GANGS

IN AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES

THIRD EDITION

JAMES C. HOWELL
ELIZABETH GRIFFITHS

Gangs in America's Communities

Third Edition

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James C. Howell
National Gang Center

Elizabeth Griffiths
Rutgers University

SAGE

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC | Melbourne

FOR INFORMATION:

SAGE Publications, Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
E-mail: order@sagepub.com

SAGE Publications Ltd.
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London, EC1Y 1SP
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Howell, James C., author. | Griffiths, Elizabeth A., author.

Title: Gangs in America's communities / James C. Howell, National Youth Gang Center, Elizabeth Griffiths, Rutgers University.

Description: Third Edition. | Thousand Oaks : SAGE Publications, Inc., [2019] | Revised edition of the authors' Gangs in America's communities, [2016] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017039321 | ISBN 9781544300221 (pbk. : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Gangs—United States. | Violence—United States—Prevention.

Classification: LCC HV6439.U5 H679 2018 | DDC 364.106/60973—dc23 LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2017039321

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Acquisitions Editor: Jessica Miller
Editorial Assistant: Jennifer Rubio
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18 19 20 21 22 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Brief Contents

Detailed Contents

Preface

Street gangs can be perplexing, and fighting them is often considered a futile exercise. The two main purposes of this book are to demonstrate, first, that the essential features of street gangs can be understood despite their highly varied and sometimes enigmatic public presence and, second, that some gang prevention, control strategies, and programs are effective, in contradiction of widespread proclamations that nothing works.

Street gangs are not well understood largely because they are typically shrouded in myths (some of which they create themselves), folklore, urban legends, media exaggerations, popular misconceptions, and international intrigue. Taking a historical approach to the emergence of gangs in the United States, this book uncovers their origins and traces their development first in the Northeast region of the United States, next in the Midwest, then in the West, and last in the South. The authors analyze the key historical events that produced waves of gang growth in these respective regions. These trends are brought up-to-date with 17 years of annual national survey data showing a marked increase in gang activity since the beginning of the new millennium. The book also examines gang trends along the U.S.–Mexico border and in Central America, along with an assessment of the threat of such highly publicized gangs as Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and 18th Street (M-18), and prison gangs such as the Mexican Mafia.

American gang history serves as an excellent backdrop for reviews of myths about gangs, theories of gang formation, and various ways of defining and classifying gangs. Gangs emerged in the United States in a rainbow of colors, beginning with the White ones, reflecting both outside immigration and internal racial/ethnic and territorial conflicts. Understanding the history of evolving gangs in America also engenders a stark realization that gang joining is typically a logical choice for powerless and marginalized youths who have been relegated to the fringes of society. Social and economic conditions in inner-city areas, organized crime, and deviancy centers foster widespread criminal activity, where ganging together for safety is an understandable response.

The text explains how youngsters who are making the transition from childhood to adolescence form new gangs. These *starter gangs* often emerge somewhat spontaneously among authority-rejecting children and adolescents who have been alienated from families and schools. Finding themselves spending a great deal of time on the street, youths may form gangs with other socially marginalized adolescents and look to each other for protection and street socialization. Although most youths who join are on average in a gang for less than a year, some of these gangs increase their criminal activity, especially when conflict with other street groups solidifies them, becoming a formidable force in the streets. Girls often are active participants in youth gangs, and they commit very similar crimes to those of boys. Interestingly, research on younger gangs shows that the most criminally active ones tend to be gender balanced.

To be sure, there is a harsh, cold reality about street gangs in major cities that we ignore at our own peril. Many of these gangs incubated in the most poverty-stricken zones of very

large American cities begin as the youngest cliques or sets of well-established gangs, in systematic age-graded succession. These gangs can dominate inner-city streets and create a feudal-like territory that often leads to ongoing gang wars for turf, dominance, and physical prowess—typically in very small gang *set spaces*.

Cities with populations in excess of 100,000 persons are home to the overwhelming majority of dangerous gangs representing the bulk of gang members in the entire country, and particularly older, more violent gangs with mainly young adult participants. Two-thirds of these cities consistently experience large numbers of gang-related homicides (more than 20% of their homicides are gang-related annually) and other gang-related violence, mayhem, intimidation, and pervasive fear. Case studies illustrate that cities have gang-problem histories much like individuals' careers in crime. The authors and colleagues have identified common gang-history patterns among groups of cities across 17 years of annual national survey data. Very large cities with long histories of gang problems tend to display relatively stable patterns of serious gang presence; in contrast, small cities, towns, and counties fluctuate in presence and seriousness of gang activity. In these smaller places, gangs can emerge and dissolve more readily. Regional patterns show that while chronic gang presence characterizes citywide patterns in all parts of the country, proportionately more cities in the West are characterized as chronic gang cities, proportionately more cities in the Northeast are emerging gang cities, the South has on average more variable gang cities, and the Midwest is proportionately more likely to include contracting gang cities. In terms of gang-related violence, only a very small proportion of homicides in very large southern cities are associated with gangs; by contrast, about three-quarters of very large cities in other parts of the country report that, on average, one-fifth to one-half of their annual homicides are gang-related. Both characteristics of place and features of the gangs themselves contribute to serious gang problems in American cities.

Preventing gangs from forming and eliminating established gangs altogether is virtually impossible when they are rooted in the cracks of our society. But the exceedingly good news is that gang crime can be reduced—even among some of the worst gangs—and communities can be made safe from the social destruction that follows in their wake. Although there is no quick fix, no magic bullet, several steps can be taken to bring measurable relief. But to expect dramatic results would be naïve, given the community conditions in which gangs thrive and that well-established street gangs place unusual demands on their members, including an oath of loyalty, a code of secrecy, penalties for violating gang behavioral codes, and unequivocal promises of protection.

The main implication is that communities must organize themselves better than the gangs and present a more formidable front. Once communities make a commitment to this end, they are in an excellent position to undertake strategic planning toward overcoming the gangs. Each community needs to assess its own gang activity, prepare a strategic plan that fits its specific gang problem, and develop a continuum of programs and activities that parallels youths' gang involvement over time. *Prevention* programs are needed to target children and early adolescents at risk of gang involvement to reduce the number of youths who join gangs. *Intervention* programs and strategies are needed to provide necessary sanctions and services for slightly older

youths who are actively involved in gangs to separate them from gangs. And law enforcement *suppression* strategies are needed to target the most violent gangs and older, criminally active gang members. Each of these components helps make the others more effective, provided that evidence-based services and strategies are incorporated in the continuum. The final chapters provide ample examples of these and link readers to online resources for more detailed information. Students and community stakeholders should then have the capacity to use these electronic resources to assess gang problems and actively assist or guide the mapping of a strategic plan in a given neighborhood or community.

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Acknowledgments

Most important, the authors are grateful to Jessica Miller, acquisitions editor, Criminology and Criminal Justice, at SAGE Publications for expertly shepherding the updates and production of the third edition of this book. We also thank Jennifer Rubio, editorial assistant, for her valuable expertise. In addition, the authors are indebted to SAGE's adopters and other reviewers of the previous editions of this book who kindly provided valuable comments on original chapters. For the third edition, these reviewers were as follows:

Cliff Ader, *SUNY-Rockland Community College*

Liza Chowdhury, *Fairleigh Dickinson University*

Peter R. Grahame, *Pennsylvania State University*

Laura L. Hansen, *Western New England University*

Douglas B. Weiss, *California State University, San Bernardino*

NEW TO THIS EDITION

These insightful reviewers suggested several major areas of refinement that have been addressed in this third edition. First, attention is drawn in this volume to new research on "gang structures"—that is, extremely violent social networks of offenders that contain a sizable subgroup of high-rate violent offenders who often commit violent crimes together, one-third of whom were gang members. Second, readers are provided distinguishing features (e.g., typologies) of major gangs and numerous examples of gang symbols, tattoos, and graffiti, along with a series of case studies that document the evolution of numerous gangs in large cities, including the community aspect, evolutionary nature, and how cities influence levels of violence. Third, nationwide gang trends are updated through 2012, the most recent year for which representative data are available.

Fourth, both macro and micro gang theories are updated, and a recent encapsulation of leading developmental models is featured alongside several other noteworthy micro-level theories. Fifth, potentially effective programs for female gang members are discussed—along with highly regarded delinquency prevention and reduction programs that have the potency to be effective in reducing gang crimes among young women. Sixth, a section highlighting the role of social media in gang life and its relevance to law enforcement is included. Seventh, a comprehensive gang prevention, intervention, and suppression program in Multnomah County, Oregon, is featured that has excellent potential for success—countywide in a very large city (Portland). In addition, updated information on the effectiveness of stand-alone gang programs is provided.

HOWELL'S PERSONAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe a special debt of gratitude to several imminent gang experts who greatly influenced my work. Early in my tenure as director of research and program development at the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), I had the distinct pleasure of working closely with John Wilson and Barbara Tatem-Kelley in expanding gang research under the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974. Ron Huff helped us shape public policy in addressing gang activity, based on his pioneering multicity gang studies. Walter Miller's multicity gang surveys moved Congress to support nationwide gang research and program development under new OJJDP legislative authority. We embedded gang member studies in three existing longitudinal juvenile delinquency causes and correlates studies, in Denver, Rochester, and Seattle. Those three studies generated the first generalizable body of research on risk factors for gang involvement and several prominent developmental gang theories that are presented in this textbook. On this front, I have particularly enjoyed collaboration with Terry Thornberry and Marv Krohn. I also have been very fortunate in benefiting from associations with other eminent gang scholars and program developers over the course of my career, including Leena Augimeri, Beth Bjerregaard, Becky Block, Richard Block, Father Greg Boyle, Dave Curry, Scott Decker, Arlen Egley, Finn Esbensen, Mark Fleisher, Amanda Gilman, Barry Glick, Elizabeth Griffiths, Meena Harris, Karl Hill, Alison Hipwell, Ron Huff, Jim Lynch, Joan Moore, Andrew Papachristos, Dana Peterson, David Pyrooz, Jim Short, Irving Spergel, George Tita, Diego Vigil, Celeste Wojtalewicz, and Phelan Wyrick.

Elizabeth Griffiths' pioneering gang research adds a vitally important dimension to this book, particularly her nationwide analysis of cities' histories of gang activity, a line of research that is new to criminology and the gang field. Beth also enriches this book with intriguing descriptions of cities' gang problem trajectories over a 17-year period and current features in several representative cities. She has remarkable command of the full array of criminological theories—both macro and micro level—which is very rare among criminologists. Working with her on this third edition is a highlight of my professional career. Beth is not only a brilliant scholar and outstanding writer, but she also has a keen understanding of gang-community dynamics that intrigues me. In addition, this book is greatly enriched by Megan Q. Howell's many critical but highly constructive reviews of my writing and research. I also am indebted to my wife, Karen, for lovingly tolerating my endearment to gangs.

