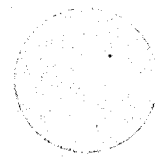


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GANGS AND VIOLENCE

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GANGS AND VIOLENCE

INTRODUCTION

Four central questions are addressed in this paper:

- (1) What is the documented pattern of membership in groups labeled as gangs, the concentration of these groups, and the amount of violence committed by their members?
- (2) Is there an association between gangs (as defined in particular ways or indicated with particular measures) and violence?
- (3) Are there unique attributes, processes and circumstances of groups that are considered to be gangs that promote the violence of either individual members, small groups of members, or the entire group?
- (4) What individual, group, community, cultural and structural factors support the formation of or membership in groups that are both labeled as gangs and implicated in the causation of violence?

The wording of these questions reflects the assumption that the term, gang, is a label, rather than a summation of some empirically recognizable, agreed upon set of group or member attributes.

The decision to regard the term gang as a label is based on a number of considerations. First, a review of the wide variety of social science and popular works that have focused on the gang reveals that the meaning of the term is ephemeral, varying with the context in which the gang exists, the activities of the members, the times, and the writer's theoretical perspective (if

any) (Stafford, 1984:168; also see Appendix). The term has been used to refer to organized criminal groups (gangsters), violent prisoners (prison gangs), rapists who offend in groups (gang-rape), motor cycle club members (motorcycle gangs) and various types of adolescent and young adult groups. There is no reason to assume that these groups share anything more than the label.

A second reason for regarding the term as a label is provided by the considerable research documenting the labeling process. Over twenty years ago, Sherif and Sherif (1964:238; also see Chambliss, 1973; Empey, 1967; Lerman, 1967) noted the tendency to label groups in lower class areas as gangs, but to call groups in other areas by nicer names. Researchers have identified imprecise processes through which police classify individuals as gang members, in some cases labeling any youth from a geographic location or ethnic background as a gang members (Hagedorn and Macon, 1988:97; Gonzalez, 1981). Official labels often are partly based on youths' reports of gang affiliation or addresses, which are distorted by the common practice of lying to the police (Moore et al., 1978:186). Police labeling can also be affected by desires of the police to increase estimates in order to "acquiring federal funding for specialized functions;" or because police accept an imagery that most violence can be attributed to gangs and to certain ethnic groups (Zatz, 1987:130). Shedding further light on the problem of accepting official labels, Zatz (1987:144) found that police, court officials, parents, and youth openly disagreed on whether particular youth were members of actual gangs, and that in the face of disagreements, police and court officials relied on dress

or even the appearance of poverty as an indication of gang membership (also see Downes, 1986; Chambliss, 1973; Morash, 1983; Pearson, 1983).

Not only are certain groups and individuals labeled, but so are certain offenses, which are designated as "gang related." In some cases all crimes by any alleged gang member are included, in others there is a restriction to violence that is committed by two or more gang member cooperatively, or to violence that is related to activities of the gang, such as illegal business operations or fighting. In a study of several California jurisdictions, Klein and Maxson (1989:208) found that classification of an incident as gang related depended partly on the type of police unit (i.e., narcotics, homicide, etc.) to which the case was assigned. Moreover, as in all official data, counts of gang related crimes are potentially subject to purposive manipulation or to level of resources to track gang activity. Illustrating the former type of misrepresentation, Horowitz (1987) pointed out that although local leaders contended that the police underestimated gang related murders, a high estimate was itself suspect as a way of documenting the need for more resources.

A third reason for regarding the gang label as a distinct phenomenon pertains to the requirements for advancing theory development. Using the label as the independent variable has been a major impediment to demonstrating and understanding causality. In the case of official labels, it is often not clear whether the gang label is applied after the fact when violence

occurs, or whether there is some predictive value of this label. Similarly, self reported gang involvement is questionable in light of the potential for rationalizing one's illegal activities as resulting from gang involvement, and also because individuals can attach different meanings to gang membership. For all types of data on gangs, if we could get beyond the label, in a sense "deconstruct" it, we could better reveal the group circumstances, processes, and other characteristics that explain violence regardless of the imposition of a label. We could also determine the effects of labeling itself.

