerto Rico and San Juan have declined.[31]

[31] Police Department of San Juan, Puerto Rico



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports

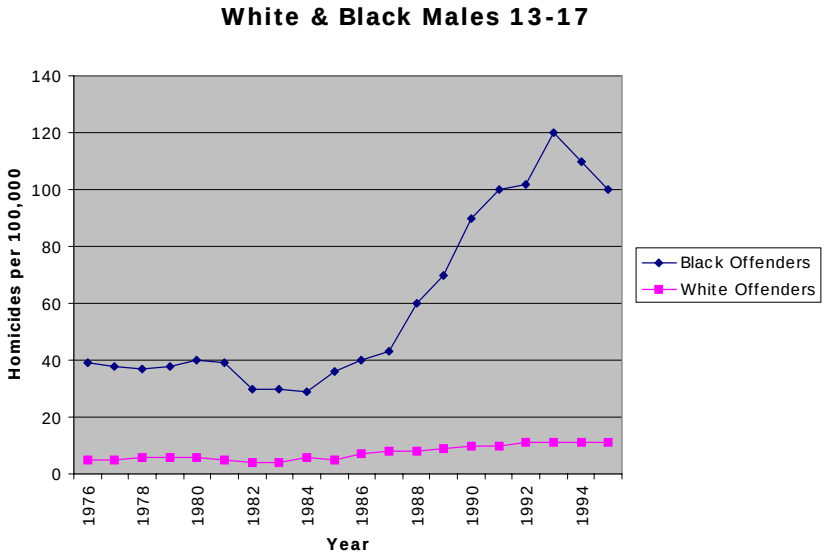
Homicide in many US cities began to rise in the late 1960s, particularly in industrial cities, as manufacturing jobs declined. Blue-collar cities like Gary, Indiana, St. Louis, Missouri, and Detroit and Flint, Michigan saw unprecedented leaps in homicide rates. In the early 1990s, nearly every large city in the US followed suit with major jumps in homicide related to the crack wars, as gangs and other drug organizations fought fierce battles over control of the profitable market for cocaine.[32]

Girls seldom use guns and female offenders, according to FBI Uniform Crime Report data, have been consistently about 10% of all homicide offenders. Many of those girls convicted of homicide are in fact guilty as accessories, what in the US is called "party to a crime." The majority of homicide arrests of females are for domestic disputes. The female gang is an important source of identity for some girls, and typically a fighting gang, using weapons, but seldom firearms.[33]

The US urban killing spree of the 1990s was an unprecedented epidemic of violence by *teenage* African American males, not the young adults who typically are most offenders and victims. While youth crime as a whole remained steady in the 1990s, armed violence by adolescents jumped sharply in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Arrests of 13-17 year olds more than doubled between 1983 and 1993 while homicide by adults 25 and over actually *declined*.[34]

[32] Blumstein, Alfred, and Richard Rosenfeld. 1999. "Explaining Recent Trends in US Homicide Rates," *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 88(4).
[33] Chesney-Lind, Meda, and John M. Hagedorn (eds.). 1999. *Female Gangs in America: Essays on Girls, Gangs, and Gender*. Lakeview Press.
[34] Cook, Philip J., and John H. Laub. 1998. The Unprecedented Epidemic in Youth Violence in *Youth Violence*, edited by Michael Tonry, and Mark H. Moore. University of Chicago.

Moreover, it was among black youth in US cities that most of the increases in youth homicide occurred. The homicide rate for 13-17 year old black males peaked in 1993 with an unbelievable rate of 120 per 100,000. The white male rate was less than 10% of the black rate. Rates of Latino violence, while varying between different nationalities, are intermediate between whites and blacks.[35]



Source: Cook and Laub, 1999, *Youth Violence*. University of Chicago Press.

Data from New York City disclose that non-gun homicide rates stayed stable throughout the epidemic and decline, while all of the increase in homicides — and subsequent decrease — could be attributed to youth with guns. The firearm homicide rate for youth aged 15-19 rose 176% from 1985 to 1991 and then dropped even more in the mid to late 1990s.[36]

Thus the rise and fall in homicide rates in US cities were associated largely with black teenagers, guns, gangs, and the drug wars. Gang homicides in the US exceed 2000 per year,[37] with the majority in Chicago, Los Angeles, and other large cities. Many children and adolescents had armed roles within the gangs and members of drug organizations were the main victims and perpetrators of the 1990s epidemic of violence. According to Department of Justice and Uniform

[35] Martinez Jr. , Ramiro. 2002. *Latino Homicide: Immigration, Violence, and community*. Routledge.
[36] Fagan, Jeff, Franklin E. Zimring, and June Kim. 1999. Declining Homicides in New York City: A Tale of Two Trends in *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 88(4).
[37] FBI Uniform Crime Report. Gang data from official sources is unreliable, since definitions of 'gang-involved' vary across jurisdictions and designations of a gang-related homicide are often subjective judgements from individual officers or responsive to political treatment.

Source: Department of Justice Reports and Estimates of gang homicides in 1999

Crime Report data, during the crack wars, youth made up around 20% of all victims and offenders of homicide, while before and after the early 1990s, they made up about 10% of all victims and offenders. Today, homicide remains the fourth leading cause of death for all US males aged 10-14 and the second leading cause of death of males 15-19 and 16-24. Firearms, mainly handguns, account for approximately two-thirds of all homicides in Chicago and Los Angeles, though during the crack wars firearm deaths sometimes exceeded 80% of all homicides.

One major difference between violence in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and other Third World and US cities is the limited extent of domestic violence by the US government and the virtual absence of killings of and by police. According 2002 UCR reports in the entire US, 56 law enforcement officers were killed "feloniously." In Los Angeles, at the height of the crack wars in 1991 and 1992, police killed 48 civilians, while during the same period there were more than 2,100 homicides. Only one LA law enforcement officer was killed. In New York City, during those same two years, police killed 51 civilians during a period when the city had more than 4,000 homicides. Only three NYC law enforcement officers were killed in those two years.[38]

These percentages do not differ greatly from Chicago or other big cities. In Chicago in 2002, for example, only one policeman was killed in the line of duty and two in 2001. However, during Chicago's Al Capone beer wars in 1926 and 1927, police killed 89 civilians and bootleggers in turn, killed 20 officers. The killing of police and civilians during Chicago's spate of violence in the 1920s was not matched by any city during the recent drug wars.[39] On the other hand, Chicago averaged nine *official* complaints of police excessive force *per day* in 2002.[40]

[38] Chevigny, Paul. 1995. *The Edge of the Knife: Police Violence in the Americas*. New Press.
[39] Haller, Mark H. 1989. Bootlegging: The Business and Politics of Violence in *Violence in America: The History of Crime*, edited by Ted Robert Gurr. Sage.
[40] Chicago Police Department. Annual Report 2002.

Actors Involved

Gangs in the United States today vary widely between and within cities. Overall, the Department of Justice estimates there are approximately 750,000 gang members in the US. There have been many attempts to categorize gangs, but in the context of this study, US gangs can be differentiated between *interstitial* and *institutionalized* gangs. The US father of gang research, Frederic Thrasher, used interstitial[41] to describe early Chicago gangs. It literally means "in between" or the transitions of youth, as from one neighborhood to a better one and/or from childhood to young adult. Most US gangs were, and continue to be, transitional interstitial groups, rising with one set of peers and declining as its peer group matures.

But in some cities, particularly Chicago and Los Angeles, gangs institutionalized, or persisted over generations. To say that a gang has institutionalized signifies that it persists despite leadership changes (e.g. killed, incarcerated, or matured out), has an organization complex enough to sustain multiple roles of members (including children), adapts to changing environments without dissolving (e.g. police repression), fulfils some community needs (economic, security, services), and organizes a distinct outlook of its members (sometimes called a gang subculture).

Institutionalized gangs are variably organized. Some have adopted a corporate structure, with a Board of Directors and Chairman of the Board, like Chicago's Black Gangster Disciples. Others, like White Fence in East Los Angeles, have an informal, horizontal form of organization.[42] In both Chicago and LA, membership in institutionalized gangs numbers in the tens of thousands.

Chicago neighborhoods have been home to gangs for more than a century. White ethnic gangs found sponsorship by area politicians who supplied jobs and patronage to them.[43] White gangs were also deeply involved in decades of violence and bombings aimed at keeping the black community in segregated areas.[44]

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, new black, Puerto Rican, and Mexican gangs formed. Unlike interstitial black and Hispanic gangs of the past, these gangs would institutionalize. They have maintained their gang organization now for more than 50 years. The four major gangs in Chicago are the Conservative Vice Lord Nation, the Black Gangster Disciple Nation, The Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation, and the Black P Stone Nation. Chicago also has dozens of other multi-neighborhood gangs including the Satan's Disciples, the Black Disciples, the 2-6 Nation, the Mickey Cobras, and the Latin Counts. All of Chicago's major gangs have gone through major changes and adapted to new conditions.

[41] Thrasher, ibid
[42] Emory, Rod. 1996. *The Blueprint: From Gangster Disciple to Growth and Development*. Morris Publishing; Moore, ibid.
[43] Thrasher, ibid
[44] Tuttle, Hirsch and Black, ibid

The Conservative Vice Lord Nation (CVL)

The CVL formed on the streets of Lawndale on Chicago's West Side in the 1950s. Originally an athletic club, the CVL took shape as its founding members were together in the St. Charles juvenile correctional facility. The CVL and other area gangs like the Egyptian Cobras fought white gangs in the schools and street corners as Lawndale became a majority black neighborhood.[45]

In the 1960s, the CVL had united most of the West Side gangs into a 'nation' and became one of the four largest gangs in Chicago, controlling many gambling and drug operations on the West Side. At the same time, the civil rights movement was attracting young African Americans, including gang members, to political struggle. In 1966, African American leader Dr. Martin Luther King moved into a Lawndale slum apartment as part of his campaign for civil rights and improved housing in Chicago. King met with the CVL and other gangs and solicited their support.

The Black Panther Party, the most militant wing of the civil rights movement, also began to court the CVL and other gangs. The CVL, along with the Blackstone Rangers and Black Gangster Disciples formed an alliance called LSD, short for Lords, Stones, Disciples, along with the Black Panthers in order to fight discrimination in hiring and contracts.[46] Politics competed with criminality for the allegiance of the gangs.

The Conservative Vice Lords got their name in part from a conservative orientation toward their community that included developing legitimate business and numerous social and recreational centers.[47] The CVL sought and received funding from private foundations and government.[48] The CVL, like other Chicago gangs, included gang members who continued on a criminal path as well as socially conscious members, like 1960s spokesman Bobby Gore.[49]

Rising rates of violence and the political threat of gang organization resulted in a war on gangs by Chicago's powerful mayor, Richard J. Daley.[50] Gore was arrested and jailed for ten years and the CVL leadership decimated as foundation funds were withdrawn under pressure from Daley.[51] The CVL reverted to criminal behavior as its legitimate enterprises folded.

Lengthy prison terms for CVL leaders did not destroy the gang, but hardened leaders who maintained ties to the street chapters.[52] In the 1970s, Chicago saw a precipitous decline in industrial jobs, including on the West Side. For example, the McCormick Works, which had

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[45] See http://gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/vicelords/believeitornot.html for transcripts of talk by Bennie Lee at University of Illinois, Chicago and interview for the Chicago Gang History Project.
[46] Dawley, David. 1992. *A Nation of Lords: The Autobiography of the Vice Lords*. Waveland Press.
[47] http://gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/vicelords/VLTitle.html
[48] http://gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/vicelords/Millionaires.html
[49] An image and text gallery is available on http://www.uic.edu/orgs/kbc/lawndale/slideshow/slide01.html
[50] Dawley, ibid; http://gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/blackstonerangers/Daley.html; http://gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/blackstonerangers/Fry/waralafry.html
[51] Dawley, ibid.
[52] Jacobs, ibid.

employed up to 14,000 workers, closed by the late 1960s. North Lawndale and the entire West Side became a land of burned out buildings and vacant lots.[53] In a jobless land with declining services and little political power, the CVL turned to the underground economy.[54] By the end of the 1980s, cocaine sales provided a substantial income for the gang.

The CVL maintained an umbrella structure, but drug selling was its prime activity. Children are recruited into the drug game, sometimes at an early age. According to one CVL member who was interviewed for this study:

> *The youngest people I know selling drugs, I swear to God, one of them is nine and the other one, he can't be no more than eight or nine. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it! And you should see it, he's like a grown man, and he runs the spot just because how much he knows. He got people over 40 working for him and he's nine years old. He passes the packs out. He collects all the money, because he knows how to do. It don't matter, he is nine years old, and he knows more about drugs than some of the old people out there, just because what he knows. That's why he do what he do. Shoot dice, he do everything, he ain't any taller than this. Nine years old, I can not believe that little one.*

While most violence in Lawndale and other black Chicago neighborhoods is over drug disputes,[55] children at a very young age can obtain weapons. Official policy of the CVL, and other Chicago gangs, though prohibits youngsters from using guns:

> *Well, really most of the time people don't want to give no kids no guns, because a kid will shoot a person way faster than a grown person because they … aren't thinking like that, they just, you know, they do what they got to do and that's why people don't put guns in little kids hands like that, because if this shorty killed somebody and the police come get him, the police don't want to lock him up, look how little he is, where'd he get a gun, you think he ain't gonna tell? He's gonna tell, so people protect themselves by don't put nothing in their hands because they're going to shoot somebody. Quick, all you gotta do is say something wrong to them and all they're going to do is say okay, get their gun, come right back and shoot you. Now you dead, whoever they shot dead, this shorty's going to get caught, what are they going to do, he's nine, ten, whatever, fifteen, it don't matter. And when they grab him, he's going to jail and you're going to jail too. So, don't do it. It don't be all about that killing and all that, nobody be all about that.*

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[53] Chicago Tribune. 1986. *The American Millstone: An examination of the nation's permanent underclass.* Contemporary Books.
[54] Dawley ibid; http://gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/vicelords/nothinleft.html
[55] Block, Carolyn Rebecca, and Richard Block. 1995. Street Gang Crime in Chicago in *The Modern Gang Reader*, edited by Malcolm Klein, Cheryl Maxson, and Jody Miller. Roxbury.

The CVL, like other Chicago gangs, have fractured in the late 1990s, and many branches have seen renegade chapters. Organized, armed violence is now often between factions of the gang, rather than between different gangs.