GRIFFITHS' PERSONAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express sincere appreciation for the various scholars who have directly influenced my intellectual development, including Rosemary Gartner, Augustine Brannigan, George Tita, Bob Agnew, Anthony Doob, Julian Tanner, Bill McCarthy, Al Blumstein, Daniel Nagin, Jacqueline Cohen, A. R. Gillis, and Jody Miller, among others. I am also indebted to Buddy Howell for including me in a project that led to the OJJDP publication *U.S. Gang Problem Trends and Seriousness, 1996–2009*, and that

ultimately led to my involvement in this book. Buddy is the preeminent expert on gangs and gang formation; his knowledge and appreciation for innovative new research on youth gangs greatly enrich each new edition of this text. He is a joy to collaborate with; I am very fortunate to have had this opportunity to continue to work with Buddy on understanding and unpacking the problems of gangs and gang violence. Finally, thanks also go to Jessica Miller and Jennifer Rubio at SAGE Publications for their thoughtful guidance in revising the third edition of *Gangs in America's Communities*.

About the Authors

Dr. James C. (Buddy) Howell is a senior research associate with the National Gang Center, in Tallahassee, Florida, where he has worked for over 20 years. He formerly worked at the U.S. Department of Justice for 23 years, mostly as director of research and program development in the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. He has published over 50 works on youth and street gangs, a similar number on juvenile justice and delinquency prevention, and seven books on both topics. His gang publication topics include street gang history; gang homicides; drug trafficking; gangs in schools; hybrid gangs; myths about gangs; risk factors; gang problem trends; gang history in the United States; and what works in preventing gang activity, combating gangs, and reducing gang crime. He is very active in helping states and localities reform their juvenile justice systems and use evidence-based programs, and in working with these entities to address youth gang problems using a balanced approach.

Dr. Elizabeth Griffiths is an associate professor in the School of Criminal Justice at Rutgers University–Newark. After completing her PhD in sociology at the University of Toronto, she joined the faculty of the Department of Sociology at Emory University before moving to Rutgers in 2011. She is also a former predoctoral fellow of the National Consortium on Violence Research and a former junior fellow of the Centre of Criminology at the University of Toronto. Her research spans multiple substantive and methodological areas, including communities and crime, spatial diffusion of violence, temporal trends in homicide, the emergence of gangs in places, the transformation of public housing, youth crime and the code of the street, the efficacy of drug-free zones, and victimization risk, among others.

History of Gangs in the United States

INTRODUCTION

This chapter traces the emergence and growth of youth or street gangs in the United States.[1] We take a regional approach following Howell (2015a), for three reasons. First, Howell's detailed historical account shows that gang emergence displays a regional pattern of development, beginning with the Northeast, followed by the Midwest, next in the West, and last in the South of the United States. Second, a few very large cities stand out in each of the four regions for rapid development of gang problems within their urban centers, particularly New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles. In time, each of these cities would serve as springboards for within-region diffusion of gang culture. Third, taking a regional approach helps isolate key conditions and events underlying the emergence of gangs and fueling their expansion. In this sense, a regional perspective has some comparative benefits. Therefore, this book examines social and historical events associated with the emergence and expansion of gang activity (see Howell, 2015a, for extensive documentation of these developments and a theoretical description of the observed patterns).

According to Sante (1991), the history of street gangs in the United States began with their emergence on the East Coast around 1783, as the American Revolution ended. These gangs emerged in rapidly growing eastern U.S. cities, out of the conditions created in large part by multiple waves of large-scale immigration and urban overcrowding. This chapter examines the emergence of gang activity in four major U.S. regions, as classified by the U.S. Census Bureau: Northeast, Midwest, West, and South. The purpose of this regional focus is to develop a better understanding of the origins of gang activity and to examine common influences on gangs themselves.

STREET GANG EMERGENCE IN THE NORTHEAST

New York City's Ellis Island was the initial main port of entry to the United States. A small number of Dutch immigrants first arrived in the early 1600s, taking Manhattan Island from the indigenous people who lived, hunted, and fished there. Three large groups of early immigrants populated the Northeast. The first immigrants came mainly from England and English territories, and a much smaller number comprised of Dutch, German, Swedish, and Scandinavian peoples (Pincus & Ehrlich, 1999). Immediately following the American Revolution, English Protestants were the first large immigrant

group, representing more than 80% of residents up to 1800. In the second large wave, commencing around 1865, about 11 million immigrants arrived from mainly northern and western regions of Europe, especially Great Britain, Germany, and Scandinavia (Denmark, Norway, Sweden). The third group of immigrants, from countries of southern and eastern Europe—the Poles, Italians, Austrians, and many others—another 11 million or so, arrived from 1890 to 1930. Largely consisting of low-skilled, low-wage laborers, not unexpectedly, the two large immigrant surges overwhelmed the housing and welfare capacity of the young northeastern and midwestern cities, contributing directly to slum conditions and the accompanying crime problems, gangs included. Street gangs also emerged, beginning in Chicago, from similar conditions of social disorganization following large-scale population movement into the Midwest. The West and South regions experienced a distinctively different immigration pattern. We begin chronologically, with the Northeast region.

The Lower East Side of the city—particularly around the Five Points—later fell victim to rapid Irish immigration and ensuing political, economic, and social disorganization (Riis, 1902/1969). Bourgois (2003) also identifies Irish and Italian immigrants as early European settlers in East Harlem. Virtually all the Puerto Ricans arrived there much later, mainly in the two decades following World War II.

Street gangs on the East Coast developed in three phases. The first phase began after the American Revolution. These gang-like groups were not seasoned criminals—only youths fighting over local turf. The beginning of serious ganging in New York City, the second phase, commenced a few years later, around 1820, after immigration began to pick up (Pincus & Ehrlich, 1999). A third wave of gang activity ensued in the 1930s and 1940s after Latino and Black populations began to arrive in large numbers. Soon, according to Gannon (1967), the initial all-White New York gangs were largely Puerto Rican or Black.

First Period of New York City Gang Growth: 1783 to 1860s

The first gang with a definite, acknowledged leadership—named the Forty Thieves and made up largely of local thieves, pickpockets, and thugs—formed around 1826 in the back room of Rosanna Peers's greengrocery, located in the Five Points district (Haskins, 1974). The second gang that formed in the area, the Kerryonians, named themselves after the county in Ireland from which they originated. Other gangs soon formed in a nearby area known as the Bowery. Battles between the Bowery Boys and Five Points gangs and the supporting gangs they had spawned (claiming more than 1,000 members each) were legendary. On occasion, outmanned police summoned both the National Guard and the regular army to quell the fights. A 2002 movie, *Gangs of New York*, vividly depicted these gangs, albeit with some exaggerations and distortions in "a blood-soaked vision of American history" (Gilfoyle, 2003, p. 621). A third cluster of gangs operated along the docks and shipyards on the East Side River of Manhattan (Asbury, 1927; Haskins, 1974). These gangs, largely composed of adolescents, were skilled at pirating cargo on the ships and docks. Occasionally, they battled nearby gangs and were far more violent than either the Five Points or Bowery Boys gangs.

Gangs in Boston, comprising White Catholic and predominantly Irish youths, with a few Italians, were first reported in the 1840s, likely having evolved from the fighting street corner groups (W. Miller, 1966/2011). Also, Adamson (2000) reports that Philadelphia's *Public Ledger* identified nearly 50 White gangs in the City of Brotherly Love between 1840 and 1870. Although these gangs persisted for some time, they were neither as well organized nor as ferocious as the New York City gangs. This assessment would change within a couple of decades.

Second Period of New York City Gang Growth: 1860s to 1930s

Gangs' growing strength was demonstrated in the Civil War draft riots precipitated by young Irish street gangs. First staged in 1863, these riots were in opposition to a federal law (the Conscription Act) that gave President Lincoln the power to draft American citizens (men ages 20 to 45) into war (Haskins, 1974). Although a clause exempted persons who paid the U.S. government $300, this option was not available to residents of Five Points and the Bowery. Two gangs led the protest, involving at least 50,000 mobsters. The riot turned into a racist event. At least 18 Black men were lynched, and as many as 70 of them "vanished without a trace" (Sante, 1991, p. 351).

For 20 years following the Civil War, corruption was rampant in New York City. Haskins (1974) pinpoints a governmental and political organization, Tammany Hall, at the center of much of the corruption—even aiding and abetting gang activity. Needless to say, gang membership grew enormously during this period. Another 8.8 million immigrants reached the United States in the late 1800s and early 1900s—the Poles, Italians, Austrians, and other nationalities (Pincus & Ehrlich, 1999), worsening the slum conditions and leading to the permanency of tenement houses (Riis, 1902/1969). As families bettered themselves economically, they would move to more suitable communities. In turn, newer immigrants would occupy the lower rung in society that advancing families vacated. This pattern of ethnic invasion and succession continued into the 20th century.

Gangs and other criminal groups responded to conditions of social and physical disorder, forging their own stronghold in New York City. The gangs rapidly expanded as slum conditions grew worse, and in 1916, according to Haskins (1974), police launched the first U.S. war on gangs. Police beat and arrested untold numbers of gang members, and criminal courts imprisoned more than 200 of their most important leaders. But the gangs survived, for they already were rooted in the cracks of the urban slum setting.

Third Period of New York City Gang Growth: 1930s to 1980s

Beginning in the 1930s, the most intensive gang activity in New York City shifted from downtown (Manhattan) to both northern (Harlem and the Bronx) and southeastern (Brooklyn) locations in the metropolitan area. German and Irish Catholics already populated the northern areas of the city, and rural southern Italians arrived at the turn of the century, to face ethnic hostility from English Americans and the Irish in particular. Gangs were visible in East Harlem and that area soon would be a gang

hot spot, although when they formed there is uncertain. Bourgois (2003) suggests that White gangs quite likely emerged there by the early 1900s, growing out of ethnic Irish and Italian clashes. Soon more Blacks would arrive, in the Great Migration of Blacks from the rural South northward between 1910 and 1930, making up 14% of New York City's population by the end of that period. By the time of World War II, Harlem was one of the first Black ghettos in America, and "the area could not have been riper for the sprouting of street gangs" (Haskins, 1974, p. 80).

More fighting gangs took root after the arrival of Latinos (from Central America, South America, and the Caribbean) in the 1930s and 1940s, who settled in areas of New York City populated by European Americans—particularly in East Harlem, the South Bronx, and Brooklyn. Bourgois (2003) describes how the largest new group of immigrants, 1.5 million largely impoverished Puerto Ricans seeking jobs in the U.S. factories, fled "sugar cane fields, shantytowns, and highland villages [only] to be confined to New York City tenements and later to high-rise public housing projects in the two decades following World War II" (p. 51). Three-way race riots commenced in the 1940s among Italian Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Blacks in Harlem. Ethnic invasion and succession was a key precipitating factor. With the massive influx of Puerto Ricans, East Harlem turned Latino and soon came to be known as El Barrio, or Spanish Harlem.