An additional beneficial outcome of conceptualizing the label of gang as separate from other group characteristics is that samples could be extended to groups and individuals that share criminogenic environments but that are not similarly labeled. Without such expansion of sampling, it is impossible to determine whether the violence producing processes observed in gangs and the violence producing circumstances of gangs are unique or are spurious due to factors that simultaneously promote both violence and gang formation.

One of the complications of imprecise applications of the gang label is that distinct types of groups have been assumed to be similar in patterns of violence, to have overlapping membership, to share the same causal processes leading to violence, or even to be connected through the evolution of a group from one form of gang to another. The next section of this paper provides distinctions between major types of gangs that have been the focus of contemporary research and considers their interconnections. This section is followed by a presentation of

descriptive evidence on individuals, groups and crimes that are labeled as gang related; and a review of research to establish a link between gangs and violence. The last section examines the research on gangs in an effort to shed light on violence causation, and it illustrates in more detail how measurement and sampling issues have restricted the development of theory. In the conclusion, suggestions are made for furthering our understanding of violence.

TYPES OF GANGS

Since this paper relies on contemporary social science literature, it reflects a bias in emphasis on groups that include primarily males who are adolescents and young adults, usually of ethnic or racial minority group status. Two types of such gangs have been the focus of contemporary research pertinent to violence: the fighting gang and the entrepreneurial gang.

Beginning with Thrasher's (1963) work and continuing to the present, the bulk of literature on gangs has focused on groups of adolescents and young adults that are by definition violent. Fighting is an integral part of the process of initiation, group interaction, group identification and it is a focal group concern (Moore et al. 1983: 186; Spergel, 1984, 200-201; Curry and Spergel, 1988:382; Vigil, n.d.; Hagedorn and Macon, 1988:105, 106; Tracey, 1979, Miller, 1958). For various reasons, for example maturation, gangs may fluctuate over time in the amount of fighting that occurs, but in this body of research a group would not be categorized as a gang unless at some point fighting were a part of the group process.

In recent years there has been considerable attention to adolescent and young adult gangs that differ from the fighting gangs in that much of members' violence occurs in the course of supplementing their incomes through such activities as extortion or illegal drug dealing. A police officer in New York City described this shift from "fighting gangs" to a new "game" which is "survival, and this means committing crimes for profit -- robbery, harassment; burglary, and dangerous weapons" (Galea, 1982:215-216). To only a minimal extent do these entrepreneurial gangs have the same members as fighting gangs or overlap in structure. In fact, a complete lack of connection has been observed in such disparate places as New York City (Sullivan, 1989) and San Diego Asian communities (Rumbaut and Kenjii, 1988:65).

Some researchers (e.g., Williams, 1989; Mieczkowski, 1986) avoid the use of the term, gang, in their writing about "work crews" or networks of youthful "drug runners". Based on my own reading, it is not readily apparent that the group or individual phenomenon considered in such research are distinct from what others call the entrepreneurial gangs. In fact, in the case of Mieczkowski's research (1986) on drug runners in Detroit and Taylor's (1989) study of drug dealing gangs ("corporations"), the very same groups appear to be the focus of study.

When connections have been documented between fighting and entrepreneurial gangs, they are relatively weak, and in no way support the idea that fighting gangs have evolved into well organized entrepreneurial gangs by taking advantage of preexisting structure and membership. Ethnographies of fighting gangs in Los

Angeles Chicano areas (Moore, 1989:275; Moore et al., 1978), a Puerto Rican New York City gang (Sullivan, 1989), and Black, Chicano and white areas of Milwaukee (Hagedorn and Macon, 1988) revealed that although some fighting gang members do deal drugs, the entire group is not involved and the economic activity is not a group activity. Fighting gang members involvement in drug sales have usually been described as more of a casual extension of their own pattern of use than a serious business enterprise. The minimal connection was also reported by Klein et al.

(1988:6), who analyzed California police data:

While the cocaine business was increasing dramatically and gang members were becoming involved in proportionally more sales incidents, they were doing so in a more diluted fashion. The 1985 figure of 25% of cases with some gang involvement was far lower than the informal estimates suggested to us by law enforcement informants. The explosion in cocaine sales was engaging a number of street gang members but was in no way dominated by gang involvement. The evidence of increasing nongang presence in gang-involved cases could in fact suggest a diminishing gang effect over time.