The CVL is one of the most influential organizations on the West Side, and fears little from police operations. One member explains why:

> *Police can't stop drug dealers from working, nobody, I don't care who you is, how many cameras you put up, people are going to get high. They got to get high and people is going to sell drugs. They see the police all day long… We know that, we look at them, they're rookies...all afraid, beat you up, keep riding around.*

CVL drug operations are ubiquitous in Lawndale and Garfield Park despite an equally ubiquitous police presence.

The Black Gangster Disciples

The Black Gangster Disciples (BGD) began as a coalition of neighborhood gangs in Chicago's South Side Englewood neighborhood, long the city's most violent community area. The BGD were involved with a number of social programs in the 1960s, but were never to the extent of the CVL. The BGD is probably the largest gang in Chicago and has chapters in dozens of cities across the US. The gangs' biggest rival is a split-off, the Black Disciples, and "wars" between the two have erupted sporadically over the last four decades.

In the 1960s, the gang developed a citywide structure and became the dominant gang in Chicago's public housing projects. The largest of these projects were the Robert Taylor Homes, 28 16-story towers that were from the beginning 99% black. As conditions in the projects deteriorated the Black Gangster Disciples claimed 26 of the towers and the Mickey Cobras the other two. The gangs organized the profitable drug trade within and around the towers. The projects were defensible space for the gangs, who retreated into them when police arrived and used them to shoot at rival gangs. As one respondent said:

> *And then, from their building you could look into our spot. And they had a sniper. And he was standing right there in front of the building; he was shooting right there. That's where they were at and he shot* [Sonny] *in the head…. Yeah, cause I was in the back, cause, you know, in our building, there's a little hole where you do the shoot out, so they shoot you…So, that's where I was, then I when I came out, that's when I heard the whole commotion, I heard what happened to Sonny.*

The BGD became the target of federal prosecution as their leader Larry Hoover became more prominent and began to get politically involved.[56] In 1992, the gang changed its name from Black Gangster Disciples to Black Growth and Development[57] in order to stress a more social role. Said one gang member, "it's all about what you is. You supposed to be a gangster, show me you got love for me, let's grow and develop. We're going to grow and develop things."

The gang organizes a youth section that is run by a coordinator, who makes decisions about weapons. One such coordinator explains:

> *It's all about their coordinator, and they got age brackets, from 12 to 16, that's the shorty count, and then you got from 16 to whatever and that's the adult count. From the shorty count, the shorty count has a coordinator and they got an assistant coordinator, and they bring all their problems to their assistant coordinator, the assistant coordinator bring it to the coordinator. So, they address their problems like that. If they've got a bigger problem, they'll go to the adult coordinator or the adult assistant coordinator and he bring it to his coordinator.*

The coordinator decides on gun distribution, though young children with guns are officially frowned upon by gang rules. The street reality, however, is often a different thing. When asked if gang leaders actually were reluctant to see kids with guns, one BGD explained:

> *They don't think like that. They think, like, shit, you a part of this. If something goes down, you got to ride* [have a gun], *that's how is. That's how I was looking at it. Shit, something go down, you ready to ride with them, cause if you don't ride with them, then we're going to ride on your ass. You ain't had no other choice, but to ride with them.*

Another said:

> *No little kids have no guns, it ain't even like that, they don't let no kids play with guns. But sometimes some little kids, 12 or 13, do be having their own guns, they came across or whatever, but they got their own gun to show somebody or whatever or something like that.*
>
> Q. Is a sixteen year old a kid?
> A. *He a teenager, and he liable to have his own.*

Youth had access to all kinds of guns, both from the gang and off the streets. This young BGD is typical:

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[56] Papachristos, Andrew V. 2001. *A.D., After the Disciples: The Neighborhood Impact of Federal Gang Prosecution.* New Chicago Schools Press, Inc.
[57] Emory, ibid.

> *When I was a shorty, I had a .357, I had a .25, I had a black one, another black one, a 100 shot tech, a 40 gauge. I had people giving me guns, old timers, I was like fifteen.*

The federal prosecution helped fracture the BGD. Like other Chicago gangs, renegade factions have developed that come into regular conflict with the official gang:

> *Everybody went on their own thing. There ain't no laws, and there ain't no rules, and the same rules that applied, the stuff they don't want you to do, and the stuff they do want you to do… still apply, but who out here to tell you what's the plan? Ain't no more gang meetings, you see what I'm saying, ain't none of that. And it's like, every man for himself now. You know what you is and you know what you have, but don't be doing nothing stupid.*

The Black P. Stone Nation

The Black P. Stone Nation has gone by many different names in its 50-year history. Originally the Blackstone Rangers, the gang formed from 21 smaller neighborhood gangs in the late 1950s under the leadership of Jeff Fort and Gene Hairston.[58] The Rangers were noted for their violence in combating rival gangs, especially the BGDs, their take-over of South Side rackets, and the political savvy of their leader.

The Rangers were involved with numerous social programs in the 1960s and were the key elements in the unity discussions of the LSD coalition of gangs allied with the Black Panther Party. The Rangers continued to adapt to changing conditions and re-invented itself as a pseudo-religion. By changing their name to the El Rukns, they fought for special privileges allowed religions in prison and registered as a tax-exempt non-profit organization. Raids by police continued to jail key leaders. The El Rukns began to get involved with Louis Farrakhan of the US Nation of Islam and were caught in a conspiracy with Muammar Khadafhy to smuggle a rocket launcher into the US. Fort and other El Rukn leaders were placed in maximum-security prisons and effectively cut off from the gang on the street.

Currently, the Black P. Stone Nation, the most commonly accepted name for the gang today, is in decline but still has strong bases in several South Side Chicago neighborhoods. They have youth sections and a black nationalist tradition that continues to inspire strong loyalty. Many Stone branches also have developed renegade factions that war with the original gang branches.

The Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation

The Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation (ALKQN) was formed in the 1950s as Puerto Ricans migrated to Chicago after World War II. Originally a neighborhood youth gang, the ALKQN formed multiple neighborhood branches and emerged as the largest Latino gang in

[58] http://gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/blackstonerangers/lance.htm.

Chicago. In rivalries with other gangs, the ALKQN recruited Mexicans and youth of other ethnicity in predominantly Latino neighborhoods.[59]

The ALKQN were allied with a companion youth gang, the Young Lords in the 1960s. The Lords transformed themselves into a revolutionary organization and organized social programs, including a health clinic and free breakfast programs, in alliance with the Black Panther Party.[60] The ALKQN and Young Lords organized street protests and the take over of a De Paul University cathedral as part of their pro-community struggle. The ALKQN's violent rivalries and political ties brought them into conflict with the police. Police targeted both the Youth Lords and the ALKQN and their leadership was incarcerated.[61]

The driving force behind the rise of the ALKQN was the gentrification of Lincoln Park, the original home of the gang. The Puerto Rican population of Chicago has been displaced twice by gentrification and in the last few years their current home neighborhood is being gentrified again. One of the top ALKQN leaders describes their home turf:

> *The east side of Humboldt Park is primarily Latin Folks, Latin Disciples, the Spanish Cobras, Dragons, Gents, and I don't know who else is over there. They all grew up, same bush there. On the West Side of it, it's us, all Latin Kings.*

The ALKQN maintained a nationalist Puerto Rican orientation, allying with Puerto Rican independence organizations in the 1970s and 1980s, including the FALN who conducted bombings and terrorist actions.[62] Violence between the ALKQN and other Latino gangs and the police continued, as the ALKQN also became involved in the street level sale of narcotics.

They have a large, formal organization with an elected Crown Council and a vertical leadership structure that was headed by Gino Colon. Colon, like Jeff Fort and Larry Hoover, was incarcerated in the last few years in maximum-security facilities and cut off from day to day contact with the organization.

The Kings have multiple youth branches, including Junior and Pee Wee Kings. Children play many roles within the organization, including the hiding of arms and their occasional use. While ALKQN policies restrict gun use by juveniles, reality, as with other gangs, is quite different. Here is one King, who joined the gang at 14 talking about violence. Note that while he was deeply involved in drug ventures, violence for him, like other Latino gang members, has more to do with retaliation and gang rivalries. "I will kill for our boys. Our boys are our people. They are our family," he said.

[59] http://gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/latinkings/Reyx.html
[60] http://gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/latinkings/lkhistory.html
[61] http://gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/younglords/chacha.htm
[62] http://gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/latinkings/lkhistory.html

Like the African American gangs, the ALKQN have stayed involved with politics on a local level, trying to influence city politicians through getting out the vote and money. One gang leader told gangrsearch.net "they [local alderman and congressman] come to the Latin Kings when they need this little area to voter from. We help out in exchange for jobs."

Another King explained how the ALKQN kept political influence:

> *The legislators…need our vote because we make up so much of the community, and lets face it, we have power. Maybe the community doesn't like to admit we have power, but the ass holes that create the laws know we have control over our people because if we didn't then they wouldn't need our help. I don't want to help them, but let's face it. Everything today is about connections. I need to make money, and with the way our economy is today, I'll take a job any way I can get it. …politics in our society helps us by letting some of our gang members receive jobs. The politicians probably won't admit this because all of the corruption bullshit that is out there today. But it's true.*

While gang violence between Latino gangs is highly publicized, it is only about half the rate of violence in black communities. Latino gang violence is more often about color and retaliation while African American gangs are typically warring over drug turf.

The ALKQN also has chapters across the US and in several countries. The New York chapter was highly publicized as it attempted a full-scale transformation from a gang into a community organization.[63] All chapters pledge allegiance to the "Motherland" (Chicago), although ties are more fraternal than hierarchical.

Other institutionalized Chicago gangs

Chicago's neighborhoods are a patchwork of gang rivalries and drug markets. Streets often separate the turf or selling spot of one gang from another. Aside from the major gangs, Chicago has dozens of other multi-neighborhood, institutionalized gangs with sharply delineated territory. This picture has been complicated in the last decade by two factors.

First is the emergence of renegade factions within all the gangs. Every gang member interviewed commented on this crisis of control. The second factor is the displacement of African American gangs by the tearing down of public housing and Latino gangs by gentrification. As gang members are forcibly moved to another neighborhood, they come into conflict with the local gang and compete over drug markets. This has caused homicide in Chicago to move westward and southward as blacks and Hispanics are pushed away from the city center.[64]

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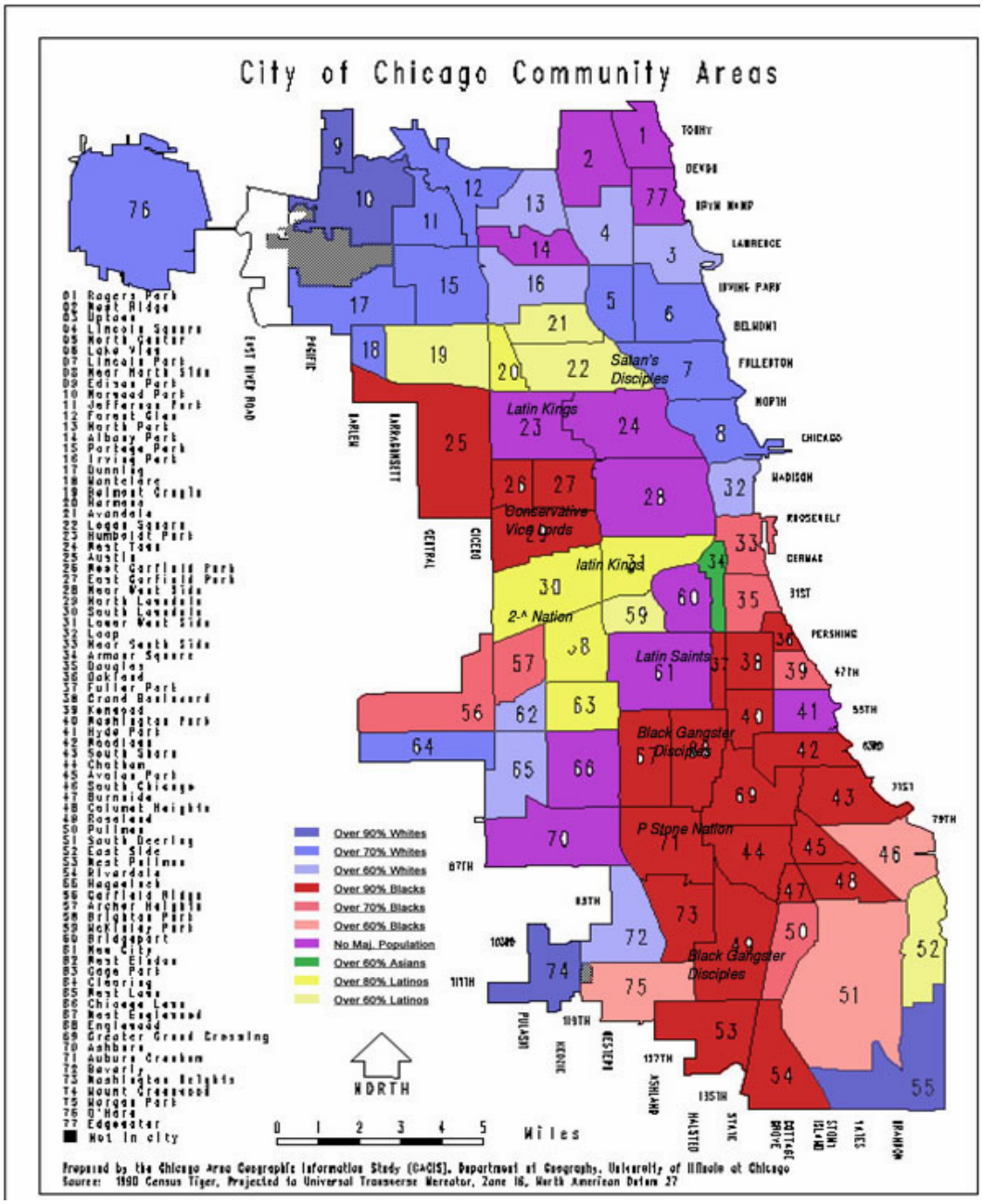
[63] Brotherton, David, and Luis Barrios. 2003. *Between Black and Gold: The Street Politics of the Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation*. Columbia University Press.
[64] http://gangresearch.net/Globalization/guggenheim/images/slideshow/index.htm

A few gang turfs in Chicago neighborhoods



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports

Command Structure

To understand the command structure of Chicago gangs and their ties to the community, we must revisit the concept of institutionalization. Most gangs in the United States are short-term interstitial gangs that go in and out of existence as members' peer friendships mature. On the

other hand, gangs in Los Angeles, Chicago and other cities have institutionalized with youth staying in the gang as adults. It is on these gangs that this study focuses. Institutionalization appears to occur given three conditions:

> *Gangs institutionalize when urban conflict is racial, ethnic, or religious, not solely class-based.* Class conflict appears to decline over time in the United States within dominant racial and ethnic groups. Thus Irish and other white ethnic gangs assimilated into urban power structures. The Mafia institutionalized as an out-group to the dominant Irish urban machines in the 1920s, but accommodated over time. However, African American and Latino gangs institutionalized as outsiders and their ethnic groups were excluded from legitimate power. Gangs typically have a strongly racial identity, often with nationalist, religious, and/or political overtones.
>
> *Gangs institutionalize in neighborhoods where formal controls, services, and economic opportunities are lacking.* When the state is unable to maintain control over ghetto spaces, street organizations arise to provide conflict resolution and order. In many neighborhoods, police involvement was welcomed when gang or drug violence got out of control, particularly during the crack wars of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Gangs at times, however, were granted legitimacy due to police racism and brutality. Second, the profits of the drug game allowed the gangs to provide area youth with entry-level jobs and opportunities in the illicit economy. In job-starved neighborhoods, the gangs fulfil an economic function. Third, the profits from the drug economy allowed the gangs to provide services, like sponsoring athletic teams, and helping residents in economic distress.
>
> *Gangs institutionalize in defensible spaces*. In Brazil, the *favelas* (urban slums) are a perfect example of a defensible space explaining the persistence of the factions. In Chicago, the black ghetto and high-rise projects also provided defensible spaces that allowed the gangs to persist. In East Los Angeles, the original barrios, like White Fence, were in valleys that formed natural, defensible grounds that gave the gangs space to develop. South Central Los Angeles and Compton, were segregated black ghettos with newly built housing projects that encouraged the uniting of different neighborhoods into bigger, stronger, units.