In Manhattan, adolescent gang fights between the Jets of European extraction and the Puerto Rican Sharks were featured in Leonard Bernstein's classic musical *West Side Story*. By then, gang members were primarily non-White (Black, Mexican American, and Latino), as early White European gangs had all but disappeared as a result of assimilation into mainstream American society. The new gangs were more organized, better armed, and often involved in drug activity (Haskins, 1974). Following another wave of Black migration beginning in the 1950s, some Black gangs were very prevalent in East Harlem and other segregated communities in New York City, bringing their total to 800,000 (Haskins, 1974). In the mid-1950s, the first high-rise public housing project in the United States was built there for several thousand poor Puerto Rican and Black families in a "slum clearance" initiative. More serious gang fights followed as the common residence brought them together in frequent and direct contact.

The 1970s and 1980s brought another large wave of migrants to the United States, around 7 million people (Pincus & Ehrlich, 1999). M. Sullivan (1993) relays that during the 1980s, many of the new immigrants into Brooklyn were Asian and non–Puerto Rican Latinos, especially Dominicans, followed by Central and South Americans. The newer Hispanic groups began to succeed Puerto Ricans. "In fact, by the late 1990s, Hispanics had replaced Blacks as the largest minority group in the city" (Lobo, Flores, & Salvo, 2002, p. 704). In the southernmost sections—Brooklyn, the South Bronx, and Chinatown—a variety of gangs had emerged (M. Sullivan, 1993).

Modern-Day Eastern Gangs

In the 1990s, urban renewal, slum clearances, and ethnic migration pitted gangs of Black, Puerto Rican, and Euro-American youths against each other in battles in New York City to dominate changing neighborhoods and to establish and maintain their turf and honor (Schneider, 1999). But New York City was no longer the epicenter of serious

street gang activity in the Northeast. In the meantime, gang activity grew more serious in Philadelphia (W. Miller, 1982/1992). For more than a decade leading up to 1980, Philadelphia ranked third (behind Los Angeles and Chicago) of all U.S. cities in the average number of gang-related homicides. Boston ranked fifth, but gang activity was evident in 37 cities around Boston by the early 1970s (W. Miller, 1974b). Following the growth of Black gangs in Philadelphia to about 100 violent gangs by the late 1960s, police reported about 40 gang-related killings each year in the mid-1970s (W. Miller, 1975). For a time, broadcast media dubbed the city the "youth gang capital" of the nation (Ness, 2010, p. 32). By 1980, authorities in nearby New Jersey (Newark and Jersey City); eastward on Long Island; northward in Albany, Cambridge, Hartford, New Haven, and Springfield; westward in Pittsburgh; and southward in Baltimore also reported gang activity—expanding the scope of gang activity in all directions within the region (W. Miller, 1982/1992, pp. 157–159). In time, gang activity in this region expanded within other states, particularly Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Connecticut. From 1996 to 2009, almost half (45%) of the 45 large Northeast gang problem cities (with populations greater than 50,000) were classified as "chronic" gang cities (Chapter 7).

The development of prison gangs in the Northeast contributed to the expansion of street gang activity, although this region was not the first to see these emerge—the West and Midwest led the way, as we shall see. The strong influence of prison gangs in this region would come much later. Nevertheless, Pennsylvania was among the first half-dozen states in the United States to report prison gangs, composed of members of the city's Black street gangs (Camp & Camp, 1985). Later in this chapter, we review the extent of prison gang activity in the United States and assess the impact of these organizations on street gangs.

STREET GANG EMERGENCE IN THE MIDWEST

Chicago emerged as an industrial hub between the Civil War and the end of the 19th century after its officials recruited a massive labor force from the peasantry of southern and eastern Europe. Gangs that flourished in Chicago grew mainly from the same immigrant groups that populated the early serious street gangs of New York City. In his 1927 book, Thrasher plotted on a map of the city the location of the 1,313 early gangs (with some 25,000 members) that he found in Chicago in the 1920s. This exercise revealed Chicago's "gangland" in "interstitial areas," zones of the city lying between the commercial central city and residential neighborhoods. In that zone, characterized by social disorganization, gangs representative of a wide variety of White ethnic groups emerged and thrived. Thrasher viewed the gang as an interstitial element in the framework of society, and gangland as an interstitial region in the layout of the city.

First Period of Chicago Gang Growth: 1860s to 1920

Chicago's street gangs developed among children of White immigrants along ethnic lines, mainly Polish, Irish, and Italian (Thrasher, 1927/2000). Merely nascent gangs at first, by the 1860s more menacing Irish gangs had clubrooms in the basements of

saloons. By the 1880s, large Irish gangs (e.g., the Dukies and the Shielders) were prevalent and terrorizing the German, Jewish, and Polish immigrants who settled there. They also fought constantly among themselves, but they occasionally united to battle nearby Black gangs. The Black immigrants had arrived following the U.S. Civil War, to escape the misery of Jim Crow laws and the sharecropper's life in the southern states. But serious Black gangs likely did not appear until the 1920s, following the bloody Chicago riot of 1919, precipitated by the death of a Black youth who had been swimming in Lake Michigan (Tuttle, 1996; Voogd, 2008). After drifting into an area demarcated for Whites, he was either stoned to death or drowned. Police never arrested the White man who led the attack.

Second Period of Chicago Gang Growth: 1920 to 1940s

Mexican American and Black gangs became prominent in the second period of Chicago gang growth, though "the impact of Black street gangs on the Black community was minimal, at best, prior to the 1940s" (Perkins, 1987, p. 25). None of the Chicago gangs that Thrasher (1927/2000) classified in the 1920s was of Mexican descent, and only 7% (63 gangs) were Black. This rapidly changed, beginning in the 1940s, after massive migration of both groups into Chicago. The first major wave of Mexican migration occurred during the years 1919 to 1939, seeking to take advantage of new employment opportunities (Arredondo, 2004; McWilliams, 1943). Soon Mexican immigrants spread into two Chicago communities that had long been settled by the Irish, Germans, Czechs, and Poles (Pilsen and Little Village), wherein Spergel (2007) suggests Mexican American gangs grew to join the ranks of the most violent gangs in the city. Several small Mexican American gangs formed in Chicago during the 1930s, a second-generation product of marginalization, youth conflict, and defiance (Diamond, 2009). More such gangs formed following the 1943 Chicago zoot suit riot (explained below), instigated by numerous attacks on Mexican American youths by White and Black youths, directly stimulating the formation of gangs in self-defense (McWilliams, 1943).

Between 1910 and 1930, during the Great Migration of more than a million Blacks from the rural South to the urban North for jobs, Chicago gained almost 200,000 Black residents (Marks, 1985; B. Miller, 2008), giving the city a very large Black population—along with New York City, Cleveland, Detroit, Philadelphia, and other Northeast and Midwest cities. Perkins (1987) directly attributes the race riot of 1919 to gang formation—in which Black males united to confront hostile White gang members who were terrorizing the Black community. Black gangs formed to counter the aggressive White youths, but these relatively unorganized Black gangs were no match for the well-organized, all-White gangs that were based in athletic clubs that provided ready participants when conflicts emerged.

Third Period of Chicago Gang Growth: 1940s to 1980s

The Chicago Black population grew enormously from 1940 onward (B. Miller, 2008). Most of the immigrant Blacks in Chicago were forced to settle in the area known as the Black Belt (a 30-block stretch of dilapidated housing along State Street on the south

side), where abject poverty soon was concentrated. To alleviate the housing shortage and better the lives of poor city residents, from 1955 to 1968, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) constructed in that area more than 20,000 low-income family apartments (virtually all of which were in high-rise buildings). The best known of these are Governor Henry Horner Homes, Cabrini Green, and Robert Taylor Homes (RTH). The latter complex, the largest of the three, consisted of 28 sixteen-story buildings in uniform groups of two and three along a 2-mile stretch from the industrial area near downtown into the heart of the Black ghetto on the south and west sides of Chicago (Venkatesh, 2002, 2008). Gangs grew stronger in the buildings, and also in several instances took control of them, literally turning them into high-rise forts. Gang wars erupted, largely over drug-trafficking turf, and Chicago's Black gang problem "exploded" in the 1960s, a period of increased gang "expansion and turbulence" in Chicago (Perkins, 1987, p. 74). Venkatesh (2008) notes, "Most remarkably, law enforcement officials deemed Robert Taylor Homes too dangerous to patrol" (p. 36).

As an illicit economy began to emerge in the 1970s, gangs based in RTH were able to exert greater control over residents' income-generating opportunities (Venkatesh, 1996). The gangs not only controlled drug distribution within their respective territories in RTH, but also facilitated the resale of stolen car parts for tenants in their area, and they sometimes provided protection for women who were using their apartments as brothels. On occasion, the gangs provided financial resources for necessities such as building repairs and upkeep. For some residents, involvement in illicit economic enterprises the gangs facilitated became their main livelihood. In some instances, gangs actually came to serve as de facto police, providing safety from outsiders. Because gangs provided some relief to residents in the form of safety and financial resources for necessities, most residents reluctantly tolerated the increased violence associated with gang involvement in drug trafficking (Venkatesh, 1996, 2002). In an unusual gesture of appreciation, the extremely violent gangs sponsored picnics for residents.

Partly in response to what Diamond (2009) tags as growing racial and ethnic violence, Black, Puerto Rican, and Mexican American gangs proliferated in the late 1950s. Racial unrest also contributed to rapid gang growth in Chicago.

> The Civil Rights Movement was advocating nonviolence, racial pride, and unity. But Black students who were having nonviolent demonstrations in the South had little influence on Black street gang members [in Chicago] who were having their own distinctly more violent demonstrations. (Perkins, 1987, p. 29)

The rise of the Black Panthers instilled Black pride, and their demise stirred resentment and anger toward White police and governance. Diamond (2009) describes how the Black gangs that were prevalent in Chicago in the 1960s were immersed in a street culture that promoted racial empowerment and racial unity. The youth subculture supplied distinctive gang clothing, hairstyles, music, and other symbols, including clenched fists, the symbolic Black Power gesture.