Taylor's (1989) study of black Detroit youth also distinguished between fighting (scavenger) and drug dealing (corporate) gangs; again, the two types were connected primarily by the recruitment of some scavenger members into corporate gangs.

The existence of the relatively distinct types of gangs has been confirmed by both ethnographic research (Feldman et al.,

1985) and in quantitative research aimed at developing a typology of gangs (Fagan, 1989). In interpreting findings from case studies of gangs known to be violent, it is critical to understand that these gangs differ from other groups even in the same communities and with members having similar demographic characteristics. In fact, there is evidence that the fighting gangs in particular include only a minority of potential members, and they do not constitute the majority of adolescent/young adult peer groups in an area (e.g., Miller, 1982; Sung, 1987; Moore et al., 1978). Because there has not been as much study of the entrepreneurial gangs and groups, there is only impressionistic evidence of the number of potential members who are involved.

Besides the research on neighborhood based gangs, there has been some study of prison gangs. There is evidence that the the prison gangs are not imported versions of fighting gangs. Moore et al.'s (1978:106-116) study of Los Angeles Chicano fighting gang members revealed that although they carried their barrio reputations into the prison, the prison officials identified "prison gangs" that were populated by "state-raised men" who had spent most of their lives in prison, not by men who identified with their neighborhoods.

The social science research on motorcycle gangs, groups that regularly are involved in gang rape, and other types of gangs is very minimal. There is not adequate available evidence to either support or completely discount any commonality of such groups with entrepreneurial, fighting, or prison gangs in group characteristics, membership, patterns of violence, or violence

causation.

EXTENT OF GANG INVOLVEMENT, PREVALENCE OF GANGS, AND AMOUNT OF GANG-RELATED VIOLENCE

Information on gangs and violence is difficult to interpret due to the definitional issues reviewed above; because there is not a consistent and clear distinction between fighting, entrepreneurial and other gangs; and because there is little pertinent research on either representative samples of potential gang members or of adolescent/young adult groups within a criminogenic area. Thus, there are few studies to provide information on the proportion of potential members who belong to gangs or on the existence or concentration of gangs in a particular area. When there is some clarification in the type of gangs being considered, the focus has predominantly been on the fighting gang.

The limitations in data on gang membership and area based gang activity is matched by spotty and limited information on gang related violence. Several dimensions of violence are of theoretical interest. At the individual level, there might be a connection between gang membership and an individual's violent activity. The specific dependent variables are individual measures of (1) number of violent acts for a time period, (2) seriousness of violent acts for a time period, and (3) frequency of violent activity (λ). For each of these, the indicator can be broken down to reflect whether the crimes were committed alone or with another gang member and whether motivations are related to gang membership. At the area level, there might be a

connection between the amount of gang activity in an area to crime or victimization rates (which could be weighted by seriousness of offense).

The information that is available on gang membership, concentration and violence is of four major types: ethnographic case studies of selected groups, self-report data on samples of individuals, survey data on area residents, and official statistics. Self report and ethnographic studies generally reveal that small proportions of potential members belong to gangs. Among black youth in suburban Chicago neighborhoods during the 1970s, Johnstone found that 10.3% of respondents reported gang membership ("Since you have been living here, have you been a member of a street gang?"). Vigil (n.d.) and Moore et al. (1983:188) have similarly reported that in California barrios, the majority of youth are not gang members.

The results of two different studies pertain to the proportion of officially recognized delinquent youth with a self-reported gang affiliation. In the 1989 Survey of Youths in Custody, respondents were asked if they regularly associated with a group of youth in the year before commitment, and if yes, whether they would call the group a gang. The proportion with gang involvement was 31% (810 of 2621). Similar information was provided by a retrospective followup interview with subjects in the Philadelphia 1945 Birth Cohort study (Rand, 1987:155-156). Of the 106 subjects who had at least one official delinquent offense, 34.2% reported gang membership. The percentage was considerably higher for nonwhites than for whites, and the gang members scored higher on incidence and seriousness of offenses.