Relations with the Community

Institutionalized gangs have strong ties to communities both through relatives who live there and the services they perform. Large numbers of community residents oppose the gangs, but some fear retaliation and some oppose police tactics.[65] Gangs also take part in political, civic, and religious activity and have built long term relationships with community leaders. Corruption of police and local officials is a Chicago tradition continued by the gangs.

[65] Venkatesh, ibid

The major Chicago gangs have written literature, with laws and prayers, and titles for various officers. As the major gangs spread out over many Chicago neighborhoods and into other cities and states, the Chicago leadership attempted to control out-lying chapters though establishment of appointed leaders. The Black Gangster Disciples, for example, re-organized in the last few years with appointed state "Governors" overseeing all branches claiming allegiance to the BGD Nation. Other gangs and street organizations have similar regional and national organization.

No serious study has investigated the nature of these Chicago-outlying ties, but it is reasonable to assume a great degree of flexibility. Milwaukee, for example, where the author has conducted over a decade of research, saw gangs form in the 1980s and take the names of Chicago gangs. Some gangs followed gang literature and made pilgrimages to Chicago looking for support, drug connections, and weapons. Others took only the name and had little to do with Chicago. One leader explained why his Milwaukee gang rejected as leader someone with rank who moved from Chicago: "We got to thinking, we're not following. Ain't nobody going to come in and tell us how to run our shit. Cause this ain't Chicago. This is Milwaukee."[66]

Law enforcement continues to portray Chicago's institutionalized gangs as tightly organized, hierarchical bureaucracies, sort of a criminal version of a police department or army.[67] While all Chicago gangs have an ostensible leader, typically locked up and attempting to call the shots from behind bars, the actual command structure is both more complex and less conspiratorial than law enforcement believes.

Within Chicago, each gang has multiple branches and a city-wide leadership. The original set of leaders from the 1960s has been either killed or jailed. The gang structures, hierarchical on paper, in fact appears to be a loosely coupled, decentralized branch-based organization often depending on kinship ties. The Milwaukee Kings, for example (a Chicago gang not affiliated with the ALKQN) have established a set of laws since the 1960s, but leadership is kept strictly within kinship groups. The current leader is son of one of the gangs' co-founders and brother to the last two leaders.

Institutionalized gangs, on the whole, appear to have centralized leadership that is loosely coupled to neighborhood branches and chapters in other cities. Military-style gang organization is more law enforcement rhetoric than street reality.

Role of the State

The state exercises effective control over most Chicago neighborhoods. Gang members see police as legitimate, if often crooked, brutal, and racist. This young man talks about his problems with police. Note that police are seen as legitimate, but complaints are of what the respondent sees as unfair treatment:

[66] Hagedorn, John M. 1988. (2nd edition 1998) *People and Folks: Gangs, Crime, and the Underclass in a Rustbelt City*. Lakeview Press.
[67] http://gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/earlygangs/gangbur.html

Q: Do you get along with some of them?
A: *Yeah, I've known a lot of police.*

Q: Are there different kinds of cops?
A: *A whole lot of different kinds. Not a whole lot, but it's, I've know some police. The only time they be pissing me off is when they take their job too seriously. Damn, just calm down, you're doing your job, getting your money, do your job. They just want to beat you up, if you ain't got nothing they can't catch you on nothing, so now they want to put something on you, that's the worst thing the police do, put something on you. They cheat you. Don't cheat me, beat me. You understand? If you're going to catch me, catch me, if you caught me, I tell the police, good job, you did your job, you found it, okay. But if they put something on you...*

This Vice Lord shows both the hatred of the police, but also admits the reality of who runs the neighborhood:

Q: Say a cop was coming in and trying to do a buy and bust or something and something broke out and somebody killed him. What would happen?
A: *Police are going to try to shut it down. There's going to be hell. It hasn't happened before, the police have got shot, but he ain't got killed, but they sure shot at his ass. It was a couple years ago, about 94 or 95. The officer was John Kinzar. This was one of the police that would beat you up. I was little, in 95 I was 12 or 13. I wasn't thinking about no drugs, I was in school. … [cops] see us, we'd be walking, and they'd twist our arms and bend it and make us, what we used to call duck walking, duck walking in water….He was little. He was like, if anything happens to John Kinzar, he was gonna kill everybody in this neighborhood. We were 12 or 13 and this is what the damn police told us.*

So I know when police get killed, I already know what's going to happen. Anybody's stupid going to kill no police, but, sometimes they deserve that shit they be getting. They be doing some dirty shit, some dirty ass shit. Like I said, sometimes they take their jobs too far. They take their job too far, and see what happens. I don't wish death upon nobody, but sometimes people deserve to die and that's the way it goes. People got to die.

Police and the state, however, are seen by all those interviewed as being fundamentally racist. This gang member says it best:

That's how it is...They want us to be dependent on the system. But that man [Gangster leader Larry Hoover] *was teaching us to not be dependent on the system. To be dependent on ourselves. He was trying to teach the*

> *niggers to go back to school. They didn't want us to do that. They want us to stay right here, selling drugs, get your rent.*
>
> Q: So, racism is at the heart of it?
> A: *Right. Yeah. Like, you could be dressed the same, you know, dressed in a nice suit. I bet you if you walk down the street like that, they won't say nothing, but if I walk down the street like that, they'd say something to me. They think I'm doing something. Oh, he must be up to something. black man dressed like that, you up to something. You got a nice car, you could have a nice car, and I could have the same car and you could get away with it, but me, I sold drugs, I robbed somebody to get it. It's racist. That's all it is. It's the gang versus the racism. They want to take over the gang, but we won't let them, so they going to try to lock us up and move us away… There's gonna be about 40, 50 penitentiaries in Illinois. What? That's what they're trying to do.*

Chicago gangs have a long political tradition. Both members from black and Latino gangs discussed off microphone payments to police and aldermen for protection. One important development has been the election to office of former gang members in several neighborhoods. These politicians do favors for their old gang in return for help with election work.

Sometimes a politician can't deliver, as this Disciple explains: "The Kings from 26th Street were doing favors for [an alderman] and he promised that he would get them jobs. Then he dropped out of the race so [the Kings] threw a bomb in his office and tried to kill him."

Police are also implicated in gang activity:

> *There are so many cops that are still gang banging. They don't necessary hang out on the corner, But they still help their people out.* [Like they] *take drugs in a stop* [arrest] *and take the drugs to their guys… Lots of them also work as bouncers* [security] *in bars and help there too.*

The Latin Kings, like many other gangs, see themselves as not only gangsters, but also having a role benefiting the community. As one gang member says: "And it's not because I'm willing to die for a gang but because I'm willing to die for the purpose of progress to improve my people's situation, other people's situation and for the betterment of our community."

In summary, today's gangs are not a revolutionary force, but, in an old Chicago tradition, trying to play a role within the political system through favors, corruption, and the use of the gang as a part of the political machine.

II. COAV PROFILES

The following table provides a profile of the 14 young adults interviewed for the study.

Gender	Present Age	Education	Age at Entry	Gang
1. male	21	GED	14	Unknown Vice Lords
2. male	23	10th grade	11	Vice Lords
3. male	21	GED	15	Vice Lords
4. male	23	11th grade	13	Black Gangster Disciples
5. male	20	GED	14	Black Gangster Disciples
6. male	28	GED	14	Black Gangster Disciples
7. male	19	9th grade	13	Black Gangster Disciples
8. female	18	11th GED	11	Black Gangster Disciples
9. female	21	GED	13	Black Gangster Disciples
10. male	21	8th grade	12	Satan's Disciples
11. male	22	GED	14	Satan's Disciples
12. male	20	GED	15	Satan's Disciples
13. male	35	GED	14	Maniac Latin Disciples
14. male	28	GED	14	Latin Kings

Personal Histories

In Chicago, gangs have been a neighborhood tradition for more than a hundred years. In most black, Mexican, and Puerto Rican neighborhoods, the current group of what are often called super-gangs[68] have been a fixture since the late 1950s. Here's a Latin King's view of Humboldt Park on the city's near North Side: "if you look at Humboldt Park, you've got two side ends divided by Sacramento and Humboldt Boulevard. The east side of Humboldt Park is primarily Latin Folks, Latin Disciples, the Spanish Cobras, Dragons, Gents, and I don't know who else is over there."

Growing up in these very poor neighborhoods, particularly for males, means to confront an inevitable decision of whether or not to join the area gang:

> Q: Did you know how long that group's been there? Do you know anything about the history of the group there at all?
> A: *Actually…I can remember from ever since I was five years old, they were out there shooting guns and everything… They had the Stones* [a rival

[68] 'Super-gangs' is the term given for institutionalized gangs in Chicago with multiple branches.

gang], *and then right there where we was just at, they had the Gangsters* [the respondent's gang], *you know what I'm saying, people getting killed and everything.*

Prior research[69] has found that, within areas where gangs dominate, family background is not the most significant variable determining membership. Peer pressures within a poor neighborhood exercise a powerful effect on youth from all types of families. While the present sample can not be determined to be representative, the respondents in this study come from poor, but not particularly dysfunctional families. About half of the respondents were brought up by both parents. Consistent with other research, this study finds powerful neighborhood effects in the recruitment of children and youth to gangs.

Family and school

The most common experience of those interviewed in this study were failure to complete high school. In fact, none of those interviewed completed high school, though about half later returned to school or received a high school diploma equivalent. Says a South Side African American gang member:

Q: How far did you get in school?
A: *Uh, 11th grade.*

Q: How come you didn't finish?
A: *Gang bangin', fightin' in school.*

A West Side Black Vice Lord has a similar experience:

Q: What happened, how come you didn't finish high school?
A: *I got kicked out…Never went back.*

Q: Why did you get kicked out?
A: *I don't know, like I started fights, oh, how terrible, started riots.*

For some, like this Mexican Satan's Disciple, school played no role in their life:

Q: You've had a lot of trouble in your life.
A: *Yeah. I'm a trouble-maker. I was a trouble-maker.*

Q: So, tell me about high school.
A: *I never went to high school.*

[69] Short, J.F., Jr., and Strodtbeck, F.L. 1965. *Group Process and Gang Delinquency*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago. Moore (1978); Venkatesh (2000).

The suspension, expulsion, or absence of kids from school interacts with gang involvement to push young boys and girls to see the gangs as a substitute family or primary socializing institution. The words of those interviewed in Chicago about school echoed the interviews of gang members in Milwaukee two decades before. All of the 47 gang members interviewed in Milwaukee in 1986 had been suspended or expelled from school:

> Q: How did the schools that you went to then respond to the gang?
> A: *Well it wasn't like that they didn't respond. It was like the principal - well a bunch of us would get suspended, you know, for different stuff; it was like a bunch of us would get kicked out, but we had to be macho, like a bunch of little kids. We had to walk out of the classroom, like a lot of…*

Typically, young people join or hang out with a gang *before* suspension or expulsion from school. A combination of rebellious behavior at school, unimaginative and racist teachers, police harassment, gang disputes, and troubled lives interact to separate gang youth from supervision by schools.

Females

Girls also follow the same pattern of fighting and early exit from school. Says one female gang member: "I got, wait, I'm 21. And my momma got four kids. She had two girls and two boys. And I dropped, well, I stopped goi...well, I only finished seventh grade."

This girl also got pregnant and began raising two kids as a teen mother. For girls, the gang experience often coincides with early pregnancy that typically results in dropping out of school. In Milwaukee, a majority of our sample of 73 female gang members had been teen mothers.

Summary

Earlier research[70] has found that most gang members come from troubled, but not dysfunctional families in poor, minority urban areas. Hyper-violent youth often have violent or extremely troubled histories.[71] While all the youth in the Chicago sample were involved with organized, armed violence, only one had a reputation for extreme violence throughout his teenage years. In this sample, the separation of gang members from the supervision by schools is one obvious common thread.

Process of Involvement

There were three ways the Chicago respondents joined their gangs — through family connections, recruitment of a local group to the area's institutionalized gang, and as a

[70] See Moore (1991) for a summary of findings.
[71] Gilligan, C. 1982. In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press; Goldstein, A 1991. Delinquent Gangs: A Psychological Perspective. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

"natural thing" to do.

Initial recruitment

Those interviewed typically joined the gang in their early teen or late pre-teen years. Institutionalized gangs by definition are long-standing and have deep ties within neighborhoods.[72] One way the gang reproduces itself is through the brother-system of bringing the little brother up into the organization as he gets older.