By 1960, the Mexican migration into Chicago had reached 56,000, prompting residents to dub the city the "Mexico of the Midwest." In the mid-1970s, Latino gangs, Black gangs, and Caucasian gangs in Illinois prisons formed loose alliances, the largest of which were the People and the Folk. The remaining gangs were independents and were not aligned with either of these groups. Until recent years, these alliances were respectfully maintained on Chicago's streets, and the People and the Folk were strong rivals. "Now, although street gangs still align themselves with the People and the Folk, law enforcement agencies all seem to agree that these alliances mean little" (Chicago Crime Commission, 2006, p. 11). Nevertheless, Cureton (2009) explains, "the Chicago style of gangsterism stretches to Gary, Indiana, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where alliances are fragile enough to promote interracial mistrust and solid enough to fuel feuds lasting for decades" (p. 354). The period of Chicago's White ethnic gangs' dominance came to an end soon after Thrasher's research in the late 1920s was completed, however. As J. Moore (1998) explains, "The gangs of the 1920s were largely a one-generation immigrant ghetto phenomenon" (p. 68).

Modern-Day Midwest Gangs

Chicago remains the epicenter of gang activity in the Midwest. "Chicago gangs tend to be larger in size, more organizationally sophisticated, and more heavily involved in large-scale drug dealing than gangs in other cities" (Papachristos, Hureau, & Braga, 2013, p. 422). By 2006, 19 gang turfs were scattered around Chicago, throughout Cook County (Chicago Crime Commission, 2006, p. 119). Next, gangs began emerging in the larger region surrounding Chicago on the north, west, and south sides. Notably, the Chicago gang culture soon spread to nearby cities, south to Gary, Indiana, southeast to Columbia, Ohio, and north to Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Cureton, 2009; Huff, 1993). In time, other cities in the surrounding Great Lakes Basin[2] reported large numbers of gang homicides, particularly Green Bay, Wisconsin; South Bend, Indiana; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Akron and Toledo, Ohio; and Buffalo and Rochester, New York (Howell, Egley, Tita, & Griffiths, 2011). A total of 16 Midwest cities with populations greater than 100,000 reported persistent violent gang activity over 14 years in the National Youth Gang Survey—about 40% of total annual homicides were gang-related. Taken as a whole, these cities form a large hot spot of gang violence in the Great Lakes Basin. From 1996 to 2009, two-thirds (67%) of the 95 large Midwest gang-problem cities (with populations greater than 50,000) were classified as "chronic" gang cities (Chapter 7).

Much of the span of gang activity in the Great Lakes Basin is attributable to the enormous growth of gangs in Chicago and in Illinois prisons. In 1969, Mayor Richard J. Daley declared "war on gangs" that moved gang leadership from the streets of Chicago to state prisons (Hagedorn, 2006). Gang leaders soon were able to swell their ranks from inside prison through active recruitment efforts among unaffiliated inmates. By the mid-1980s, Illinois had the largest number of gangs and gang members in prison of all U.S. states (Camp & Camp, 1985). The gang alliances came to be called *supergangs* or *gang nations*. Though largely fictive, these alliances contributed to young people's hopelessness, despair, and proclivity for violence that was carried back to the streets

(Diamond, 2009; Hagedorn, 2006; Venkatesh, 2002). Though unsubstantiated, People and Folk alliances took credit for the major street conflicts that took place in Chicago in the 1980s (Perkins, 1987).

STREET GANG EMERGENCE IN THE WEST REGION

The emergence of street gangs in the West region predates settlement of the area, and historical events that led to gang formation therein date back to the 16th century, when people of Indian, Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo backgrounds inhabited a broad region that was then northern Mexico and is currently the American Southwest, encompassing parts of present-day Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. The first gangs there grew out of later Mexican immigration. Gang precursor groups are said to have first appeared there as early as the 1890s (Redfield, 1941; Rubel, 1965). Widely recognized experts on Mexican American gang origins (J. Moore, 1978, 1991; Vigil, 1990, 1998) suggest that the precursor of urban gangs in the West region was a unique Mexican "male cohorting tradition," *palomilla* (meaning, literally, flock of doves). With this custom of regular association, small groups of boys and young men commonly developed solidarity and evolved into more gang-like forms called *pandilla* and *banda* (a more tightly knit group; Paz, 1961/1990). The first Mexican American gang members, reported in El Paso, were called *pachucos* (a Mexican-Spanish word for a young Mexican living in El Paso, and belonging to a *banda*). Actually, the first Mexican American gang in the United States was reported in the Mexican section of El Paso in 1924 (R. E. Dickerson, cited in Thrasher, 1927/2000, p. 139). Gang culture moved along the continuous westward migration route to Los Angeles. Seemingly coalesced under urban social pressures associated with impeded or blocked social and cultural assimilation, the first Mexican Los Angeles gangs, which Bogardus called *boy gangs* in 1926, clearly were patterned after the *pandilla, banda*, and *pachuco* (Bogardus, 1926; J. Moore, 1978; Vigil, 1990, 1998).

Mexican migration to the United States increased sharply during the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920), facilitated by Mexico's new rail system and the labor needs of the West, Southwest, and Midwest. Telles and Ortiz (2008) relay that these three factors combined to draw 700,000 legal Mexican immigrants to the United States from 1911 to 1930. The trail from Mexico to Los Angeles soon became a well-traveled road, with a multigeneration tradition of migration to and from Mexico and the United States. Although the original inhabitants of Los Angeles were native Mexicans, Anglos came along and displaced them in the late 19th century, and segregated incoming Mexicans in barrios along the eastern margin of the town center (Vigil, 2014). In large part, social and cultural angst was based in the ironic situation that Mexican immigrants faced. Under the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Mexican government ceded a large southwestern region to the United States. Mexican citizens in the area we now know as California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and Texas, and residents in parts of New Mexico and Colorado became naturalized U.S. citizens. Yet, when they later migrated from Mexico, they were treated as foreigners and told to go back home. But that region *was* their homeland before U.S. annexation.

First Period of Los Angeles Gang Growth: 1890s to 1920s

J. Moore (1993) asserts that the Mexican American gangs in the barrios (neighborhoods) of East Los Angeles typically formed in adolescent friendship groups in the 1930s and 1940s. The first bona fide Chicano gang crystallized in El Hoyo Maravilla[3] (in Belvedere, East Los Angeles, Boyle Heights area) in the 1930s (J. Moore, 1991, p. 27). J. Moore (1993) and Vigil (1993) both believe conflict with groups of youths in other barrios, school officials, police, and other authorities solidified them as highly visible groups. This intense bonding to barrios and gangs is unique to Los Angeles and other southwestern cities. Vigil and Long (1990) explain, "Each new wave of immigrants has settled in or near existing barrios and created new ones, [providing] a new generation of poorly schooled and partially acculturated youths from which the gangs draw their membership" (p. 56). Thus, isolationism and stigmatization were major contributing factors in gang growth and expansion.

Second Period of Los Angeles Gang Growth: 1940s to 1950s

Mexican migration into the United States accelerated again, beginning in the early 1950s, bringing what Telles and Ortiz (2008) pinpoint as almost 1.4 million more persons by 1980. The Mexican-origin population in the United States grew from 2.5 million to 8.7 million during this period. The Los Angeles area received the most Mexican immigrants. Indeed, "Los Angeles has long been the Latino 'capital' of the U.S., housing more people of Mexican descent than most cities in Mexico" (J. Moore & Vigil, 1993, p. 27).

Two social events led to the expansion of Mexican American gangs in the West: the Sleepy Lagoon murder and the zoot suit riots. Sleepy Lagoon was a popular swimming hole in what is now East Los Angeles. A Mexican youngster was killed there in 1942, and members of the 38th Street Mexican American gang were arrested and charged with murder by the Los Angeles Police Department. Unfortunately, the criminal trial resembled a "kangaroo court," in which five of the Mexican gang members were convicted and sentenced to prison.

> Mexican street gangs changed forever because of these convictions. The jail sentences also acted as a glue to unite the Mexican community in a common cause, a fight against class distinction based on prejudice and racism, a fight against the establishment. (Al Valdez, 2007, p. 98)

The 38th Street gang members' cause continued in prison, and other gang members especially held them in high esteem as martyrs.

The zoot suit riots had a similar unifying effect for Mexican Americans and fueled gang recruitment. Zoot suits were a fashionable clothing trend in the late 1920s and popularized in the nightclubs of Harlem. The exaggerated zoot suit included an oversized jacket with wide lapels and shoulders, and baggy pants that narrowed at the ankles, typically accompanied by a wide-brimmed hat. The style traveled west and south into Mexico and California via the El Paso Mexican street gang population. Soon the Anglo

community, the police, and the media began to view the zoot suiters as a savage group that presumably had attacked vulnerable White women and was also said to be responsible for several local homicides. Vigil (2002) elaborates that military personnel on leave and citizen mobs chased and beat anyone wearing a zoot suit—Mexican American and Black youths alike—during a 5-day riotous period. Without any doubt, the zoot suit riots solidified and served as a catalyst for expansion of Mexican American gangs in the West and Southwest. Other similar anti-Mexican riots followed in the summer of 1943, in San Diego, Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, Harlem, and many other cities (McWilliams, 1948/1990).

Third Period of Los Angeles Gang Growth: 1950s to 1980s

In the third stage, the development of Black gangs in Los Angeles follows a pattern that resembles the emergence of Black gangs in Chicago. As in Chicago, Harrison (1999) shows a pattern of south-to-north Black migration in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Southern Blacks had gone there looking for a better life with employment in factories. Instead, institutional inequality (in housing, education, and employment) and restrictive housing covenants legalized in the 1920s rendered much of Los Angeles off-limits to most minorities (Alonso, 2004; Cureton, 2009). Black residents challenged these covenants, leading to violent clashes between White social clubs and clusters of Black youths (Cureton, 2009).

Alonso (2004) documents Black gang formation in Los Angeles principally in two phases: in the late 1940s and in the 1970s. He and other observers contend that Black Los Angeles gangs formed in the late 1940s as a defensive response to White violence in the schools. Vigil (2002) reports the first racial gang wars to have occurred "at Manual Arts High in 1946, at Canoga Park High in 1947, and at John Adams Junior High in 1949" (p. 68). Quite likely, many of these Black gangs and others initially formed in the marginal areas of communities, typically close to Whites, which permitted the Black gangs to draw more members. In the second phase, the effects of residential segregation (particularly in public housing projects), police brutality, and racially motivated violence in the aftermath of the 1960s civil rights conflicts "created a breeding ground for gang formation in the early 1970s" (Alonso, 2004, p. 659).

Thus, it is not surprising that the gangs that grew in the 1950s and 1960s were far more serious gangs than the earlier ones. Vigil (1988) explains that beginning as early as 1940, low-income housing projects helped curb social problems for impoverished Los Angeles families, but these large-scale settlements also contributed to gang growth among Black and Mexican youths alike. Five such Mexican American housing projects in East Los Angeles have become barrios in their own right. But Black gangs appear to have evolved principally out of Black–White racial conflicts. Cureton (2009) attributes the Black civil rights movement (1955 to 1965) to an underclass-specific, socially disorganized, and isolated Black community. Alonso (2004) explains that events of the 1960s were the last chapter of the political, social, and civil rights movement, a turning point away from the development of positive Black identity in the city. According to Davis (2006), a major contributing factor was that poverty and high unemployment rates were most prevalent among Black youths.