Of course, youth with official justice system contacts are not typical, and one of the reasons that they may be processed through the system is that they have a gang affiliation.

Although they are suspect for the reasons already discussed in this paper, some official statistics have confirmed the low estimates of the numbers of gangs and gang members in an area. Pennell and Curtis (1982:3) estimated 55 gangs and 3000 gang members in the San Diego region. Sung (1987:143) reported police estimates that in New York Chinatown, there were between 200 and 300 gang members, of whom only 150 were "hard core." One of the higher estimates was for the Chicago area, with approximately 100 street gangs, nearly all of which had black or Hispanic members (Bensenger, 1984). In prisons, Camp and Camp (1985) estimated 12,634 gang members in 33 prison systems. This represented just 3% of the prisoners in state and federal institutions (Fong, 1987:20; Camp and Camp, 1985).

Consistent with small proportions of estimated gang members, officials often designate a relatively small proportion of violent offenses as gang related. For example, based on police statistics, Pennell and Curtis (1982:20) projected that 4 percent of 1982 violent offenses in San Diego would involve gang members. Spergel (1984:204-205) calculated that between 1967 and 1981, only 5.5 percent of Chicago homicides were categorized as gang related by the police. The gang homicides did involve more offenders than other homicides; thus, 10.2 percent of the arrested homicide offenders were gang members, and the offenders were primarily older adolescents and young adults. San Diego

Police Department statistics for 1980 and 1981 revealed that the most frequent types of crime that police categorized as gang related were assault with a deadly weapon (n=235), robbery (n=206), burglary (n=198), and auto theft (n=91). Small numbers of other less frequent offenses were violent: assault vs. police officer (n=40), rape (n=36), shootings into a dwelling (n=32), attempted homicide (n=33) and homicide (n=24). Looking specifically at violence in the context of cocaine arrests, Klein et al. (1988:9) found that occurrence was "quite rare." These estimates share a striking consistency with Toby's (1961) conclusion that for the communities studied by Cloward and Ohlin some time ago, gang delinquency at most could account for 10 percent of the offenses handled by the juvenile court.

Of course the low estimates of the extent of the "gang problem" are contradicted by many examples of police, correctional and other official estimates that gang membership and violence is widespread and growing (Miller, 1982; McKinney, 1988). Many of the official statistics cited do not extend into the most recent years, and it is not known whether recent insistence of a growing gang problem is a result of actual widespread increases, area specific increases, changes in official categorizing and reporting, or some combination of these.

In a study that is unique in its approach, Takata and Zevitz (1987) surveyed residents of Racine, Wisconsin about gang activities. Almost one third of the 500 residents reported knowledge of a "gang problem", very small proportions (1.7%-3.7%) in various subgroups reported illegal or threatening behavior.

Slightly more respondents (but still under 10%) reported knowing of a relative or a friend that was assaulted or harassed by a gang member. Although at least one resident in each district of the city reported some contact with a gang member, contact was disproportionately concentrated in certain districts. The Racine study suggests that at least in Racine -- a city that is not recognized as having a particularly serious gang problem -- a relatively small proportion of people have experienced or even heard of gang violence. It is possible that even these estimates may be exaggerated, since residents may erroneously attribute gang membership to youths who act aggressively.

Aside from the neighborhood based groups that are identified as gangs, there are estimates of membership or violence for the prison gang. The proportion of violence attributed to prison gangs is quite high. Summarizing statistics from the Texas Department of Statistics, Fong (1987:110) reported that before the number of gangs began to increase, the one gang (the Texas syndicate) was reported to be responsible for five of the twelve inmate homicides (41%). As the number of identified gangs increased, so did the absolute number of inmate homicides and the proportion of homicides attributed to gang members and thought to involve gang warfare. By 1985, over 80% of inmate homicides were gang related. A survey of correctional facilities throughout the U.S. similarly showed that officials attributed many violent activities, including homicides and attempted homicides, to gang members (Camp and Camp, 1985). However, there was tremendous state variation on the proportion of

problems attributed to gangs, with three states attributing no problems to gangs, eleven states attributing five percent or less, and three states attributing eighty-five percent of problems or more to gangs. Drug distribution was the most common problem, but intimidation of other inmates, extortion and other forms of violence were also mentioned frequently. Also, there was variation in the use of violence at all by gangs, with over half reportedly using such tactics, but a sizeable minority not reportedly violent. The size and concentration of the prison violence problem is reflected by the finding that in 1983, 20 inmates were reportedly killed because of gang activities, but half of the murders were in California.