The 'brother system'

An African American gang member explains how his brother paved the way for his recruitment:

> *Started hanging out with them, during school hours, and then it turned into after school hours, then after that, it turned into before school hours and it just went on from there.*
> Q: So, what's the role of your brother in all of this? Your brother was riding [in a gang], too?
> A: *Yeah, he was a gangster, too, and I was looking at that, too, like my brother's a gangster, I might as well be a gangster, too. You know what I'm saying, keep it all in the family. I just was a gangster too.*

But even with those who joined through family connections, there was more to it. This respondent goes on:

> Q: Well, how come you didn't just decide to like go live with some relatives out of state or something, get away from it all? What was the pull of it that you wanted to stay?
> A: *They was making good money at the time. They was making nice money, rides slick, you know what I'm saying? Dressing nice, latest clothes, latest shoes, know what I'm saying, it was something you wanted to see.*
>
> Q: Wasn't there a downside?
> A: *There was chances that you could get violations, chances that you could go to jail, there were all types of chances, know what I'm saying? You didn't want your mother or your father to know you was in a gang. There were all types of things.*

A Satan's Disciple (SD) has a similar experience:

[72] Institutionalized means that a gang persists despite changes in leadership (e.g. killed, incarcerated, or 'matured out'), has an organization complex enough to sustain multiple roles of its members (including roles for children), can adapt to changing environments without dissolving (e.g. police repression), fulfills some community needs (economics, security, services), and organizes a distinct outlook of its members (sometimes called a gang 'subculture').

Q: What about your brother? Was he...
A: *My brother, yeah, he's in the gang too.*

Q: Now was he an influence on you?
A: *You could say that, yup.*

Q: Or not?
A: *Um. He never wanted me to turn, but I was seein' things he was doin', um, I liked the way he was doin', bringin' home money,...gang bangin', smokin' weed. I liked all that.*

Q: How old were you then?
A: *I turned when I was um, 13 years old. 1996.*

Another Satan's Disciple tells a tragic variant of the brother system:

Q: What about your brothers, were your brothers involved?
A: *My brother was. He's the one the hooked me up* [and] *my best friend. But he dropped a year later. He dropped it and he's got his life together, but I couldn't.*

Recruiting an existing neighborhood group

While institutionalized gangs exist in most Chicago neighborhoods, spontaneous groups of teenagers still form. But once formed, as a group they will have to decide with whom to ally. For a "neutron"[73] gang to not ally or join with a near-by, institutionalized gang means no protection and a constant risk of violence. Here is the story of how one such group was recruited by the Satan's Disciples (SDs):

Q: And when did you first start getting involved with the SDs?
A: *Well,* [we] *was not involved* [with the SDs] *it was a crew we had with some kids called the Flamingo Boys. It was about 50 of us from, I was about 10 years old already at that time, when I started hanging with them. And when one of the SD's just came out of prison, I was already 12, I had just turned 12, and he tells us, 'Look, if you want to turn SD's...' because there was nobody on this block. So, we all agreed to it. That's when we ended up, all of us, turned SD's.*

Q: So, you all turned...
A: *We all turned together, from the little group. Some went to different gangs because they had brothers that were in them.*

[73] 'neutron' is the common term for a neutral person or gang, one who does not take sides in Chicago's bitterly divided gang culture.

A 'natural thing' to do

Since gangs are a local institution, joining the dominant neighborhood gang often seems like a good thing to do at the time:

> *It was just like a big family. I wouldn't say they was just like family, but it was just natural.*
>
> Q: How old were you?
> A: *I was like 12, 13.*

Others 'turned' to make money and help in fighting:

> *Um, okay, I got involved because, um, it was a guy that, like, influenced me to turn. I was goin' to school, and I got, you know what I'm sayin', like, um, my mom had a big family, and I couldn't get the stuff that I needed, and he told me … know what I'm sayin', this and that to sell drugs and I could take care of myself. So that's how I be turnin'. And uh, I liked doin' the things we were doin'. It was like gang bangin', you know what I'm sayin'? I need some help go holler at them, they come back and help me, all that.*

Which gang you joined depended on who was dominant in your neighborhood:

> Q: Who were you involved with?
> A: *Unknowns. I feel like I was with a gang, that's who all I'd be with, so I guess by association.*
>
> Q: That's where your friends were...
> A: *Right. And like I got initiated in the gang and that's who you be with, so that's who you're with.*

Female gang members

In many ways this discussion with two female African American gangsters who joined the Sisters of the Struggle (SOS), the Black Gangster Disciple's female branch, demonstrates the inter-relationship of family, finances, and fun. The women also add an element of safety that is an advantage to being in a gang:

> Q: So tell me how you got involved with the Gangster Disciples?
>
> R1: *Well, my whole family, I'm from ...everybody in the family*
>
> R2: *All, all of them...*[taking over from R1]
>
> R1: *I had like 12, all my whole family had like seven to eight kids, and they was mostly boys. And I mean, all the girls just, you know what I'm sayin', all the boys* [were in the] *Gangster Disciples, so, you know, they had a*

little group, like. You know for the girls, the SOS, that's what it's called, SOS, the girls is called SOS, but the boys called Gangster Disciples. It's the same thing.

R2: *One day, we just joined the gang, I mean...*

R1: *Yeah. We just ganged in, I mean we just joined the gang. I mean, I liked it, I don't know what it was about, I just liked the activity.*

R2: *'Cause it was like one...*

R1: *It's like, you know , one for all.*

R2: *Right. If you don't fight you get, you get whupped. You get whupped.*

R1: *I mean, we just, I don't know, I just liked the activity. I mean, I was, I was young. I just wanted to join because everybody, my sisters and them was in, so I did too.*

R2: *Right. Everybody was in. Why not?*

Q: Was that the same, same way with you, that your family was...?
R2: *Yeah. Why not? Yeah. Everybody else was in. I had to join it.*

Q: What do you mean by that, you had to join it?
R2: *Yeah, I had to join it, but you, I seen everybody else…was doin' it, so, why not? They was, you know what I'm sayin', everybody, you know...*
R1: *'Cause if, if you get, if you get whupped, who would help you? You know what I'm sayin'?*
R2: *Nobody gonna help you.*
R1: *You gotta be, you gotta be in somethin' for somebody else, so I joined the gang, you know what I'm sayin'? So they don't really mess with you too much, if, you know what I'm sayin', you join the gang. But if it's somebody else like a neutron and .. they gonna mess with 'em, but us, they never mess with us, 'cause they's always scared 'cause the gang's always gotta be on our side no matter what.*

Q: So you felt safe...
R2: *Hey, I felt the safest joinin' than bein' by myself…because nobody gonna help me. I had to join somebody.*
R1: *And then basically down there, you couldn't, you couldn't sell drugs without bein' from* [a gang].
R2: *Right. Yeah.*

Advancement

Once in the gang, most of those interviewed joined a junior or "shorty" clique, an age-divided grouping with its own structure. Joining the gang can be a life-turning experience

or simply a natural one.

Family Relations
Family ties were important in advancement as well as recruitment:

> Q: What kinds of things were you doing when you first got involved? You must have, your brother was there, you must have had at least some rank, you know, people looked up to you, whatever.
> A: *Well, people known my brother was in the gang and then they knew I was in the gang, they was really showing me much love, because he was older then me and he had some rank. He was giving younger gangsters dope to sell, you know, it's all good, they were out there working for him, all the time when I used to buy guns, I used to hold the guns I stole for him, pistols, I had up to about five pistols for him up at the crib.*
>
> Q: So, you'd keep them so they wouldn't be where he was, right?
> A: *Right. They were never at the same place where he was at the same time.*
>
> Q: And he trusted you because you were his brother?
> A: *Right, he was my brother and at the same time he knew I was trying to do something nice, build my status up so I could be here one day, or be how he was doing it, you know what I'm saying? He trusted me.*

Structure
Most Chicago gangs are age-divided, with the juniors or shorties having their own leadership appointed by the older guys, sometimes called 'OGs.'[74] This loosely organized structure is typical of nearly all Chicago gangs. Institutionalized gangs, by definition, exist in many neighborhoods. This SD explains:

> Q: Do you have one branch, or you got branches all over the city?
> A: *Okay, it's branches, okay, we um, we from the North Side, so we got branches on the South Side, Midwest, you know what I'm sayin', we like all over.*

Impact of Joining
While for some, joining a gang is the "natural" thing to do, for others joining a gang can bring vast changes to their lives:

[74] 'OG' are the initials of Old Gangster. This term is used in many different contexts.

> Q: And so, when you turned and you got involved, what kinds of things did you do? What's life in the group like? You started goin' to school less, right?
> A: *Okay, when you turn, it's like, um, everything you used to do, like all the old friends you had...everything changed, 'cause, you know what I'm sayin', the neutron friends don't want to hang with you 'cause they don't want to be a target. So I was, like, I was goin' to school but not, um every day like I was. But I started like, okay, I'd come outside, go to school, you know what I'm sayin', um cut school with the fellas, smokin' weed, start sellin' drugs, start gang bangin' at cars, breakin' cars, you know what I'm sayin', doin' all that. So, I liked that, so that's when school cut less, goin' home cut less, you know what I'm sayin'. Like, um, hangin' with my friends I used to hang with, all that stopped I started hangin' with, like, man, all gang bangers. I turned to that gang-banger life.*

Gang attitudes toward school

One common thread running through all the gangs in Chicago is a normative view on the importance of education by older gang members. Most gangs have rules about the need to stay in school and pressure is put on younger members to not neglect education. This Satan's Disciple explains how it works:

> Q: Well in a lot of the organizations in Chicago, the older guys try to tell the younger guys ...
> A: *to go to school… Our rule was, if you didn't go to school and you get caught in the hood and didn't go to school, you get a, um, violation. So the key was, you don't let them catch you. That's the whole key. If you don't go to school, they say, man, you know what I'm sayin', violation, you might get a two minute, like, you know what I'm sayin', like, head to toe violation,*[75] *somethin' like that. But if you don't let them catch you, they won't never know.*
>
> Q: So it helps if the older guys sleep late?
> A: *No, I mean, they don't sleep late, but...you know what I'm sayin', if you be a dumb ass and you come out there and try to act and try to sell drugs at* [the neighborhood], *you know they gonna ride past, you gonna get your ass whupped. But if you don't let 'em catch you, it's cool.*

Despite the rules, the lure of money to be made pulled kids from school to the street.

[75] 'Violation' means violating a gang rule. 'Head to toe violation' means undergoing a beating from head to toe for two minutes rather than just ten blows to the chest.

> *My school starting sliding and all. Man, got to have more now, somehow, so I started serving.*[76] *That's when I started to miss a lot of school. Like maybe they called my momma, because I haven't been to school in a month and she's just looking at me like, what you mean, you leave every morning? But I wasn't going, when we got home, she whooped my ass for that. You know, but…*

Summary

Joining an institutionalized gang in Chicago is a common occurrence for young boys and many young girls in traditional gang neighborhoods. Chicago's gangs have a structure that accommodates children of 10 or 11 years old or younger. For many, joining the area gang is as natural as going to school — maybe more natural. For others it is a life-changing experience. While most gang have rules about young gang members attending school, those rules are typically not followed.

Current Involvement

Once in the gang, young members have supportive roles to play in their gang's drug operations, organization, and violence with rivals. Chicago's institutionalized gangs have a citywide or national organization, with leadership positions. The heart of all of the gangs, however, is the neighborhood branch, which exercises extensive autonomy. While the formal organizational characteristics of each gang differ, the centrality of the neighborhood branch is a constant.[77]

Young children selling drugs

Drug selling begins very early for some youth, but for this Unknown Vice Lord age didn't matter:

> *It didn't depend on your age, it depended on how smart you is. Certain people built for certain stuff. Certain people can't hold their own drugs apart. Their minds were just not built for that. Some people were made for looking out, some people made for cooking, certain things certain people do, they know what to do. Like in here, they say you don't know nothing about drugs, how you gonna sell drugs? If you want to work, then you gotta be a lookout on the corner, for the policemen, if that's what you know how to do. It don't go by no age, it goes by your knowledge.*
>
> Q: So, young people, kids under 18, also knew all sorts of things.
> A: *Right, if they knew what they're doing, and they don't talk, and they know exactly what they're doing, then that's what they do. Like I said, certain people can do certain things, everybody ain't built for it.*

[76] 'Serving' is gang slang for selling drugs.
[77] See gangresearch.net

> *Everybody thinks anybody can sell drugs, anybody can't sell drugs. You're going to jail.*
>
> Q: Anybody can go to jail, right?
> A: *Right, anybody can go to jail, but anybody can not sell drugs. If you try to sell drugs and you don't know how, you're going to jail. So I advise you to sit and watch and learn, observe.*

For some, no matter what the age, helping out at home was the most important thing and sometimes selling drugs was the preferred method and accepted, if reluctantly, by parents:

> *At first I felt uncomfortable 'cause I had to think about my momma, but then, you know what I'm sayin', my momma got seven kids. I had to make, you know what I'm sayin', even though I know it's wrong. But I had a job, too. I had a job and I was doin' it, so my momma, at first she really didn't know what I was doin'. But then, you know what I'm sayin', she told me, like, well if you're gonna do it, you sure ain't gonna do it in my house, but she seen I be coverin' her life...so she didn't care to approve it. She just told me like, long as you finish school, then...*

Others had to make an arrangement with their mothers and confront them with the knowledge of where the money was coming from.

> *My momma ain't never knew what I was doin'. She just kept askin' me where I get money, so I just used to lie like, my cousin and them gave me money. 'Cause they was doin' it back then. So I'm like, they gave me money. She, like, you lyin'. Then one day, I just told my momma like, I be servin'. She ain't say nothin'. She knew all the time, but she ain't knew, she ain't, she ain't wanna tell me she knew, but all the time she knew I was servin'. I had to do somethin'...*

Young children with guns

In another neighborhood, the same pattern emerges. The 12 respondents in this study are all over 18, though they were involved as juveniles. But they look at kids today as being wilder than they were:

> *Like little kids 10 years old, 11 years old, I was like 14,* [when he joined the gang]*… but kids now these days, I don't trust them with guns, they know how to shoot the guns, and they got them, too, though. Shooting people, sticking people up, shooting people at school.*
>
> Q: Kids that young?