More frequent street conflicts increased the wide variety of street groups and also expanded the base of Black gangs into two camps, Crips and Bloods. Crips wore blue clothing; the Bloods chose red. Both the Bloods and the Crips drew large memberships in the public housing projects built in the 1950s. Av. Valdez (2007) reports Blacks made up nearly 95% of the membership of these two gangs, whose presence, according to Alonso (2004), quickly spread into other areas of South Los Angeles, including Compton and Inglewood. "Crip identity took over the streets of South L.A. and swept Southside schools in an epidemic of gang shootings and street fights by 1972," first involving 18 Black gangs, which multiplied to 60 by 1978 and to 270 throughout Los Angeles County by the 1990s (p. 669).

Mexican American gangs also steadily grew in number during this period, fueled by three historical developments: the Vietnam War, the War on Poverty, and the Mexican American movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Acuna, 1981). Vigil (1990) contends that the Vietnam War depleted the barrios of a generation of positive role models. The ending of the War on Poverty eliminated jobs and increased marginalization. In the meantime, major demographic shifts occurred throughout the greater Los Angeles area as another surge of Mexican immigrants that arrived in the 1960s joined the other Latino groups that began migrating to Los Angeles in the late 1970s. These first-generation residents have replaced heretofore Black and third-generation Latino ghettos and barrios, respectively (Vigil, 1990).

San Francisco evidenced gang activity as early as the 1960s, and these nascent gangs were mainly African American and Asian, with a mixture of Mexican gangs later into the early 1990s (Joe, 1994; W. Miller, 1975; Waldorf, 1993; Waldorf & Lauderback, 1993). The alluring Los Angeles gang culture soon began to draw the attention of youths in nearby communities and cities. The Bloods became particularly strong in the Black communities in South Central Los Angeles—especially in places on its periphery such as Compton—and in outlying communities such as Pacoima, Pasadena, and Pomona (Alonso, 2004; Vigil, 2002). By 1972, Vigil (2002) reports there were 18 Crips and Bloods gangs in Los Angeles, and these were the largest of the more than 500 active gangs in the city in the 1970s. By the end of the 1970s, according to W. Miller (1982/1992), street gangs had emerged in most populated areas across California.

Modern-Day Western Gangs

The number of Black gangs in Los Angeles increased from just 60 in 1978 to at least 270 by the 1990s (Alonso, 2004). In fact, by the 1980s, Black gangs had become "a major street force" (Vigil, 2002, p. xvi), and some Bloods and Crips gangs were involved in crack dealing and consumption in the ghettos of South Central Los Angeles (Cockburn & St. Clair, 1998). An epidemic of gang homicides followed (Hutson, Anglin, Kyriacou, Hart, & Spears, 1995). This development expanded the visibility of both Black and Mexican American street gangs and quickly drew media interest (Reeves & Campbell, 1994) and police attention (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1996). Today, many West Coast Black street gang members affiliate themselves with the Bloods or Crips (Al Valdez, 2007). Many other gangs and naïve youths across America mimic them

and adopt their symbols and other elements of their gang culture. This diffusion of gang culture is equally pronounced—if not more so—among Mexican American gangs (Martinez, Rodriguez, & Rodriguez, 1998; Vigil, 2002).

Los Angeles remains the epicenter of western region gang activity. From 2001 to 2008, almost half of all homicides in Los Angeles were gang-related, compared with about 14% elsewhere in California (Tita & Abrahamse, 2010). Interestingly, Tita and Abrahamse found that Los Angeles appears to serve as an "early warning" agent with respect to upturns in gang violence across the state. "Gang violence begins to increase (and peak) earlier in Los Angeles than in the remainder of the state" (p. 28). In addition, Los Angeles has produced four gang forms that have gained national prominence in the past two decades: (1) the traditional Black Bloods and Crips; (2) a mixture of prison gangs; (3) the highly publicized Mexican American 18th Street and Salvadorian Mara Salvatrucha gangs, both of which are viewed by the media and federal agencies to be transnational gangs; and (4) Asian gangs.

Los Angeles gang culture produced two gangs that have been called *transnational gangs*, and no other street gangs exceed them in generating widespread public fear. These are the notorious 18th Street Mexican American gang and Mara Salvatrucha, a Salvadorian Los Angeles gang. (These gangs are discussed below and also in Chapter 8.) The West region is also known for its Asian gangs, which grew there in the 1990s and first decade of the 21st century among Filipinos, Koreans, Samoans, and Central Americans, creating a veritable "rainbow of gangs" (Vigil, 2002). Among the Asian groups, the Vietnamese gangs seem to have drawn the most attention, because of their territorial style, avoidance of monikers, and fluid structure (incessant changing membership).

A total of 45 western cities with populations greater than 100,000 reported persistent violent gang activity during the period 1996 to 2009 in the National Youth Gang Survey (of which 38 are in the state of California). Each of them reported about 40% of total annual homicides as gang-related (Howell et al., 2011). The California cities in this group include Los Angeles, Oxnard, Pasadena, Pomona, Riverside, Salinas, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, and Santa Ana. Overall, almost 9 out of 10 (87%) of the western region's 162 gang problem cities with populations larger than 50,000 were classified as "chronic" gang cities during the period 1996 to 2009 (Chapter 7, this volume). This proportion is higher than in any other region.

STREET GANG EMERGENCE IN THE SOUTH

The broad South region emerged much later than other regions as an important gang territory, for reasons that are not well understood. The following are most plausible (see Howell, 2015a, for supporting information). First, the South was not engulfed by the waves of White ethnic immigrants from Europe that came to the East Coast from 1783 to 1860. Second, the South remained an agricultural region until after World War II. Third, Black–White youth conflict was minimized with the Great Migration of more than a million Blacks from the rural South northward between 1910 and 1930. Fourth,

southern culture was deeply religious in its early history—"the most solidly Protestant population of its size in the Western Hemisphere" (Woodward, 1951, p. 449). Fifth, the southern states largely were bypassed by the Mexicans who migrated mainly to the Midwest and West. Sixth, southern cities have always been virtually devoid of public parks where youth conflicts could be staged.

First Period of Southern Gang Emergence: 1920s to 1970s

Although most of the early Mexican migration northward leapfrogged Texas, nascent gangs quite likely formed in San Antonio in the 1920s, growing out of the *palomilla* groups of youths in migrating families, as did gangs in El Paso. For many decades, it appears that San Antonio was the only large city in the South that experienced gang activity, but it may have been too isolated geographically to extend its gang influence through the youth subculture (Telles & Ortiz, 2008).

With the exception of San Antonio, W. Miller (1982/1992) concludes that gang activity likely did not emerge in the southern states prior to the 1970s. Toward the end of that decade, only six southern cities reported gang activity—Dallas, Texas; Durham, North Carolina; Fort Worth, Texas; New Orleans, Louisiana; Miami, Florida; and San Antonio, Texas. Among these cities, only Miami and San Antonio were considered to have a moderately serious gang problem at that time (W. Miller, 1975). Actually, Dallas and Fort Worth reported a greater problem with disruptive local groups than gangs in the 1970s.

Second Period of Southern Gang Growth: 1970s to 1990s

San Antonio's gang problem was first identified as a serious one (along with Miami) in W. Miller's (1975) first multi-city gang study. Before the end of the 20th century, W. Miller's (1982/1992) research shows that the South region matched the other major regions in the prevalence of gang activity. Several southern states saw sharp increases in the number of new gang counties by 1995: Florida (23%), South Carolina (15%), Alabama (12%), and Texas (8%). From the 1970s through 1995, the South region led the nation in the number of new gang cities, a 32% increase, versus increases of 26% in the Midwest, 6% in the Northeast, and 3% in the West.

Because of its historically pluralistic population, Miami was insulated from southern culture, and racial conflicts with White youths were practically nonexistent (J. Camacho, personal communication, April 23, 2014). Miami officials first recognized gang activity in the mid-1980s according to annual reports of the Dade County District Attorney (1988). Based on references to gangs in the testimony of Dade County witnesses, within a 3-year period (1984–1987), it appeared that the number of active gangs increased from 36 gangs to more than 70. Distinguishing features of Miami gangs also changed significantly, from neighborhood play groups to gangs with older members who had become involved in more serious and violent crimes, including drug trafficking, firearm use, and associated violence. These developments reflected the reality that Miami was becoming a central port for drug trafficking into the United States. In time, street-based gangs intermingled with organized drug trafficking groups.

Modern-Day Southern Gangs

It comes as a surprise that Houston was not a major gang center in the South before the first decade of the new millennium—given that its western border is shared with Mexico. However, massive Mexican migration to the East, Midwest, and West largely bypassed Houston. Based on interviews with Houston agency representatives, the city had a "borderline" gang problem in 1980 (W. Miller, 1982/1992). The first gangs to form there likely were barrio gangs much like the Mexican American gangs in Los Angeles. In one expert's view (De León, 2001), Mexican immigrants into Houston maintained their barrio/cultural identity for many years, and that identification intensified, providing the basis for frequent gang fights. By the mid-1990s, gang-related homicides were commonplace there. From 1996 to 2009, only about 20% of homicides in the city were gang-related (Howell et al., 2011).

In concert with Houston, Miami currently anchors Deep South gang activity, along with New Orleans and Atlanta. Miami officials acknowledged a significant gang problem in 1980 but with few gang-related homicides at that time (W. Miller, 1982/1992). Much like other very large cities, Miami has seen steady growth of gang violence, such that about 20% of homicides in the city were gang-related in the recent past (Howell et al., 2011). In 1980, New Orleans agency representatives reported a relatively serious problem with youth groups other than gangs (W. Miller, 1982/1992). However, in the period 1996 to 2006, 4 in 10 homicides in New Orleans were gang-related (Howell et al., 2011). Gangs appear to have been incubated in public housing projects that housed large numbers of Blacks in Atlanta: "With constant exposure to crime and criminals, many children fell into the pit of gangs, drug dealing, stealing and worse" (Atlanta Public Housing Authority, 2010, p. 34). Atlanta police reported about 20% of homicides in the city as gang-related from 1996 to 2009. A total of 12 broader southern cities with populations greater than 100,000 have reported persistent violent gang activity over the past 14 years in the National Youth Gang Survey—accounting for about 40% (or more) of total annual homicides as gang-related (Howell et al., 2011).

In Focus 1.1

MAJOR GANGS: HISTORY, LOCATION, STRUCTURE, AND IDENTIFIERS

The National Alliance of Gang Investigators' Associations (NAGIA) is a cooperative nonprofit organization of criminal justice and professional organizations that represents gang investigators' associations, with a membership of about 20,000 gang investigators across North America. Several state gang investigators' associations contributed and integrated information for NAGIA's informative *Quick Guide to Gangs* (2009). According to NAGIA gang experts, the following are considered prominent gangs in the United States. From this guide, we extracted each gang's history, location, structure, and identifiers.