Trends in Violence

Even more difficult than establishing the current amount of gang activity, including gang-related violence, for a particular time is establishing a trend over time. Although national indicators do not directly consider gangs, there is some minimal information on multiple offender incidents. If an increase in gangs or a change in members' activity has resulted in a dramatic shift in offenses by multiple offenders (two or more), then this would be shown by National Crime Survey data. Such a shift is not evident for crimes of violence between 1978 and 1987 (Appendix B). National victimization data for violence by racial, sex and age subgroups also do not show a clear pattern of an increased victimization rate even for the minority adolescent and young adult males who would be most at risk of fighting gang violence, and the Uniform Crime Reports show fluctuation in

murder and non-negligent homicide since 1979 with an overall 13.4% decrease as of 1988 (Crimes in the U.S.-- 1988, 1989). None of the murder circumstances that are tabulated for the UCR are specific to gangs, but the proportion of arguments due to reasons other than romance, property or money (and thus including gang issues) has decreased; the increase has been in the area of circumstances involving narcotics and "unknown." Thus, any increase in violence due to gang activity would have to be localized and limited to the extent that it has no bearing on national statistics.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (McKinney, 1988) has published the impressions of law enforcement experts that gang activity and related violence is increasing dramatically. However, no attention is given to the degree to which an increased counting and categorizing of offenses and people as gang related might account for the trend. In fact, one recent OJJDP report (Bryant, 1989:4) encouraged officials who think there is no gang problem in their communities to actively try to uncover one and to invest law enforcement resources in documenting it.

A type of violence of primary concern to those who study fighting gangs is increasingly lethal peer confrontations due to the use of firearms (Moore et al., 1983; Frias, 1982; Horowitz, 1987; Miller, 1975; Short, 1976). It is known that the availability of a gun is an important predictor of homicide (Cook, 1982). The reasons for increased availability are not known. Potential influences include more frequent theft or purchase, increased illegal drug trade, and a perceived need for

self-protection or to illegally earn an income.

One other source of data on trends in gang related violence is provided by the National Youth Survey, which did include a few items on potentially gang related crimes for a representative sample of youth. An examination of the indicators of prevalence of gang fights, aggravated assault and hidden weapons for 17 year olds in the National Youth Survey between 1976 and 1982 (Table 1) did not show an increase. Unfortunately, the National Youth Survey suffers from its own methodological problems, one of which may be the attrition of the most delinquent youths over time; and it does not provide comparable information on 17 year olds through the present.

THE ASSOCIATION OF GANGS AND VIOLENCE

For groups that are labeled as gangs, the literature is far from definitive about the connection to violence. On the one hand there are media, law enforcement and some social science reports (e.g., Bensinger, 1984; Kornblum, 1987 McKinney, 1988; Bryant, 1989) of drastic increases in the number of gang members and a related increase in the seriousness of gang related violence, in the number of communities affected by gangs, and in the merger of street gangs with organized crime. [Organized crime involves people from both the underworld (criminals) and the upperworld (e.g., politicians, law enforcement officials) united in ongoing illegal economic activities (Bloch, 1980).] On the other hand, there are personal accounts explaining that the media has seriously overestimated the amount of violence in, for example, motorcycle gangs (Harris, 1985), as well as considerable

documentation that the media generally conveys an inaccurate picture of crime and its causes (Marsh, 1989; Morash and Hale, 1987), and particularly distorts our understanding of gangs and violence (e.g., Zatz, 1987; Sato, 1986:140; Gonzalez, 1981).