> A: *Yeah. I saw a little kid, 11 years old, just recently, looked about 25, but he was 11, 12 years old. Just playing with him, a little while, I told him, 'Where did you get that* [a gun] *from,' 'Don't worry about it, it's none of my business.' Yeah, that's what he told me, don't worry about it. I was like, 'Okay, you got a gun, okay,' …I saw him the other day and he had a gun and he told me where he got it from and all that, he said he's scared and I told him I know, I was your age before, I know it's rough out here. This and that. He just didn't want to listen to it though.*

Younger kids had a supportive role to play in carrying guns:

> *My job, all the little kids, was to go to school, to the high school with guns already. Our first gun* was *a .38. We was to go and pick them up from school everyday.*
>
> Q: When you said pick them up, what, you're job was to bring the guns or?
> A: *Bring the guns to school and wait for them* [older gang member] *to get out. And we were the security if anybody tries to do something, we were there as protection, because they had to walk far to get back to the neighborhood.*
>
> Q: So, you would come with the guns and give them to the older guys?
> A: *No, I would just keep them on us, we'd keep them on us, because they was like, you're still young, we're going to end up in the county jail, but you'd just go to the juvenile thing so that was the chances we were taking at that time. That's when I got to hold my first gun, when I was twelve years old.*
>
> Q: When you were 12 years old?
> A: *Right*

Female gang members and guns

Often women and juveniles carry and hide weapons for male gang members since they are less likely to be caught and the penalties would not be as severe. This SOS member complains about how male gang members demand girls hide the guns: "Hold this gun! Hold this, do this, do this."

While women and girls are not likely to have a gun, to fire it, or if they fire it, to hit someone, that does not mean that all female gang members don't know how to use a firearm.

> R1: *But I shot at a lot of people, but uh, I mean, I've never watched the news or nothin' like that, this one's got, I mean I never went back over and...I ain't care. At that time, I ain't care.*

R2. *They used to try to shoot at me, why not? I got shot at before…*

Changes in the last decade

While violence has tapered off some in Chicago since the drug wars of the early 1990s, to our respondents, things have become worse.

> *I think it works in different angles, but, like, back in 93, 94, things was a little bit different. It ain't used to be all about, okay, now I'm going to kill him and do this, you know, it wasn't all about that. Now, times have changed. Now it's harder, money don't hardly flow through Chicago like in the early 90s or whatever. So, you got guys doing all kinds of things and then...Once upon a time ago, they used to tell the young guys or whatever to go to school or whatever, you know what I'm saying. It wasn't all about going to kill nobody or nothing. But now, you asked me if times have changed, and they're not doing that anymore. The young guys, they're awful.*

Roles in drug sales

Young gang members play a variety of roles within the gang. One respondent insisted that children did everything the adults did:

> Q: What roles do kids 18 and younger play in operations?
> A: *The same roles as anybody else., the same thing everybody else do. It don't matter that you're 18, 35. It don't matter. If you're in gang, you could be 18 and be legal, 17, you're illegal. There could be people 35 or 40…*

Most gangs, however, allow very young children to play only supportive roles of lookout and hold weapons and drugs for older members. Penalties for drug and gun possession are much less severe for youth.

Other gang members, particularly those who grew up in Chicago's high rise housing projects, started selling and making money early.

> Q: Okay. Were you selling around the project or on the streets or what?
> A: *On the street, right across the street from the projects.*

> Q: Who were your customers, people from the area or people coming through?
> A: *The majority of customers was people from the area. You might get once in a while a customer from out there, but most of the time, all your money was in the area.*

> Q: Right. There's not a freeway around.[78] So, how much money were you making as a young kid?
> A: *I stayed on State* [Stateway Gardens, a housing project] *so I was making like 600, but I had to bring him [the supplier] back 400 and keep two for me. So I'm straight, 14 and taking $200 home a day, so I'm straight. I'm loving it now. Yeah, that's when I started selling.*

Summary

Consistent with most US research,[79] young gang members are involved with gang rivalries and disputes over turf and 'colors' to a greater extent than older members. For involved children and youth, the gang is part of the adolescent, rebellious experience. The drug game has somewhat transformed youthful rebellion and channeled it into profit-making drug sales. Guns and high levels of violence, however, have made the entire adolescent gang experience deadly.

Armed Violence

Children and youth under 18 are involved in armed violence of all types. Violence occurs mainly as a result of drug disputes, but also in gang rivalries. Chicago's homicide rate has not fallen like New York or other major US cities, and interviews reveal the role of the displacement of tens of thousands of African American families in the persistence of violence.

Shorties and guns

Older gang members are generally reluctant to put guns in the hands of children and adolescents, who may be irresponsible or likely to snitch to police.

> Q: Are there some kids who are too young to have a gun?
> A: *Really, um, you can't turn the mob unless you, um, like, man, thirteen and up, you know what I'm sayin'? Man, well from 13 and up. Twelve years old, you can't, you just like a, um, I, we call it a group gang. So, 13 and up, you're old* [enough] *to turn, I mean, man, you're gonna join a gang, you gonna, man, you gonna grab that pistol. Believe that. If the chief don't tell you, man, you gonna do it yourself. You got other niggers like, man, go on and grab that strap, little folks, you know what I'm sayin', grab that strap go bust the nigger, so man, you gonna do it. Peer pressure, motherfucker!*

This SD explains how it really is with his gang:

[78] A freeway exit and entrance nearly always means there will be a market for drug sales to white people who will drive into the neighborhood, buy dope, and get right back on their return journey to the suburbs. Such places are often the most lucrative drug selling spots.
[79] Taylor 1989; Vigil 2002

> Q: What, how did it work — you're 15 and you got a gun. Is that acceptable? Is that what other kids did?
> A: *To be real with you, when you young, that's who really grab a gun, all the young kids, 'cause, um, you can't go to the county jail. You know what I'm sayin'? So all the young kids really, you know what I'm sayin', may be first to grab a gun, 'cause really, you're really tryin' to prove yourself to the big guys…Like, um man, you're tryin' to make a name for yourself out there. So, when you young, you 15, you 14, with a gang* [you] *talk shit, boom, fuck it. Go get the gun, you just, man, man, man...*[trails off and appears sad].

This Gangster from a high-rise housing project explains why having a gun is cool for kids:

> *The projects used to be – it be dangerous, but it was cool, for me, it was dangerous but it was cool at the same time.*
>
> Q: But for young kids, dangerous and cool sort of go together?
> A: *Right, you excited by it.*

Guns are functional for protection, but also having a gun projects an image of the gangster, a street lifestyle that forms the basis for gangsta rap and consciously imitates it.

Some gangs have rules about the use of guns by shorties and access to guns is restricted. Here one local chieftain explains Gangster policy:

> Q: You're the coordinator of the shorties. Does anybody that's there, do they get a gun? Are there people you don't trust with a gun? Is that an issue at all?
> A: *There actually would be a safe box, somebody holding all the guns till somebody needs them. Everybody just don't walk about with a gun. But somebody be holding them, there might be some over there, there might be some over here. Everybody don't be having no guns.*
>
> Q: Does everybody, do you trust everybody that's in the group, from 12 to 16?
> A: *Oh, no. The 12 to 16 year olds they participate, but they don't play no role in the shooting, they participate on some fighting activities, but they don't be having no guns like that…the coordinator and the assistant coordinator, they're the oldest anyway…so they might have a gun. So, there is a chance of a 16 year old having a gun.*
>
> Q: But most of the homicides are about 18 to 24, but there's a large number from 15 to 18, so a lot of kids that age have guns. Are you saying

that they're unlikely, within the group , they're unlikely to be trusted with a weapon?
A: *They ain't likely to be trusted, it's just the point of how the organization doesn't distribute to minors, but if it was drugs, then it's something different. But the guns, they don't want you going out and killing nobody and catching no case. You might get one, you get thirty little shorties, one of them get into it with somebody, they're going to come to the bigger count. They got 75 adults in their count, they've probably got a cousin or somebody, or he might just happen to know where it's at, cause he's got a cousin or a brother or something in the gang, his big cousin or his big brother… just take care of his business himself, that's how it happen, nine times out of 10.*

Q: But with the organization, it's common sense.
A: *Yeah, don't give a shorty the gun, but he might just happen to know where it's at, he might just have a cousin who might give it to him, too. You know, 'just go about your business, be careful, don't tell no one I gave it to you.'*

This Gangster says a 16 year old is old enough to carry a gun.

No little kids have no guns, it ain't even like that, they don't let no kids play with guns. But sometimes some little kids, 12 or 13, do be having their own guns, they came across or whatever, but they got their own gun to show somebody or whatever or something like that.

Q: Is a 16 year old a kid?
A: *He a teenager, and he liable to have his own.*

This Gangster attributes juvenile gun use to the locking up of the main Leader, Larry Hoover, and the decline of the Gangster organization:

Q: The organization, what's their view about youngsters having guns and stuff? We've been talking a lot about guns being available to teenagers and people can get guns if you want them all the way down. But there's an organization.
A: *Like I said, like if Hoover was out, no little kid would be having guns and all this and that. But because he's locked up, he gone now, it's crazy today. That's what I'm saying and kiddies today do need guns, or somebody they know they knows got a gun, they go get their gun, you get your friend to go buy you a gun, they go buy a gun for somebody else, you don't know where they get it from, they just go buy a gun for somebody else, then they give it to you, and now its me and you's gun, 'Where'd you get it from?' 'Don't worry about it, just know that you and me got a gun.'*

The first time he or she shot a gun

The first time most gang members fired a gun was New Year's Eve, when guns are shot off at midnight.

> Q: How old were you when you first shot a gun?
> A: *Twelve… It wasn't a violent shooting. It was like New Years. I wasn't trying to kill nobody. Just like New Years, a celebration.*
>
> Q: But there were always a lot of guns around then?
> A: *Yeah.*

A few used the gun in gang or drug disputes. This Mexican SD is one:

> Q: When did you first fire a gun?
> A: *When I was 13.*
>
> Q: What was that, what happened then?
> A: *Somebody came into our neighborhood, I was already a SD. And somebody had come into our neighborhood trying to shoot at us, but they didn't see us and somebody told them, 'You can still catch them out on the street, on Chicago Avenue.' So, we ran and we had a shoot out right on Chicago Avenue. That was my first time I ever shot a gun.*

This African American SOS member explains how she first shot a gun within a context and physical environment of persistent violence:

> Q: What's the first time that you fired a gun?
> R1: *I was about 14. We was in a New Year's Eve…We was into it with the Iggies* [rival gang from another housing project tower]*…We just shot at them. We was like, I hit, you know the Hilton got a lot of floors, and we was like on the fifth, fourth, I* [talking over each other]...
> R2: *It's like halves, so you could just shoot out the porch. It's like a big open thing. And…there's like a fence right here. It's, hey, you could just shoot. And, you know, they basically don't know where it's comin' from.*

This Gangster shot his first bullet when his friend was killed by gunfire from one housing project tower to another. He explains the necessity of a gun during warfare:

> Q: What's the first time you ever shot a gun?
> A: *Like, I got plugged while on State and 51st. It was 1994. We was at war with the MC on 53rd. That's when Sonny got shot in the head.*
>
> Q: What happened?

A: *…from their building you could look into our spot. And they had a sniper. And he was standing right there in front of the building, he was shooting right there…and he shot him in the head.*

Q: Was this a Mickey Cobra [a rival gang] building?
A: *Right. Yeah, cause I was in the back, cause, you know, in our building, there's a little hole where you do the shoot out, so they shoot you…So, that's where I was, then I when I came out, that's when I heard the whole commotion, I heard what happened to Sonny.*

Q: Wow.
A: *Man, he was cool. Sonny was cool.*

Q: How did it make you feel?
A: *That was the first time in my life I felt fucked up about what I was doing. Like, damn, that could've been me. We could've been switched spots easy. That's the first time made me think. It didn't stop me, but it made me think. Damn. Made me finally believe what kind of game I was in.*

Q: Now, were you carrying a gun at all times at that age?
A: *Basically during war time, during war time you got to keep it on you. In war times, it better to have it on you. They'll catch you slipping. Then, but when it's cool, you don't have it on you, cause for what? Everybody cool.*

One young man expressed his emotional reaction to firing a gun:

When I first shot a gun, I was like blanked out.
Q: How old were you?
A: *Probably 16. My friend had a gun, I never had never shot one. When I first shot a gun, I hit a person, blanked out, I starting seeing bodies, bodies coming my way, anything come my way, I was by myself, the police got to come. I got away, but I was like damn, I just killed somebody or I just shot somebody, this and that. I was blanking out. I was like, what should I do, what should I do, should I kill myself, I was thinking like that, like damn, what should I do? I have to deal with an attorney, church doesn't bother me, but it was like I had a devil inside of me. I pray, I don't pray everyday, but I stay focused.*

Types of guns
Most youthful gang members have access to the gang's supply of guns. The vast majority are handguns which are easy to conceal and can be bought cheaply on the street:

Q: What kinds of guns did they have?

> A: *Automatics for the shorties, that's all we had. Revolvers and shit. Automatic revolvers.*

Female gang members typically have smaller caliber weapons which are easier to handle:

> *But I had my boyfriend. He had plenty of guns. He had money. I just had his little 22. I kept that gun. It was my gun. You know what I'm sayin'. I kept it.*

On the other hand, gangs have stockpiled weapons. One gang, in the 1980s, had its leaders indicted for smuggling in a rocket launcher from Libya.[80] The Latin Kings stormed a National Guard armory in the 1970s and stole the weapons.[81] While stories of powerful weapons abound, most shootings, including those by youth, are by small caliber automatic pistols. These two Satan's Disciples explain why:

> R2: *Right. People, guys have grenades, man, guns like this long, I never used one but I done seen here...*
> R1: *Where I'm like, you know, hey, you know, where you get this from, man? And you know...*
> R2: *Like stuff you see in the army, like, you know...*
>
> Q: I've never, you know, you always hear these stories and you see people seen all this stuff, but I haven't seen it used, haven't heard about it used that much.
> R2: *I never used it,... I don't think nobody wanna use that stuff! Unless they robbin' a bank.. some guys that got them, but they never been used in our neighborhood, because people scared to use 'em. And if you use 'em, and you get caught with 'em, that's the, that's the perfect way to get in the joint. Nine out of 10 times, when you shoot, like when you shoot one of them guns, you're shootin' about 70 bullets at one time. So you gonna kill whoever you shootin' at, or somethin', you gonna end up hittin' 'em, goin' into somebody's house or somethin' like that. So, basically, you know, it's like a unsafe, and it's a lose-lose situation, usin' that stuff.*
> R1: *I think people just get 'em just to show 'em off, like, I got this little somethin' you wanna* [see it].

Shooting someone and being shot

All of those interviewed had seen their friends killed and most had been hit themselves. First, this Vice Lord saw his best friend killed the day before this interview:

[80] Jeff Fort and the El Rukn's, formerly the Blackstone Rangers. http://gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/blackstonerangers/lance.htm
[81] Unpublished interview with a Latin King leader.