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(Continued)

Bloods

History: *Bloods* is a universal term used to identify both the West Coast Bloods and the United Blood Nation (UBN). While these groups are traditionally distinct entities, the original Bloods were formed in the early 1970s to provide protection from the Crips street gang in Los Angeles. UBN is an East Coast gang that originated in 1993 in the Rikers Island, New York, George Motchan Detention Center.

Location: Bloods sets have been identified in all 50 states.

Gang structure: Each set of the Bloods has its own leadership, although some Bloods sets have been known to coordinate criminal activities for different sets across states.

Gang identifiers:[1]

- The five-pointed star in tattoos or graffiti showing affiliation to the Bloods Nation
- *Damu*, meaning "blood" in Swahili, seen in graffiti, tattoos, and other forms of communication
- Burn marks in the shape of a dog paw
- Colors: Red, and apparel of professional teams such as the Philadelphia Phillies, San Francisco 49ers, and Chicago Bulls

Crips

History: The Crips street gang was established in Los Angeles out of youth disappointment with the failure of the Black Panther Party to achieve its goals.[2]

Location: Los Angeles, and every state except West Virginia and Vermont has reported the presence of Crips in its jurisdiction. The states with the largest estimated number of Crips sets are California, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Gang structure: The Crips is an association of numerous structured and unstructured gangs, also known as sets, that have adopted a common gang culture. Local sets vary in their structure from no formal leadership to a hierarchy that consists of a leader, lieutenants, drug coordinators, soldiers, and drug couriers.

Gang identifiers:[3]

- Blue, sometimes purple, or no color at all.
- Hoover Gangsters, formerly known as Hoover Crips, took their name from Hoover Street in Los Angeles. They have since disassociated themselves from the Crips and now use the Gangsters name. They identify with the color orange.
- Gang members on the West Coast use a variety of colors; however, colors are downplayed and not routinely displayed unless the gang is gathered for a purpose. Crips who have relocated to the Midwest or the East Coast and have affiliated with the Folk Nation represent to the right and use the six-pointed star in tattoos and graffiti.
- Crips refer to themselves as "Blood Killas" and often use the initials BK in tattoos and graffiti.

Folk Nation

History: Folk Nation grew as an affiliation of Chicago street gangs in the 1970s and 1980s—after Chicago Mayor Daley's "war on gangs" in 1969 moved gang leadership into prisons and inadvertently made gangs stronger, both inside prisons and on the streets.[4] The increased number of gang members entering Illinois prisons in the 1970s created a need for immediate means of distinguishing allies from rivals.

Location: While most concentrated in Chicago and the Midwest, Folk Nation gangs exist nationwide.

Gang structure: Folk Nation is not a gang itself; rather, it is one of two major alliances of street gangs (along with the People Nation described below). Well-known Folk gangs include La Raza, Spanish Cobras, Spanish Gangsters, Latin Eagles, Two Sixers, International Posse, Simon City Royals, Black Gangsters, and the various factions of Disciples.

Gang identifiers: Each gang maintains its own identifiers, but Folk Nation gangs also use symbols to identify their affiliation with the alliance.[5]

- Six-pointed star
- Pitchfork
- Heart (alone or with wings, devil's tail, and/or horns)
- Number 6
- Wear everything to the right (caps, bandanas, belt buckles, rolled pant leg, jewelry) and communicate with right hand

People Nation

History: Along with the Folk Nation, the People Nation began as an affiliation of Chicago street gangs in the 1970s and 1980s. People Nation consists of gangs that originally aligned with the Black P Stone Nation. As with the Folk Nation alliance, many of these groups originally formed as a means of defense within the prison system.

Location: While mostly concentrated in Chicago and the Midwest, People Nation gangs exist nationwide.

Gang structure: People Nation is the second major street gang alliance (along with the Folk Nation). People Nation gangs include Latin Kings, Vice Lords, Spanish Lords, El Rukns, Bishops, Gaylords, Latin Counts, and Kents. People Nation maintains a charter and a strict code of conduct driven by the "All Is All" and "All Is Well" philosophies.

Gang identifiers:

Each gang has its own identifiers, although, as with the Folk Nation, gangs affiliated with People Nation also use symbols to identify their association with the larger alliance.[6]

- Five-pointed star and the number 5
- Crown
- Crescent
- Pyramid
- Dice
- Bunny head
- Wear everything to the left (caps, bandanas, belt buckles, rolled pant leg, jewelry) and communicate with left hand

Mara Salvatrucha 13 (also known as MS-13 and La Mara Salvatrucha)

History: Salvadoran nationals migrated to California from war-torn El Salvador in the 1970s and 1980s and settled mainly in the Pico-Union area of Los Angeles, where they integrated with other Hispanic immigrants.[7] These Salvadoran immigrants established their own gang in the early 1980s in response to continued persecution by other Hispanic gangs.

Location: Although based in El Salvador, as a result of population migration to the United States, MS-13 has been reported in 42 states and the District of Columbia. However, the MS-13 threat is highest in the Los Angeles region and the broader northeastern region of the United States. MS-13 cliques exist in El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, Belize, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama, as well.

Gang structure: MS-13 gangs consist of numerous "cliques." Some cliques are highly structured and organized; however, most have little formal structure. Each clique has a leader or set of leaders, commonly referred to as "shot callers," "leaders," or *"ranfleros."*

Gang identifiers:[8]

- Devil's pitchfork
- Clique initials: MS-13
- Mara Salvatrucha
- Colors: blue, white, and black

Latin Kings (also known as Almighty Latin King Nation, Almighty Latin Charter Nation, and Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation)

History: The Latin Kings formed in Chicago in the mid-1960s with the goal of helping Puerto Rican immigrants overcome racial prejudice by forming an organization of "kings."

Location: While active in 34 states, the Latin Kings can be found primarily in Illinois, New York, Texas, and Florida. Latin Kings chapters also exist in Canada, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Italy, Peru, and Spain.

Gang structure: The Latin Kings are highly organized, and gang leadership exists at the

(Continued)

(Continued)

national, regional, and local levels. Membership is governed by a manifesto and constitution with established rules and bylaws. The gang originally consisted of predominantly Puerto Rican males but currently has members of various nationalities. Some Latin Kings chapters also have female associates, commonly referred to as Latin Queens.

Gang identifiers:

- Five-pointed crown
- Graffiti: a lion wearing a crown, often accompanied by the initials LK
- Amor de Rey or ADR, 1-4-18
- Amor de Corona or ADC
- Colors: black and gold (yellow), red, and green

18th Street (also known as Calle 18, Mara 18, M-18, Barrio 18, and La 18)

History: The 18th Street gang was founded by undocumented Mexican immigrants and youths of mixed Mexican ancestry in the 1960s near 18th Street and Union Avenue in the Rampart area of Los Angeles.[9]

Location: In addition to the Los Angeles region, 18th Street gang members have been identified in 36 states and the District of Columbia, as well as Mexico and Central America.

Gang structure: This gang networks via personal contacts throughout the United States, Mexico, and Central America, and cliques are semiautonomous groups that do not answer to a central authority. Although Mexican immigrants primarily account for the gang's current numbers, membership is open to individuals of other ethnicities. The racial and ethnic makeup of a particular gang is typically influenced by the demographics of the region in which the gang operates.

Gang identifiers:[10]

- BEST (Barrio Eighteen Street)
- Graffiti: Mayan numerology for the number 18, XVIII, XV3, *Dieciocho*, 666
- Colors: black, silver, blue, and occasionally red

Sureños 13 (also known as Sur Trece, Sur 13)

History: The term *Sureño* (meaning southerner) originated in the 1960s in the California prison system after a Hispanic inmate from Northern California was killed by a member of the California Mexican Mafia (La Eme). This incident, known as "The War of the Shoes," led to the formation of La Nuestra Familia (NF) and the birth of Sureños and Norteños. After the formation of NF, Hispanic gang members entering the California prison system were expected to set aside their individual street names and rivalries and align as either Sureños under La Eme or as Norteños under NF, a practice that still exists.

Location: Sureños exist nationwide and, though California-based Sureños answer unequivocally to La Eme, most Sureño gangs outside of California are loyal but not subordinate to La Eme.

Gang structure: Sureños have no national structure or hierarchy; each Sureños gang is an independent entity most often led by a "shot caller" who delegates responsibilities, organizes criminal activities, oversees meetings, and is the person in direct communication with La Eme.

Gang identifiers:[11]

- Colors: mainly blue, but may also be seen wearing gray, black, white, and brown
- The number 13, X3, XIII, the Mayan symbol for 13, and *trece*, the Spanish word for 13
- Three dots for *mi vida loca*, Spanish for "my crazy life"; the cholo laugh now/cry later theater faces
- Mexican pride themes: the Aztec war shield and Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec sun god

Norteño (also known as Norte 14)

History: The term *Norteño* (meaning northerner) originated in the 1960s in the California prison system after a Hispanic inmate from Northern California was killed by a member of the California Mexican Mafia (La Eme). This incident, known as "The War of the Shoes," led to the formation of La Nuestra Familia (NF) and

the birth of Sureños and Norteños. NF formed not only in reaction to the killing but also because Northern California Hispanic inmates grew tired of suffering abuse at the hands of La Eme.

Location: Norteños are most prevalent in Northern California but are also found throughout the western United States, as well as in Texas, the Midwest, and New York.

Gang structure: The gang is well organized and has a written constitution stating that the leadership resides in California's Pelican Bay State Prison. All gang members are accountable to this leadership, though a small minority follow the Norteños' previous leadership, who are imprisoned in Colorado.

Gang identifiers:[12]

- Colors: red (red shoes with white shoelaces, white shoes with red shoelaces, bandanas, jerseys, caps, long canvas belt looped and hanging to the front or side)
- Number 14 and variations of 14 (X4, XIV, Mayan symbol for 14)
- Letter *N*
- Four dots (sometimes with a single dot to the side)
- Northern star
- Huelga bird (symbol of the United Farm Workers' Association)

Source: National Alliance of Gang Investigators' Associations (2009).

[1]*For examples of Bloods' gang identifiers, see In Focus 10.3: Gang Tattoos.*
[2]*Cureton (2009)*
[3]*For examples of Crips' gang identifiers, see NAGIA (2009).*
[4]*Howell (2015a)*
[5]*For examples of Folk Nation's identifiers, see NAGIA (2009).*
[6]*For examples of People Nation's gang identifiers, see NAGIA (2009).*
[7]*Vigil (2002); Zilberg (2011)*
[8]*For examples of MS-13's gang identifiers, see In Focus 10.3: Gang Tattoos.*
[9]*Vigil (2002)*
[10]*For examples of 18th Street's identifiers, see NAGIA (2009).*
[11]*For examples of Sureños' gang identifiers, see In Focus 10.3: Gang Tattoos.*
[12]*For examples of Norteños' gang identifiers, see NAGIA (2009).*

ANOTHER WAVE OF IMMIGRANT GROUPS

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 ended the national quotas on foreigners in the United States. This led to a shift in immigration to the states, from European origins to Central and South American and Asian (Bankston, 1998). The next 25 years brought in many groups of Asians (Cambodians, Filipinos, Koreans, Samoans, Thais, Vietnamese, and others) and Latin Americans (Colombians, Cubans, Dominicans, Ecuadorians, Mexicans, Panamanians, Puerto Ricans, and others) (W. Miller, 2001)—altogether about 16.6 million people of all nationalities (Pincus & Ehrlich, 1999). Native American gangs also would emerge much later (Bell & Lim, 2005; Major, Egley, Howell, Mendenhall, & Armstrong, 2004). By the late 1980s, the children of many American-born or Americanized parents among the new immigrants, dubbed "the new second generation" of the post-1960s immigrant groups (principally Asian and Latin Americans), had reached adolescence or young adulthood (Portes & Rumbaut, 2005; Portes & Zhou, 1993), and some of them joined gangs. Studies show that because of the successful assimilation of early European migrant groups into American society,

gangs virtually disappeared by the third generation (Telles & Ortiz, 2008; Waters, 1999). Telles and Ortiz did not find this to be the case with Mexican Americans. With each generation, familiarity with the gang lifestyle increased and thus gang involvement grew, at least through the fourth generation.

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF STREET GANGS

For purposes of contrast, it is important to keep in mind that the early European White ethnic gangs did not become fully institutionalized anywhere. In Chicago, J. Moore (1998) observed that "the gangs of the 1920s were largely a one-generation immigrant ghetto phenomenon" (p. 68). So it was in the Northeast as well. Most White immigrant gang youths matured out of gangs as their families moved out of downtown in northeastern and midwestern cities, into areas of second settlement, and assimilated into mainstream American society and the adult labor force. By 1975, the majority of American gangs were no longer White youths of European stock (W. Miller, 1975). What is it, then, that distinguishes White, Black, Mexican American, and Latino gangs in particular that have persisted in one form or another for almost a century?

The social adaptation process began once European White ethnics arrived in the United States, in their struggles to assimilate into the dominant American society. Immigrant families felt "marginalized" between their society of origin and the dominant American culture to which they had migrated (Vigil, 2002, 2006). Once children and adolescents experienced this discomfort, gangs emerged as a group that provided relief on an ongoing basis. Having been left out of mainstream society because of language, education, cultural, and economic barriers, this situation left them with few options or resources to develop socially. Naturally, they drew comfort from places where they were not marginalized, often in the streets and in gangs. In this way, gangs helped immigrant youths adapt to tribulations from social disorganization. For example, Whyte (1943b) discovered that gang turfs "were not *dis*organized, but rather *differently* organized and that street corner groups provided a clear and *organized* response to the disruption of formal social institutions" (pp. 7–8). Similarly, in *The Social Order of the Slum*, Suttles (1968) also observed mechanisms by which street gangs contributed to a "skeletal" frame of order in the world of street corner gangs. These included social interactions on the streets and relational patterns such as modes of dress, dating rituals, public interaction, and familial patterns. In this context, gangs organized youths' behavior.

W. Miller (1974b) identified three prominent goals of street gangs: territorial defense, maintenance of personal and collective honor, and achievement of prestige by besting one's peers. Adamson (2000) coined the term *defensive localism* to describe a variety of functions that gangs provide in communities, including securing living space, upholding group honor, policing neighborhoods, and providing economic, social, employment, welfare, and recreational services. Racial conflicts across America served to expand gangs' role to the protection of minority groups to which they belonged.

After mutual acceptance, membership is consummated in a ceremony that Vigil (2004) has likened to a religious baptism in the sense of turning away from one's past life and turning toward the gang for the life course. At the individual level, a need for protection is the main reason youths give when asked why they joined a gang (Esbensen, Deschenes, & Winfree, 1999). They want to feel safe and respected, but they want to be an integral part of the social scene. At the group level, age-graded gang structure in Mexican American gangs ensures that there is a place for everyone, even the youngest members. It allows for gang regeneration with the inclusion of each new generation, and it additionally provides the social arena for youngsters to learn and demonstrate important gang customs among themselves (Vigil, 1993).

In Chicago and Los Angeles, Mexican American street gangs clearly were integrated in the everyday life of many Mexican communities. For Mexican American gangs, a large measure of integration or cohesiveness comes from the tradition of linking the gang name with the neighborhood or barrio of residence—*"mi barrio"* ("my neighborhood") becoming synonymous with "my gang" (Vigil, 1993).

Mexican American gang traditions are perpetuated in the barrios of East Los Angeles through four distinct processes: kinship, alliance in fights, extensions of barrio boundaries, and forming branches (J. Moore, Vigil, & Garcia, 1983). First, without exception, gang membership is extended to relatives who live outside the barrio. For Mexican American gang boys, a *homeboy* (fellow gang member) is the equivalent of a *carnal* (blood) brother. In addition, the gang takes on kin-like characteristics, especially mutual obligations among gang members. Second, because fighting—particularly with another gang—is the defining characteristic of barrio gangs, boys from other barrios become allies in fights. Third, gang boundaries often extend into other barrios when members of multiple gangs live within them. Twenty cliques of the Hoyo Maravilla gang were formed across several decades through these methods (J. Moore, 1991; Vigil, 2007). The Hoyo Maravilla and White Fence gangs—now nearly 80 years old—are testament to this process of gang perpetuation.

At the group level, Decker (1996) delineated a "cycle of violence" process that often accounts for gang cohesion and cyclical gang conflicts that wax and wane and sometimes extend over a number of years (C. Block & Block, 1993). The process begins with a loosely organized gang; members have loose bonds to the gang. This state is common and may last a long time. However, collective identification of threat from a rival gang (through rumors, symbolic shows of force, cruising, and mythic violence) quickly expands the number of participants and increases cohesion. Next, a mobilizing event occurs or is rumored and sometimes involves violence—or the threat of it. This development serves to mobilize gang activity, and the group becomes more alert and cohesive. A violent incident against the threatening group occurs, followed by rapid de-escalation. Later, violent retaliation by the opposing gang occurs. Papachristos's (2009) Chicago research revealed a similar process, finding that "gangs are not groups of murderers per se, but rather embedded social networks in which violence ricochets back and forth . . . [and] what begins as a single murder soon generates a dozen more as it diffuses through these murder networks" (p. 76). These events become, in effect, "dominance contests" in

which "violence spreads through a process of social contagion that is fueled by normative and behavioral precepts of the code of the street" (p. 81). In other words, violence is contagious on the streets and perpetuates intergang conflicts that sometimes are rekindled for decades.

The Unique Contribution of Prison Gangs to Street Gang Institutionalization

Briefly, prison gangs originated to provide protection for gang members from members of other hostile gangs inside prisons. The most widely accepted definition of a prison gang is

> an organization which operates within the prison system as a self-perpetuating criminally oriented entity, consisting of a select group of inmates who have established an organized chain of command and are governed by an established code of conduct. (Lyman, 1989, p. 48)

The American Correctional Association (ACA) adopted in 1993 the more inclusive term *security threat groups* (STGs), defined as "two or more inmates, acting together, who pose a threat to the security or safety of staff/inmates, and/or to the orderly management of the facility/system" (ACA, 1993, p. 1). In time, the term STG virtually supplanted prison gang terminology.

As U.S. prison populations began to grow in the 1950s (Justice Policy Institute, 2000), prison gangs were formed by inmates for protection from rival gang members. A sharp upturn in confinement in state prisons and local jails commenced in 1970 (338,029) and increased to 1,965,667 in 2000, for almost a sixfold increase over the three decades. With the accelerated growth in numbers of inmates, racial/ethnic conflicts prompted formation of prison gangs. In a mid-1980s survey of all state and federal prisons, facility administrators in 33 states indicated that they had gangs in their prisons (Camp & Camp, 1985). Having been formed to provide protection inside prisons from rival street gang members, the prison gangs were "an extension of an identical organization imported from the streets" (Jacobs, 1974, p. 397). Two states stand out for sheer strength and statewide influence of their prison gangs: California and Illinois.

California has been dubbed the "mother" of major prison gangs because six major prison gangs were active in the state's prisons by 1984, and these without doubt contributed directly to the growth of gang activity throughout the state and to some extent in the western region. Gang suppression legislation, coupled with the state's indeterminate sentence provision and "Three Strikes and You're Out" law, served to increase confinement of street gang members (Schlosser, 1998). In turn, growing conflicts and assaults between Northern and Southern California gang inmates led to the formation of Sureños and Norteños networks, and a rivalry that produced many gang wars, both in prisons and on the streets (National Alliance of Gang Investigators' Associations, 2009). Rival Southern California Hispanic street gangs thus were enemies of anyone

from Northern California, and vice versa. In time, this rivalry would unite the respective clusters of gangs in jails and state prisons. By the mid-1990s, the California prison system was said to be full of warring gangs, members of the Crips, Bloods, Mexican Mafia, and Black Guerrilla Family, to name a few.

In Chicago, massive incarceration of gang members followed Mayor Daley's 1969 war on gangs. Prison administrators inadvertently strengthened the gangs by using them to help maintain control of prisons, thus allowing them "to consolidate, form alliances, and grow in number and strength" (Venkatesh, 2002, p. 133). The Illinois prison gangs were "reorganized at a level of sophistication that dwarfed the type of structures that had developed in the streets" (Perkins, 1987, p. 17). By the mid-1970s, Latino, African American, and Caucasian gangs in Chicago and elsewhere across the state had been merged into two major coalitions in Illinois prisons, the People and the Folks, by inmates who were seeking protection through coalition building (Chicago Crime Commission, 2006). They soon took control of older inmate organizations by guile and targeted violence, and became the strongest force within the prisons. Once members were freed from prisons, they quickly moved to battle, overpower, and subsume the weaker street corner groups (Cureton, 2009). By the mid-1980s, Illinois had the largest number of gangs and gang members in prison of all U.S. states (Camp & Camp, 1985). Across Illinois, Department of Corrections' officials estimated that some 5,300 inmates were active gang members in 1984, constituting 34% of all inmates (Camp & Camp, 1985, pp. 134–135). Some of the Chicago gang leaders formed organizational networks both inside and outside prisons that linked inmates with others in jails and on the streets in illegal enterprises, creating what came to be called webs, supergangs, or gang nations (Venkatesh, 2002, p. 134). "But significantly, and unlike past inmate groups, the gangs maintained their ties to the streets" (Hagedorn, 2006, p. 203). People and Folk alliances accounted for the major street conflicts that took place in Chicago in the 1980s (Perkins, 1987). Under these coalitions, gang conflicts were far more serious because they involved multiple gangs on occasion.