My man got killed yesterday, his name is Big Boy, at Gladys and Kilbourn. He got six times in the face. Now I was just talking to him yesterday, just was talking to him.

Q: Why did that happen?
A: *I don't know. I was talking to him, then I left to go in the house. My grandma told me he got killed. I'm like damn, I just seen him two hours ago, he walked me to my house, I shook his hand, said I'll see you, later, alright, catch you later. He did. He got shot six times in the face. He walked down Kilbourn, Kilbourn and Gladys. Things happen like that. People don't think about it.*

Q: Are you afraid that might happen to you?
A: *No, I ain't afraid, but everything happens for a reason. Whatever happens, happens, you can't control it. If it's your time, it's your time. That's why you got to live your life while you can. Have as much fun as you can, do what you're going to do, because when it's over, it's over.*

It almost was this gang member's time, but he lived to tell about it. The interview continues:

Q: Did you ever get hit?
A: *Yeah.*

Q: Do you want to tell me about that?
A: *It would be two years Friday. I was sitting on my porch. He tried to shoot me in the back. I didn't think he was gonna do nothing because I know him and my friends are sitting on my porch. He just walked up, came to sit on the porch with us, then he came up by me because I was sitting on a chair by my door, my friend was sitting on the stoop…so he grabbed me up…like, 'C'mon, let's go in the back.' 'I ain't going in the back, what's up with you?' He tried to pull the back of my neck, 'If you got to tell me something, you can tell me right here, I ain't going nowhere.' If I go in the back, I already know what's going on. So, he started pulling me, so my stepfather, he hears us hollering and he comes out to the porch, and when he comes out, I push him off me, and tried to run in the house, and he shot at me, seven times.*

Q: Where did you get hit?
A: *I got shot right here on my hand, I got shot right here. I got shot five times all on my leg, the back of my leg.*

One of those interviewed had the role of a hit man within the gang. This is the sole respondent who led a life of constant violence as a youngster. He looks back at his killing

days:

> Q: Pulling the trigger, shooting people…does it have an effect on you?
> A: *Man. You know what, that's, you're right, 'cause, man, if you know you killed somebody, man, and you know you really shot that person, man, it's gonna have an effect. One effect is you got to worry about the police comin' to get you, and another effect, you really don't want to kill nobody, but, you know what I'm sayin', peer pressure, once again, peer pressure come up again. So if you, I mean, man, some people don't shoot to kill, you know what I'm sayin', they just shoot to be shootin', they just him 'em, man, you gonna have that effect. Two effects you gonna have-police comin' to get you, and man, did you really kill this person. You gonna have an effect on it. I don't care what nobody say.*

> Q: Yeah, I've had people who've, I've had people older than you guys, deeper than you guys, break down and cry talkin' about people they killed.
> A: *It hurts, man.*

Reasons for armed violence

Gang wars are a normal condition every day somewhere in Chicago. This Gangster explains how he got shot:

> Q: What was that over? Just over you were in the wrong place?
> A: *War. I mean, the war, you know what I'm sayin', the war. It's kill or be killed. You slip you get caught, man. Might wind up dead, so, so I slipped, they got me. That's how it was.*

While disputes over drug markets are the dominant reasons for homicide by African American gang members, Latinos insist that gang rivalries are the cause for most of their lethal violence:

> Q: Most of the gun play, the gun fights, are they over rivalry, or are they over drug turf?
> A: *Okay. Ours, ours is not for drugs. No way, it's never for drug turf. Never.*

> Q: No?
> A: *It's just, ours, ours is like, this our hood, rivalry. Like, okay, let's just say, um, one of the guys go to the store or somethin', man, like, hears some comin' around, and he talkin' shit. And they move on folk. That's a war. We gonna go back and shoot 'em, so, man, that's what...we never fight over drugs. It's always about the hood, territory, and that's just that. Niggers talkin' shit. Never about drug territory. Never. Not us.*

> Q: That's a big difference from the South Side.
> A: *Yeah. South Side, West Side* [African American ghettos] *yeah, they all about drugs and shit. They don't gang bang that much over there. They, man, they all about money over there.*

For many, the frustrations of life boil over into violence. This Latin King explains gang warfare psychologically:

> *Kids just get frustrated and say fuck this. You know? You watch little kids long enough, you see that they get pissed off, what's the first thing they do? They break their own toys usually. I slammed my phone. I've gone through so many cell phones. Quite a few times, arguing with gang leaders. Fuck you! You know. Damn shit why did I break my own phone? $200 phone. You know. And that's our nature. We self-destruct. We get to a point of frustration and we self-destruct. You know. And we need to learn how to address that.*

On the other hand, in housing projects, and black neighborhoods, there is no question that the violence was over money, drugs, and masculinity:

> *So, basically, it was over the money, then you want control...Because they was making a lot money off blows and we was making money off of coke and we was splitting the weed money. And it wasn't going to work. Everybody wanted it all. That's how the wars started off.*
>
> Q: A lot of greed.
> A: *Greed and niggers wanted to flip us and we wanted to flip them, trying to advance in their gangs. Trying to become a man.*

This girl has no hesitation as to why there are so many gang wars: “Cause we was makin' more money than they was, than the Iggies [rivals] was. That's why.”

This man who grew up with the Gangsters in the housing projects explains it in simple to understand terms:

> *Because, like in the days, the projects were making a lot of money. That's when I started really making money in the projects, because they was giving me two hundred dollar dime bags, that was two stacks. I was sixteen, that's when I started making my own money, real money. My man gave me 200 bags, tell me to bring him back 15, I keep five. Then, you're going to slip 200 bags in a day, easy. In the morning, from 12 to five, you're going to make so much money because that's when they're out. That's why everybody was fighting. People thought it was over gangs because you ain't getting along. It was over money, it was over money.*

Money drives violence among females as well.

> Q: They still have wars in the projects, shootin' between buildings and everything, right? Do girls fight in the wars too?
> A: *Yeah. Girls, yes. Because I...be jealous. They used to be like, well y'all make more money than us.*

Renegades

One further source of violence in Chicago today is the fracturing of the gangs and the emergence of renegade gangs who have split off from the area's institutionalized gang. These gangs do not follow orders from their nation or mother gang, and are typically "all about the money" and care little for their community.

It is too early to tell what the long-term effect of gang fragmentation will be. But in the short term, rather than diminish violence, renegade or outlaw gangs seem to increase intra-gang fighting. This Gangster explains why some members "go renegade":

> Q: One of the things I noticed about here, in the last five [years] or so is that [there are a] whole lot more outlaw gangs.
> A: *Renegades and shit...We ain't, no, we ain't too together. I mean, I mean, it happens. You know why that happens, though, because niggers, you know what I'm sayin', get their head pumps up. Nigger don't wanna honor no violations no more. Nigger don't wanna pay dues. They don't wanna hang out. So renegades come from that. Nigger wanna do what he wanna do. Outlaw: 'Fuck it. I don't gotta ride with y'all. I do what I wanna do. I'm out for myself. I ain't be goin' no meetings no more, I ain't be payin' no dues.'*
>
> Q: And a lot of that's about the money, right?
> A: *You could say the money. It's about, you know what I'm sayin', man, uh, man, respectin'.*

This Gangster sees the emergence of renegade gangs and the effectiveness of police in arresting gang leaders as leading to 'outlaw' violence:

> Q: Ain't there a lot of outlaw groups now, things that are sort of breaking up into different groups all over?
> A: *Like down in the low end, on 21st* [near South Side], *where I be at. We GDs, but we called ourselves something else, because there ain't no order no more. We do what we want now. See, that's another thing that I want to tell you about. They think that they're so smart, taking all the cheese* [gang leaders] *off of the street, they just fucked up. You left a group with young wild peoples out here, don't got, cause we all was young, we ride, you left us out here with nobody to tell you. Because, back in the day, ask anyone,*

> *GDs had structure. The hundreds* [far South Side] *had structure. There wasn't no you could do what you want to do. You could do what you want to do, gonna get your shit split. Then, once they took all the cheese away, it wasn't it. Now, you got outlaws. Everybody their own, you got all types of gangsters out there. It's a bunch of outlaws, because there ain't no order.*

Tearing down the housing projects and gentrification

In the 1990s, the city of Chicago began tearing down the high-rise housing projects it had built a half a century before. The housing projects had become nearly 100% African American and homogeneously poor. While the mayor claimed that tearing down the projects was an attempt to lower crime, the land the projects occupied had coincidentally become prime real estate and coveted by developers. Tens of thousands of African American families were displaced and moved to out-lying communities. At the same time, Puerto Rican and Mexican areas began to be gentrified and many Latino families were pushed westward into the suburbs. This re-division of space in Chicago is similar to the changing spaces of gang activity in cities around the world due to gentrification, displacement, and segregation.[82]

About half of the interviews included gang members who were either displaced by the tearing down of their project, or lived in areas that received gang members from the projects. The respondents told of schools in turmoil, sometimes for mundane reasons:

> Q: What about the schools and kids that come, because new kids are coming into the schools, is that creating some...
> A: *Yeah, that's creating some problems, for a family of two brothers and three sisters, now they go into a whole different school and now they're changing their atmosphere and everything, now they think once they go to that school, they'll have to get another boyfriend, and there's nothing like, like my brother don't like her, you know, something silly like, but little problems involved in that, too.*

As the Robert Taylor Homes and other housing projects were torn down, the residents were forced to move to outlying areas. A single gang dominated each tower of a housing project, and the gangs had to move as well. This caused all sorts of problems:

> Q: You weren't brought up in Roseland, where were you brought up?
> A: *51st and State. In Robert Taylor* [housing project].
>
> Q: Were you there most of your life?
> A: *Most of my life. Till I got out of jail, my first bit.*

[82] Caldeira, Teresa P.P. 2000. *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in Sao Paulo.* Berkeley: University of California.

Q: And you can't go back there, because...
A: *There ain't no more.*

This Gangster describes the confusion the move from the projects caused:

Because, for me, when I first got out there, it was hard as hell. I wasn't used to it, I was used to the building, now I'm on a block. Everybody's walking around so you don't know who's who, who's the police and who's who. I got popped right there twice. And that's the fucked up – I've been out there, in five years, I went to the joint twice. On the low end, I was out there almost all my life, and I only went once. I'm like, damn. But I made more money because there's more hypes, and more weed heads, and girls.

In Roseland, drug markets continue to be volatile:

Q: One of the things that I've watched in Chicago, and looking at what's different in New York, is of all the projects coming down and all the people moving in to Roseland, what effect does that have on the neighborhood, in terms of drug trade and violence?
A: *A lot of them cashiers* [drug dealers] *coming down here from the low end, from the projects, they come down to the big city where it's at, but they don't even know they got the mentality of the project, when it's a block like that. You see what I'm saying? They're all used to living in a project, and now it's a block and it's going to change you're whole environment. So, they now they still think like they're living in the projects, getting tooled with some of the other gangsters or either they could be some opposition gang, and now they still think they're living in the project, project mentality. No… that's causing wars, niggers is dying. You shooting people out here, shooting niggers, that moved out.*

Q: What's the difference in the project mentality? I didn't think of it that way. Explain that to me.
A: *Well, the project mentality is a whole different frame of thought from how you live on a block, you know what I'm saying. I don't know how they're thinking, but their hustle skills all is different, the way they think they could treat somebody else is different. Don't think you could just, now that you moved out here, don't think that you could just fool somebody and go back on your porch where you would go back to your building like that? Somebody's going to come back and get you. It ain't like that, it ain't that easy, it ain't that type of party. You still think you got that project mentality, like living in projects, and you come onto a block and it's totally different.*

> Q: It's like you don't realize you're much more vulnerable and out in the open?
> A: *Right, you're sticking out where you weren't sticking out in the project, because everybody was like that. And people got to hound you if you're making to much noise and something like that.*
>
> Q: You don't rip down people's homes that they've lived in for 20 to 30 years...
> A: *It ain't going to work.*

Satan's Disciples from the West Side feared the same renewed violence as a result of the projects coming down:

> R1: *As the projects come down, they gonna start movin' in, in like our neighborhoods, like our neighborhoods, probably some suburbs. That, that's gonna be a big, when all the projects get moved down, that's gonna be a, I'm talkin' about, man, a real, I'm talkin' about, man, a war, a war that you've never seen before, man. 'Cause niggers from the projects gonna come try to take over niggers' lands and shit and, ain't nobody gonna let it, you know what I'm sayin'. It's gonna be a lot of people dyin' and getting' shot and getting' hurt, robbed...*
>
> R2:...*like, from our experience, the people with gangs in the project, they tend to be, they more aggressive than we are. They tend to think that we, that, you know, we weaker than them or something like that. So, you know, but that's gonna come, that's not gonna make a agreement right there.*
>
> R1: *It's gonna happen. 'Cause all those projects like the Horners, the Green, some of them buildings getting' torn down, they gonna start movin' here, to the West Side.*

On the other hand, while gentrification means displacement, it also brings opportunities:

> *What they don't see is* that *a lot of these yuppies use drugs. That's just helping the gangs get situated a little better. Now they don't have to sit on the corner. Now its just 'call me on my cell'. The yuppies have big money.*

Future Perspectives

Since most of those interviewed were in their early twenties, they were looking ahead but didn't know how change would occur. Having kids made these young gang members stop and think:

> *I be tryin' to give it up, man, 'cause I got three kids, man.*

> Q: Oh yeah, really?
> A: *Yeah, it's, I can't get no job, you know what I'm sayin'. I ain't finish school, you know what I'm sayin', so I just, you know what I'm sayin', I gotta support my kids so, I just, man, stick to doin' what I'm doin', hope God don't let me killed out there, you know what I'm sayin', man, before my kids get older. So I gotta sell drugs to try to support 'em.*

Sometimes they were baffled by the question of what to do about organized armed violence in Chicago:

> Q: Let me ask all of you about, if, if the door bursts open here and Mayor Daley comes in and he says that he doesn't know what the hell to do about all these homicides in this city, all this killing. You guys take over. And he says, you're now the mayor. You get to do whatever you want in this city. Tell the cops what to do, whatever... What do you do, all right? You got the power.
> R2: *That's a good question.*
> R1: *You know what, that is a good question, 'cause I never thought about no stuff like that, you know what I'm sayin', be kickin', like, ...You know what? To be honest with you, I don't know what I'd do. His head be hurtin' all the time. He don't even know what to do.*

Several of those interviewed thought that the old gang leadership could pull things together if they were back on the street:

> *He's* [Larry Hoover] *a great man, he almost did something. He almost got a whole community to vote and almost won. That was something great. From inside the penitentiary, you got people that come together for just that one little moment. He almost did it. They caught him. But he did some things. He's teaching, though, teaching political, teaching both sides of the gang, man, you know, keep you level headed.*

This Gangster emphasizes the influence of Larry Hoover:

> *But, you* [want] *me to tell you something, though? If the nigger was out, all this, he could stop people from crimes and stuff, because he had everybody listening to him, everybody. Every time I go to the joint or every time I get locked up, the old Vice Lords talking about him. Yeah, everybody was cool. If he was out, all this would stop. Because the man was so powerful, someway, somehow, he make motherfuckers, because all he got to do is put jobs out here. But y'all ain't doing it. Y'all build the restaurants. Who wants a $5.25 an hour job? You might make in week, what you make on the street, in thirty minutes. You got to get them good jobs, you got to put schools. Okay, they got Dawson* [a new school], *but that ain't nothing, you*

> *got to put good schools, make people want to go. It's they're fault, I feel. Gangs got ready because they allowed it to. Now they have the community. So, we have to find a way to help ourselves. And we did.*

Another sees politics as being the reason for Hoover's continued incarceration:

> *Larry Hoover was talking politics, that's why they were scared. You can't let no man like that get out. Now, he ain't the same person as when he went in there. I think he went in there in 1972, something like that.*

Others are simply unrealistic:

> Q: Well, you're almost 21 now, so it's time to graduate out. You got to find yourself a better career. You should definitely go to school.
> A: *That's what I want. I can play baseball for these schools, go to Robert Morris with my friend, he plays with the NBA, you know, I've met Michael Jordan. I met Sammy Sosa before, at Michael Jordan's restaurant. I met him in person. I met a boxer, I forgot his name, I met a hockey person before, you meet all kinds in the neighborhood. People get killed, prostitutes, drugs, and all this. I'm crying at night, like, damn, it could be me, it could be this person, it could be that person, it just hits you all at one time...*
>
> Q: Time to move on.
> A: *Look for a real job, stick to that job, get that job, get the respect.*

This Vice Lord focuses on guns:

> Q: What, if the mayor came to see you and said, 'What do we do with all this violence, how are we going to deal with this stuff?' what would you tell him?
> A: *Because he doesn't have a clue. He just thinks if he sends more cops out, he's going to stop the killing. The police are going to get killed like everybody else. These people don't care about killing no police. The people I'm talking about don't care about killing nobody. They ain't stupid, but they know they be kind of leery about what they're doing, but sometimes the police are in the wrong place at the wrong time.*
>
> [They] *Got to find the people selling guns. Who sell guns? I don't anybody that got a whole lot of guns around here. Go to the gun store. What do we got gun stores out here for? What do you need guns for? Can't nobody shoot nobody if they don't got no guns.*
>
> Q: Well, maybe we should go into the places that make them.

A: *Right, and they keep making them so people gonna keep getting them. People make guns so they sell them. If you ain't selling no guns, what you gonna do? You'll have to shut it down. It's just like that with anything. Let's say you selling boats and ain't nobody buying your boat, what you gonna have to do? Close it down cause you don't have any money, you can't afford in anymore. Shut it down.*

Q: So, drug gangs don't have to be violent.
A: *No, as long as everybody stay in their own little territories minding their own business, everything will be okay.*

This women give an answer almost word for word to that given by most female gang members in the earlier Milwaukee study. Female gang members didn't find guns morally wrong, but they did not want them around their kids.

Q: Do you have guns in your house now?
A: *No, I ain't got no guns.*

Q: Why not?
A: *I got two kids.*

These two Satan's Disciples saw some good in the mayor's community development efforts but raise the question of jobs:

R1: *'Cause I ain't…like, just let all the gang bangers take over, I wouldn't, 'cause I wouldn't do that. I don't, I really don't know what I'd do. I'm serious, I don't know. That question never, I mean, I never got asked a question like that.*

R2: *I think he* [the mayor] *got a good… plan when he's, you know, buildin' up these good communities, you know what I mean, all these condos! and stuff like that. He got a good plan. It's a start. But he has to get back down to like, the economy. We're down in the economy, we gotta get jobs for people. And the only reason that people do stuff like this is 'cause we ain't got no jobs for them. And they ain't got no choice but to do what they gotta do. They gotta survive some way. They gotta rob, sell them drugs, and destroy other people's lives, so they can help their own. It ain't good, but that's just the way the world was made.*

This Vice Lord also emphasizes the need for jobs.

Q: Do you have anything else you sort of want to add about this, your thoughts about this, the future or the past or anything?

A: *I know there's a lot of people that aren't interested in this, that want to do the things that need to be done. With the jobs, they aren't giving us much of a chance to change. Like you don't want to change, you go out looking for jobs, you go to a hundred interviews, filling out the applications, you get tired. And you feel like, 'I'm doing this when I could've did this and made a couple of hundred bucks, and I waste this time and make nothing.' They're not giving us much of a chance. Even though we did this, we did this to ourselves, but at the same time if you don't give a person much help... If a person don't got no job, they can't get hired, how's they gonna give you a job, if they don't give you a chance? I can't get no job because I don't have no job history. I would never get a job. Because nobody's going to give me a chance… they got kids to feed, they got to feed themselves. Some way you have to eat, you're going to find a way.*

This Latin King explains the state's role in provoking violence and the gangs' desire to keep things cool:

Cause I'll tell you something, all of us on this side of the fence, we want shit to stop. We wish we didn't have to go through what we had to go through. We tired of burying people. Is it in our hands? No it's not. Because we've seen and we've done it many times. We reduce the violence and we reduce all the graffiti and when we stop everything and we stop drug dealers from selling, we still go to jail. It continues to happen. Why? Because of the Red Squad. The Red Squad supposedly officially ended in 1976, it came out in the newspaper. You know everybody said hey it's over it's not happening again. In 1996 it came out in the newspaper in the Chicago Tribune that it really ended in 1983. Then another report came out not too long ago saying well we think it still might be active but in a minimal way. I have at least three or four close relatives, two of them that are in jail for no reason. I mean it's not, they're not there because they did something but because they were set up.

Education

All of those interviewed expressed interest in returning to school and getting a degree or additional education. Some are blasé.

Q: Are you thinking about going on in school?
A: *Yeah. When the opportunity presents itself, yeah, I'll go back.*

While several had returned to school and got their high school diploma equivalent, one common short term goal was to try to get an education and away from the streets. This Gangster talks about how sick and tired he is of the street life:

> [Other guys on the street say] *we don't like you, this and that, pick a fight for no reason. You trying to going to school, to be somebody and that's what I want. To stay out of trouble. I don't want to go back to jail or nothing, just lay low, be cool, I ain't with this shooting people, no, forget it, I'm just focused right now.*

On the other hand, the lure of the streets is very powerful.

> *You know what I'm sayin'? Sell drugs, or gang bang. I mean, it's, it's* just *like a cycle. It's just like, okay, you in jail, you do the same …. So, when you in a gang, you, I mean, it's nothin', it's nothin' new. It get borin' after awhile, but this is what you like to do everyday. You like to get drunk, get high, smoke weed, you know what I'm sayin'...I mean, just want to, man, fuck somebody up today. Sometimes you just want to chin and sell drugs, I mean. I been in, I been in since 96, man, and I ain't goin' nowhere, I don't think I'm goin' nowhere no time soon. I mean, that's fucked up to say. I got three kids, but that's what I like to do, man.*

Summary

Gang members don't see much hope in the near future in Chicago. The barriers of joblessness, racism, and a volatile drug market pervade their outlook. The changing spaces of gang life in Chicago due to gentrification and the demolition of the housing projects has kept drug markets unsettled and rates of violence remain high. Thus pressures continue for children to be involved in organized, armed violence. Most respondents in this study wanted to return to school, though for some of these young adults, the street life has indelibly marked them.

III. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TARGETING COAV

Chicago Violence Intervention Programs

Programs that work with gangs and violence have a long tradition in Chicago. Many of the high profile programs today duplicate some of the main characteristics of the Chicago Area Project,[83] formed in 1934 as a community-based answer to juvenile delinquency and still active today. In the 1940s and 1950s Saul Alinksy's Back of the Yards organizing became the paradigm for community action and delinquency prevention programs.[84]

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[83] Carey, James T. 1990. "The People Versus the Experts: The Chicago Area Project." Unpublished paper at the University of Illinois-Chicago.
Finestone, Harold. 1976. The Delinquent and Society: The Shaw and McKay Tradition in *Delinquency, Crime and Society*, ed. James F. Jr. Short. University of Chicago; Schlossman, Steven, and Michael Sedlak. 1983. *The Chicago Area Project Revisited*, Santa Monica, California: The Rand Corporation; Schlossman, Steven L., Gail Zellman, and Richard Schavelson. 1984. *Delinquency Prevention in South Chicago*. Santa Monica, California: Rand Corporation; Sorrentino, Anthony 1959. "The Chicago Area Project After 25 Years." Federal Probation 23:40-45.
[84] Alinksy, Saul. 1946. *Reveille for Radicals.* Chicago: University of Chicago.

These programs typically hire "marginal" or "detached" workers, who are often former gang members, to do outreach to gangs. The heart of the detached worker approach is to maintain contact with gangs on the street, know when problems may lead to violence, and intervene with conflict mediation skills. The detached workers work as advocates for gang members to the courts and look for jobs. They also try to get younger gang members to return to school, and organize recreation programs. These programs relied on community involvement and participation and opposed models that utilize a professional staff of social workers.

Chicago today has too many violence prevention programs to mention. Each community follows, in some respects, the parameters set by the Chicago Area Project. Irving Spergel[85] has developed a community approach to gang intervention that has been widely copied nationally. Spergel's demonstration of his model, in Chicago's Little Village, has recently been disbanded and Spergel himself argues that the police undermined the effectiveness of his efforts. [86]

The city response to gangs and violence has changed since the first days of the Chicago Area Project. These early programs largely worked with Polish, Italian, Irish, and later Mexican youth in areas that were relatively stable and ethnically homogenous.[87] Except for the 1920s during the years of alcohol Prohibition and Al Capone, violence in Chicago was not at the very high levels of the last decades. Most gang programs focused on delinquency prevention not violence reduction.

In the 1960s, gang violence increased and the city's response changed from delinquency prevention to gang eradication. Mayor Richard J. Daley, the present mayor's father, declared war on gangs[88] and subsequent police repression led to the arrest or death of many of the gang leaders, as well as black and Latino political activists. Social programs that employed gang members, like Youth Manpower run by The Woodlawn Organization (TWO), were targeted by police and city officials and shut down.[89] TWO officials and gang leaders were called before a US Congressional committee and the idea that gangs could play a positive role in social programming was thoroughly discredited.[90]

In the 1990s, some cities saw homicide rates plummet while others, like Chicago, saw little change. All cities, however, have some version of violence prevention programs and each claims to be effective on its own terms. However, in cities like Chicago, Detroit, and St. Louis these programs have had little effect on city-wide homicide rates. Rather than

[85] Spergel, Irving A. 1995. *The Youth Gang Problem: A Community Approach.* New York: Oxford University Press.
[86] Personal communication.
[87] Carey, James T. ibid
[88] http://gangresearch.net/ChicagoGangs/blackstonerangers/Daley.html
[89] Spergel, Irving A., Castellano Turner, John Pleas, and Patricia Brown 1969. *Youth Manpower: What happened in Woodlawn.* The School of Social Service Administration, The University of Chicago.
[90] Spergel, Irving A., Castellano Turner, John Pleas, and Patricia Brown 1969 Ibid.

discounting this kind of program as ineffectual, it is important to also take structural factors into account.

New York City, which had homicide rates that paralleled Chicago's, saw homicide plummet in the 1990s while Chicago's only declined slightly. Among the factors in the United States relating to higher homicide rates appears to be the presence of institutionalized gangs. In NYC, police tactics of arresting of gang leaders apparently succeeded in destroying the infrastructure of the newly formed crack selling gangs. While drug sales have stayed high in poor neighborhoods, violence has dropped and "crews" that organized drug selling in the 1990s have ceased to operate. In Chicago, similar "zero tolerance" tactics have been unable to uproot gangs that have institutionalized over more than fifty years.

Other structural and policy issues also appear to be important. While, as we've seen in the report, Chicago has been uprooting public housing tenants, New York city has been engaged in one of, if not the largest investment in public housing in human history. NYC invested over $6 billion over ten years in affordable public housing in the Bronx and other poor neighborhoods. These policies stabilized poor neighborhoods, while Chicago's housing policies uprooted them.

The main approach of the Chicago Police Department, as other police agencies in the US, has been to respond with intensive and aggressive patrol to reports of violence. When successful, these activities typically displace violence rather than end it.[91] Recently the Police Department has begun to deploy CCTV, or closed circuit television, in areas of high drug dealing. No evaluations of CCTV exist, but continuing overall high rates of violence and declines in certain areas indicate displacement.

Psychological approaches to black on black violence

By the 1980s, black on black violence had become a crucial issue within Chicago's African American community, where more than two-thirds of the homicides took place. Black psychologists nationally began to focus on treatment and prevention within African American communities. In Chicago, Carl Bell, an African American psychologist, carried out studies on the impact of violence on African American children and provided treatment.[92]

Bell argued that high rates of violence led to PTSD, post traumatic stress syndrome, a war related disorder that was called to public attention after the Vietnam war. Bell found in his various studies that more than a quarter of black children in poor neighborhoods had witnessed a homicide. While police continued their policies of arrest and incarceration, Bell argued that many of the youth that became perpetrators could have been reached

[91] Blumstein, Alfred, and Joel Wallman, eds. 1999. *The Crime Drop in America.* Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.

[92] E.g. Bell, Carl C., and Esther Jenkins, J. 1991. "Traumatic Stress and Children." Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved 2.

with clinical treatment after exposure to violence. He also advocated conflict mediation in schools.

My own earlier Milwaukee studies confirmed the high levels of exposure to violence of young males within black and Latino communities. In our sample of gang members we found that male gang members were significantly more likely to have been exposed to violence than female gang members and both were exposed to more violence than non-gang youth.

	Total number of times gang member was shot at:	Mean per gang member	Total number of people gang member has seen killed	Mean per gang member
Male Gang Members N=68	617	9.1	143	2.1
Female Gang Members N=68	23	.33	21	.31

Median Age of gang members: 28.
Lifetime exposure to violence, by gender of gang members.

The Department of Youth and Child Services (DYFS), Chicago's public child protection agency, provides psychological services for children who are exposed to violence, although funding levels for such services are quite low. Teenagers who participate in organized, armed violence are either detained within the juvenile justice system or waived[93] to adult court and sentenced to prison.

The Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) makes some attempt to identify violent youthful offenders and provide counseling. The programs, however, will only provide services for a child under 12 if he or she is in immediate danger. A DCFS spokesman said they would not provide services to any "delinquent" involved in violence. In the view of expert observers, DCFS services "are not very robust due to lack of support and systematic direction." [94]

Violence intervention programs, information technology, and culture

Detached worker programs, like Operation Ceasefire in Chicago, are necessary, but not sufficient efforts to stop the cycle of violence. In the US, cities with high rates of violence are either marginal to the information economy — like Detroit or Milwaukee — or have large sections of the city that are socially isolated and excluded from the new economy. Direct approaches to violent behavior need to be supplemented with programs that promise hope through exposure of youth in poor minority communities to information technologies. Cultural approaches have

[93] In the United States children under 18 are supposed to be treated within a juvenile justice system whose goal is "the best interests of the child." Children as young as 10 who commit murder or other acts of armed violence are routinely 'waived' into adult court, meaning their status as a juvenile is terminated and they are judged in adult court.
[94] Confidential personnel communication

proven to be effective as well and can reach youth who otherwise would not be open to intervention.

My own work has combined mural projects with rival gangs and training in web page design for gang members.[95] What I learned from my own experience is that youth need to see there will be jobs that can give them hope for the future, and cultural and sporting activities, such as art, break-dance, basketball leagues, and rap music are effective ways to attract gang youth and offer alternatives. Two programs directed at Chicago's youth display these contrasting, but complementary, approaches.

Operation Ceasefire

The largest detached worker program in Chicago today is Operation Ceasefire,[96] a multimillion-dollar state-funded intervention through the University of Illinois-Chicago School of Public Health. Community groups throughout the city sponsor similar less funded programs.[97] Other programs, inspired by the Chicago Area Project committees in different neighborhoods, and B.U.I.L.D., a well-regarded detached worker program, have existed for decades working with troubled youth. Each has their own success stories and most have formal or informal evaluations.

Background: The Chicago Project for Violence Prevention

Formed in 1995, the Chicago Project for Violence Prevention is a citywide and regional effort to reduce violence in the Chicago area and other Illinois communities. The Chicago Project is in the seventh year of a 10 to 15 year effort, and is working in communities in Chicago that account for a large portion of the homicides in the city. The mission of the Chicago Project is to work with its community, city, county, state and federal partners in order to reduce street violence, namely killings and shootings.

The Chicago Project's Ceasefire initiative is focused presently on stopping the shootings and killings and the implementation of an eight point strategy:

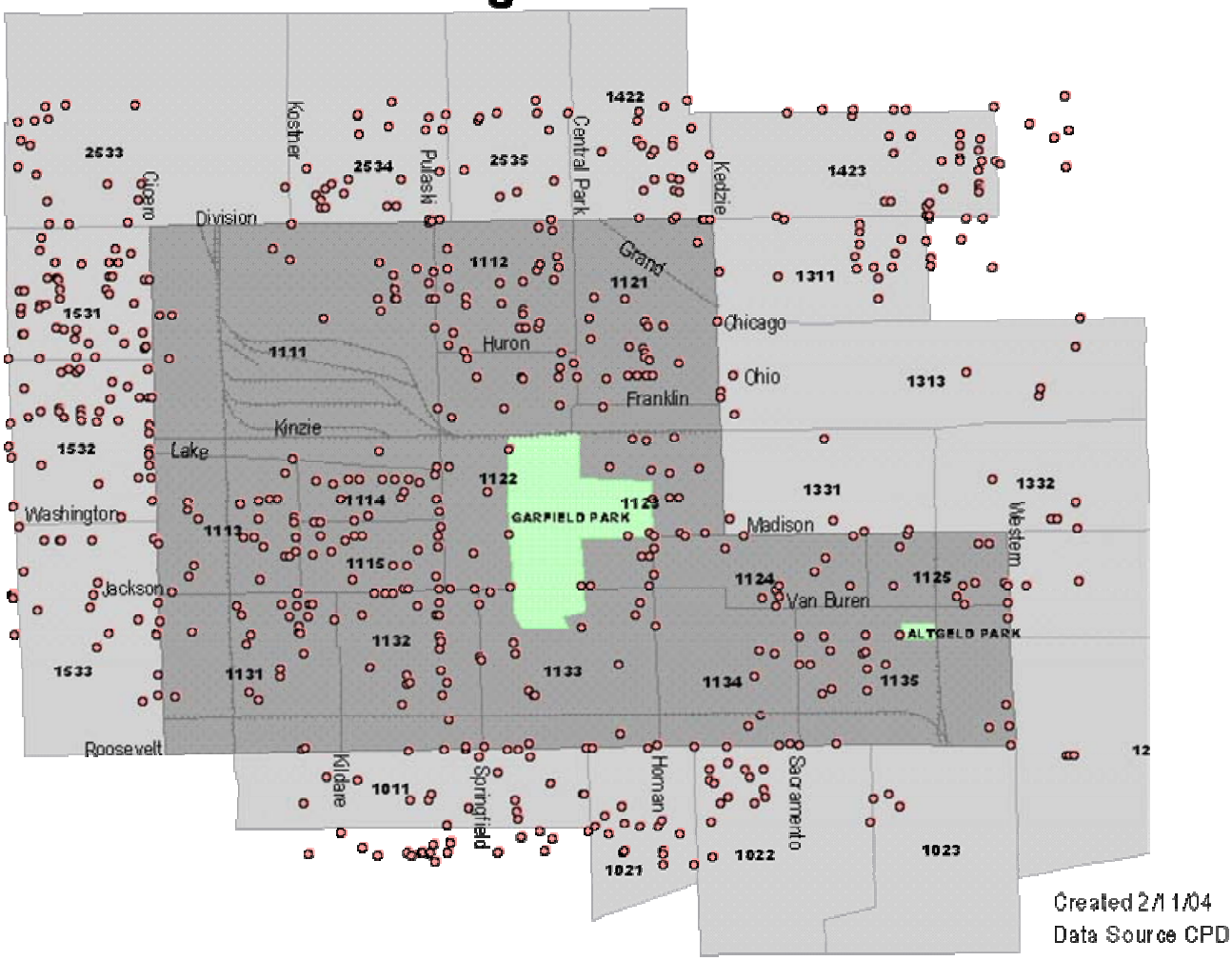
1. Strong community coalitions
2. Unified message: *No shooting*
3. Mediate and intervene in all conflicts
4. Rapid response to all shootings
5. Alternatives and linkages for most at-risk persons
6. Safe havens and programs for youth
7. Penalties for gun use and gun trafficking
8. Ensure prosecutions

[95] Hagedorn, John M. 1998, ibid.
[96] http://www.ceasefirechicago.org/main_pages/getinfo.html
[97] http://chicagoareaproject.org/history.htm

The Chicago Project uses a strategic public health approach to violence prevention that has been time tested for other serious health problems – in other words, for reductions of child mortality, prevention of heart disease, and strategies that have been applied to the elimination of smallpox and polio. This approach includes developing clarity, and full commitment, to specific objectives. The setting of long term and short term goals; strategy development based on best practices but adapted to the local situation by local practitioners; and a management structure that works at both community and city/county levels.

The map below illustrates the heavy volume of shootings in West Garfield Park, one of the highest homicide neighborhoods in Chicago and where several interviews for this study took place. The neighborhood is home to rival gangs, The Black Gangster Disciples and Conservative Vice Lords. Operation Ceasefire has worked in this area for several years.

Shootings in District 11 2002



Shootings are defined as Aggravated batteries with a firearm.

The Chicago Project for Violence Prevention, Operation Cease Fire's sponsor, has official support from the mayor, police department, the Catholic Church, and other institutions.

Ceasefire's target population is youth and young adults. The project's detached workers have worked with 902 clients or young people between June 2001 and December 2002. The typical services are referrals to school (256 persons), work (346), substance abuse programs (205), and mental health services (149).

Evaluations

Like other programs and the Chicago Police Department, Operation Ceasefire claims success in its interventions, despite the fact that homicides have not fallen in Chicago as in other cities. The program claims decreases in shooting incidents, measured by police reports in all of the neighborhoods where they have detached workers. West Garfield Park, for example, a map of which is on the preceding page, saw a 67% reduction in shootings in both 2000 and 2001. The Director of Ceasefire, Gary Slutkin, says:

> *The strength of this approach is that it is direct, goes to the heart of what drives behavior [expectations], uses multiple messengers with the same message, and focuses on assisting persons toward more adaptive approaches as supported by the immediate group itself. It does not depend on retaliatory use of force by police or anyone else, and in fact teaches that violence is always counterproductive, something that is intrinsically known, but which social pressure and emotions frequently overrides in the short run.*

Like policies of intensive patrol by police, community approaches to violence in a certain area can be effective in displacing violence, while having minimal impact on violence citywide.

Street Level Youth Media

Chicago's Street-Level Youth Media is a cultural approach to Chicago's at-risk youth. According to the website, it "educates Chicago's inner-city youth in media arts and emerging technologies for use in self-expression communication, and social change. Street-Level programs build self-esteem and critical thinking skills for urban youth that have been historically neglected by policy makers and mass media. Using video production, computer art and the Internet, young people address community issues,

access advanced technology and gain inclusion in our information-based society."[98] In 2001, more than 1,800 youth in neighborhoods across the city participated in its diverse array of cultural programs.

Street Level Youth Media's first pilot program, Neutral Ground,[99] demonstrated how media can transform a community. Using cameras to create a series of video letters, rival gangs who had never spoken face to face developed a dialogue about identity. Through video, they taught each other how to communicate and for at least a short while, a truce was brokered between the opposing factions. In the process, it taught the community to see these youth as real human beings trapped in a desperate, life-threatening position. Today, Neutral Ground Youth is a drop-in center and webzine (on line magazine) for young people on Chicago's West Side.

[98] http://streetlevel.iit.edu/aboutus/aboutus.html
[99] http://streetlevel.iit.edu/youthprojects/Neutral/ng.html

Street Level Youth Media has also sent Chicago youth to Chiapas, Mexico for a video project[100] and initiated a wide assortment of other youth projects. Street-Level became one of the first organizations in the USA to offer new technology access to urban kids. SLYM doesn't depend on charity for its existence, but instead bases its support on earned income for hard work and quality programs. By partnering with the city, in 2001 SLYM was able to develop job programs that paid out more than $80,000 in youth salaries.

The goal of SLYM, in their own words, is "to work with youth rejected by mainstream society and traditional youth agencies, advocating for their needs and pushing them to new heights. We want to show how art and social commentary can meld together on the grassroots level to empower youth. We know that media making demands teamwork and creativity, and builds in youth the critical thinking skills that help them navigate modern times. Our ongoing hope is to create opportunities for young people to find solutions to their problems, to strengthen their communities and work together towards economic viability."[101]

Recommendations

There are many programs in Chicago neighborhoods to combat youth violence. A few are well-funded, like Operation Ceasefire, but most are neighborhood-based efforts to make contact with gang members, offer services, and try to mediate conflicts. Some culturally-based programs exist as well, like Street Level Youth Media, but most do not reach out to gang-affiliated youth. Both types of programs are necessary, but not sufficient to reduce Chicago's high levels of violence.

Structural factors create the conditions for persistent violence and need to be addressed along with programmatic efforts. The lack of jobs and poor education in poor African American and Latino communities fuels gang involvement and is related to violence. Poverty, unemployment, and failing schools, however, do not automatically lead to high rates of violence. Many US cities, with unemployment and poverty rates as high as Chicago's, have markedly reduced their rates of homicide.

In Chicago, as in many cities around the world, poor populations are being displaced to make room for housing and work for the affluent and information economy. Thousands of Chicago families and entire branches of gangs have been displaced to areas of high homicide. This has contributed to keeping drug markets volatile as the displaced drug sellers violently compete with established gangs for customers. Police repression has not

[100] http://streetlevel.iit.edu/youthprojects/chiapas/chiapas.html
[101] http://streetlevel.iit.edu/aboutus/aboutus.html

stamped out gangs with a 50-year history, but has succeeded in fragmenting them, thus added intra-gang to inter-gang violence.

What is needed in Chicago to reduce organized, armed violence is a combination of youth programs, institutional reform, and structural change. Specifically:

- An end to the forced migration of public housing tenants to other parts of the city and the rehabilitation of their present homes or new homes in the same area.

- Crop Substitution. To end the reliance of poor Chicago neighborhoods on the gang's drug economy, licit jobs and economic development are needed in poor communities. What is good for Colombia should be good for Chicago.

- Chicago police need to generally ignore small scale, non-violent, survival strategies like most neighborhood drug selling. Much of what is called crime is in fact work in poor communities and the gangs run these underground enterprises. Chicago should be the first city in the nation to call a truce in the 'war on drugs.'

- More resources for neighborhood-based conflict mediation programs that employ former gang members.

- More resources for cultural and computer-based programs for youth, especially gang-affiliated youth.

Conclusion

While in all cities, a few children commit individual acts of armed violence, it is only in cities with institutionalized gangs that we can speak of children or youth participating in *organized* armed violence. Children, adolescents and youth that play armed roles in the city's institutionalized gangs conduct much of the organized, armed violence in Chicago. The access to guns combined with decades old gang rivals and competition for drug markets spurs violence on. The fracturing of Chicago's gangs through police repression

and demoralization have led to a crisis in leadership which has provoked continued violence that is out of the control of the newer gang leaders who have replaced the older, jailed, leadership. The displacement of African American families through the tearing down of public housing has unsettled drug markets in receiving communities and disoriented gang drug sellers. Similarly, gentrification has displaced Latino residents but also changed the nature of local drug markets and provided the gangs with a more upscale market.

While organized,armed violence among children is declining in most parts of the United States, Chicago has seen little change over the last decade. More than 600 people kill

each year in the city of Chicago, which signifies more murders in Chicago than in any other US city. Homicide rates for children and young adults have plummeted in most major cities that do not have institutionalized gangs. The early 1990s were the height of the US drug 'wars' and the sharp increases in offenders and victims were largely due to black and Hispanic kids in gangs with guns. The declines in the 1990s meant that in most cities those kids ceased to kill one another at the same rate. There is no academic consensus on the reasons for the 'crime drop'. Clearly, the stability of drug markets after years of warfare contributed to the sharp declines. However, as noted above, these sharp declines did not occur everywhere.

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