In a 2009 survey of directors of security in the 53 U.S. prison systems (federal and state), 19% of all inmates were classified as gang members, half of whom belonged to gangs prior to imprisonment and, interestingly, half of whom joined gangs after entering prison (Winterdyk & Ruddell, 2010). Just 12% of all federal and state prison inmates were members of prison gangs in 2003; thus, the 19% figure in 2009 represents a substantial increase in just 7 years—reflecting the growing strength of prison gangs. Of course, estimates are far higher in states with a history of major street gang activity, such as Illinois. By the mid-1980s, Illinois had the largest number of gang members in prison of all states, and the largest proportion of gang-involved inmates (34%) (Camp & Camp, 1985; see Sundt, Castellano, & Briggs, 2008, for more recent estimates).

The Texas Fusion Center's prison gang threat assessment matrix incorporates 10 factors that are important in determining the threat posed by each gang (see In Focus 1.2). Each factor is rated using a weighted, point-based system that generates a composite score. This score provides a metric of the overall threat level of each gang. The most significant gangs are classified as Tier 1, with other significant gangs classified as Tier 2 and Tier 3.

In Focus 1.2

GANG THREAT TIERS

Relationship with cartels: This factor examines the extent to which a gang is connected to Mexico-based drug cartels. A gang may be assessed as having no relationship, a temporary or short-term association, or a long-term business venture or exclusive relationship.

Transnational criminal activity: This factor considers whether a gang has transnational criminal connections, as well as whether the gang's criminal activity has spread into the transnational realm.

Level of criminal activity: This factor rates the type and frequency of crimes perpetrated by the gang. Crimes are rated on a scale covering a range of offenses, from misdemeanors to felonies.

Level of violence: This factor assesses the overall level of violence perpetrated by the gang in its criminal activity. It ranges from generally nonviolent offenses, such as money laundering, to crimes involving extreme violence, such as torture and murder.

Prevalence throughout Texas: This factor determines the extent to which a gang is active throughout the state. The geographic reach of some gangs is limited to specific cities or regions of Texas, while others are widespread across the state.

Relationship with other gangs: This factor examines the nature of a gang's alliances and influence with other gangs. This may include limited and temporary contact or formal alliances, whereas some gangs exercise direct oversight over other gangs.

Source: Texas Fusion Center (2013, p. 10)

Total strength: This factor assesses the known size of the gang, measured by the number of individuals confirmed by law enforcement and criminal justice agencies to be members of the gang. This number is almost always an underrepresentation of the true size of the gang, as many members are unknown to law enforcement.

Statewide organizational effectiveness: This factor examines the gang's effectiveness in organizing members under its leadership across the state.

Juvenile membership: This factor considers the extent to which the gang recruits juveniles and is active in schools, as gang recruitment of juveniles is considered a unique threat.

Threat to law enforcement: This factor considers the extent to which the gang represents a threat to law enforcement. Some gang members may only use violence to resist arrest or to flee from law enforcement, while others may actively target officers.

As of 2014, the Tier 1 gangs in Texas are Tango Blast and Tango cliques, Texas Syndicate, Texas Mexican Mafia, and Barrio Azteca (Joint Crime Information Center, 2014). "These organizations pose the greatest gang threat to Texas due to their relationships with Mexican cartels, large membership numbers, high levels of transnational criminal activity, and organizational effectiveness" (p. 11). Importantly, Texas Fusion Center intelligence reveals that prison and street gangs are now increasingly working together for financial gain—even with rival gangs in large operations, some of which are with traditional drug trafficking organizations.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Important differences in the history of gang emergence are apparent in the four major U.S. gang regions. First, the timing has differed. Serious gangs first emerged on the East Coast in the 1820s, led by New York City. A half-century passed before gangs emerged in the Midwest (Chicago), while the West (Los Angeles) saw significant gang development a full century later than New York City. The South would not experience significant gang problems for another half-century, in the 1970s. Second, the racial or ethnic composition of gangs in each region varied over time. In both New York and Chicago, the earliest gangs arose in concert with external migration of European origins—the traditional classic ethnics of the period from 1783 to 1860 (particularly German, French, British, Scandinavian). Other groups of White ethnics soon arrived during 1880 to 1920—mainly Irish, Italians, Jews, and Poles—and the second-generation youths were most susceptible to gang involvement. The latter nationalities almost exclusively populated the early serious street gangs of New York and Chicago. Gangs in the western region formed in the Mexican American barrios. Black gangs formed there following large-scale Black migration from the southern region in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. For both of these peoples, gangs were largely a by-product of macrohistorical (racism and repression) and macrostructural (immigration and ghetto/barrio living) processes (Krohn, Schmidt, Lizotte, & Baldwin, 2011). Gang emergence was delayed in the southern region because conditions that led to gang formation and growth in the eastern, midwestern, and western regions were largely absent in the South, or present on a much smaller scale. A new wave of immigrants, principally Asians and Latinos, was welcomed into the United States in the mid-1990s by less restrictive immigration policies.

Street gangs are now well institutionalized in the United States. Youth gang problems in the United States grew dramatically between the 1970s and the 1990s, with the prevalence of gangs reaching unprecedented levels in the mid-1990s (W. Miller, 2001). By the mid-1990s, all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and 40% of local law enforcement agencies nationwide reported youth gang problems (Egley & Howell, 2013). Prison gangs now have stronger relationships with street gangs than ever before, mutually engaged in criminal enterprises on an ongoing basis in many states.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Why do street gangs exist? What explanations does history suggest?
2. What roles did racial/ethnic conflict, organized crime, and political corruption play in the development of street gangs? Which of these factors was more important in each region?
3. Why is the South so different in its street gang history?
4. Why was high-rise public housing such an important contributor to street gang problems?
5. How are prison gangs linked with street gangs?

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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NOTES

1. A much-abbreviated history of gangs in the United States is presented in this chapter. For a detailed nationwide history and extensive analysis of gang emergence, development, and institutionalization, see Howell (2015a).
2. The Great Lakes region of North America includes the eight U.S. states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin and parts of several Canadian provinces on the north banks of the Great Lakes.
3. Meaning *Que maravilla!* Translated, that is "what a marvel" or "what a wonderful city."

Myths and Realities of Youth Gangs

INTRODUCTION

Because of their criminal activities and deliberate efforts to control the streets, gangs can engender enormous fear in community adults and youths (Lane & Meeker, 2000, 2003). But two groups in particular have a tendency to exaggerate the nature and seriousness of gangs: the broadcast media and the gangs themselves (Esbensen & Tusinski, 2007; Howell, 2007; Thompson, Young, & Burns, 2000). J. Moore (1993) explains,

> Most typically, [the media stereotype] is that gangs are composed of late-adolescent males, who are violent, drug- and alcohol-soaked, sexually hyperactive, unpredictable, confrontational, drug-dealing criminals. . . . They are demonic, and all the worse for being in a group. (p. 28)

In many communities, when gangs are enshrouded in images such as this, the determination of appropriate community responses can be thwarted.

This chapter presents several popular gang myths along with research that substantiates realities that contradict the myths, or at least brings them into serious question. Technically speaking, *myths* refers to beliefs that are strongly held and convenient to believe but are based on little factual information; they are not necessarily false (Bernard, 1992). Beliefs that are unequivocally false are properly labeled *fallacies.* Although useful, such a clear-cut distinction often cannot be made in reference to gangs because, depending on how they are defined, at least one exception may be found to every myth; thus the more inclusive term is used herein.

Felson (2006) argues that the gangs themselves complicate community action by creating myths as part of what he calls their *big gang theory*. The process often transpires as follows: Youths sometimes feel that they need protection on the streets in their communities. The gang provides this service. However, few members of the younger gangs are nasty enough to be particularly effective in protecting youths. Hence, they need to appear more dangerous than they actually are to provide maximum protection. Felson observed that gangs use a ploy found in nature to maximize the protection they seek to provide. To scare off threatening predators, some harmless animals and insects will mimic a more dangerous member of their species. In turn, predators learn to avoid all species—both harmless and dangerous—that look alike. For example, Felson notes that the coral snake, an extremely dangerous viper, is mimicked by the scarlet king

snake, which is often called the *false coral snake* because of its similar colors and patterns. Although the latter snake is not venomous at all, it scares off potential predators by virtue of its appearance.

Felson (2006) suggests that gangs use the same strategy, providing signals for local gang members to make their gangs resemble truly dangerous big city gangs. These standardized signals or symbols typically consist of hand signs, colors, graffiti, clothes, and language content. Gang members can display these scary signals at will to create a more menacing image. Employing a famous gang name will help them intimidate others. Once enough people believe their overblown dangerous image, it becomes accepted as reality.

CONSIDERATION OF KEY MYTHS ABOUT GANGS

Misrepresentations of gangs in the print media have been well documented in four analyses covering articles published over the past four decades (Best & Hutchinson, 1996; Esbensen & Tusinski, 2007; W. Miller 1974a; Thompson et al., 2000). As Bjerregaard (2003) notes, legislators also sometimes foster overreactions to gangs with very broad laws that prescribe severe penalties for any type of gang involvement. Almost invariably, though, newspaper accounts, popular magazine articles, and electronic media broadcasts on youth gangs contain at least one myth or fallacy. First, the leading news-weeklies and most major newspapers consider "gangs" to be a monolithic phenomenon and do not describe the diversity among distinctively different types of gangs, such as prison gangs versus drug gangs and youth gangs. Second, the demographic image of gang members as exclusively males and racial or ethnic minorities is perpetuated. Third, news outlets portray gangs as an urban problem that has spread to new areas, as part of a conspiracy to establish satellite sects across the country. Fourth, most gangs are characterized as hierarchical organizations with established leaders and operating rules. Fifth, the pervasiveness of violence is exaggerated. And the members themselves are prone to overstatements, for example, always claiming they were victorious in fights (Klein, 1995; Al Valdez, 2007).

Myth 1: Most Gangs Have a Formal Organization

A key premise of the big gang theory is that modern-day gangs are highly organized and function in a ruthless manner, much like organized crime groups or drug cartels. A main reason why a gang appears to be more menacing than a mere collection or group of lawbreakers is that the term *gang* implies that its members are organized, commit crimes in groups, and are thus resolutely committed to violence and mayhem (McCorkle & Miethe, 2002).

Reality

A few street gangs have evolved into highly organized, entrepreneurial adult criminal organizations (Coughlin & Venkatesh, 2003; Papachristos, 2001, 2004). However, studies