Gang Membership and Violence

To reveal the association between gang membership and individual's violence, it is necessary to consider a sample that includes both gang members and non-members. There is a paucity of research of this sort. In two separate studies that stand as exceptions, Rand (1987) reported on the self-reports of gang affiliation from a survey of boys in the Wolfgang-Sellin Philadelphia Birth Cohort Study, and Johnstone (1981) on self-reports of gang affiliation and being approached to join among suburban Chicago black youths surveyed in 1974. Tracey also considered the Philadelphia Birth Cohort data, but he used official police designations to indicate gang membership. Additional information is provided by Fagan's (1989) comparison of 151 gang members identified by social service workers and other gang members in three cities known for gang problems to other samples of juveniles.

There is some evidence supporting a connection between gang membership to both serious delinquency (Rand, 1987:155-7; Johnstone, 1981:364; Fagan, 1989:646) and violence (Tracy, 1979; Tracy and Pipper, 1984). Not only was the association found, but gang members had a longer career of in crime; for most youth, joining a gang preceded delinquent activity; and for white youth, a cessation of crime occurred after leaving the

gang (Rand, 1987).

There are remaining questions, though, about the nature and strength of the connection between gang membership and violence. In a representative sample of youth in three communities with a history of gangs, Fagan (1989:647; 1990:12) found that the prevalence of violent acts (robbery, felony assault, weapons offense) was considerably higher for self identified gang members, but only a small percentage of gang members were involved in frequent violence. Moreover, although a majority (65%) of boys identified as gang members described gangs with a high level of violence, a sizeable minority were in gangs characterized by a low violence level. Offering a parallel finding, Camp and Camp (1985) concluded from their survey of correctional officials that though most prison gangs used violence, some of the gangs were not violent.

The findings about the association of gang membership to individual measures of violence are consistent with earlier studies of gangs that stressed the inter-group, nonfatal nature of most aggressive behaviors of gang members (e.g., Miller et al., 1961; Short, int. article:257; Klein, 1971; Miller, 1958; Short and Strodbeck, 1965), and with research showing that members of fighting gangs at times cooperate to avoid extreme violence (Hagedorn and Macon, 1988:143; also see Suttles, 1968; Miller, 1975). It also is consistent with Miller's (1975; also see Keiser, 1969) conclusion from his national assessment of gang activity that that violence is a rare group activity.

Besides underscoring the variability in the level of violence for self or officially identified gang members, the

existing research has raised questions about the degree to which gang membership is necessary in the production of violence. In the Rand study, two thirds of non-white gang members persisted in delinquency after leaving the gang. Thus community and socio-economic factors may impinge on nonwhites to explain both gang affiliation and criminal activity, making the association between gangs and crime spurious. Johnstone's (1981) finding that those approached to join gangs were almost as violent as those who actually belonged has similar implications. Fagan's (1990:21) comparison of youth who admitted gang involvement with others in the neighborhood showed similar explanatory factors for the delinquency, including violence, for both groups. He concluded that the causes of delinquency do not differ for gang and non-gang members. Also, peer group types other than gangs appeared to contribute to serious delinquency. Thus, the high rates of gang members' delinquency could not be explained by "social processes," unique to gang members; at least not the social processes pinpointed in existing etiological theories.

Studies of official delinquents also have raised questions about the degree to which gang membership produces a unique pattern of violence. Zatz's (1987:143) comparison of court records for Chicano youth who were and who were not identified as gang members by the Phoenix Department of Corrections showed only minimal difference in violence: alleged gang members were more often referred to court for fighting with peers. Similarly, Klein et al (1988:7) found no difference in the presence of

firearms in their comparison of drug dealing incidents varying in whether a participant had a police designation as a gang member.

Besides showing that the relationship between gang membership and individuals' violence varies, and that gang membership is not necessary to produce violence, research has shown that the relationship is not static over time. In some cases, gangs change and there are related changes in the patterns of members' violence. In a recent retrospective look at her continuous research on Chicano Los Angeles gangs, Moore (n.d.:3, Variations in Violence) noted that before 1970, for young gang members, "apart from gang fighting, graffiti, and occasional forays into vandalism..., delinquency, including drug dealing, is a matter of individual or pair activity, and not an activity of the gang as a whole. Beginning in the 1970s, perhaps because of the effects of popular drugs and/or a desire to "outdo" the reputations previous gangs, violence escalated to involve guns and became more impersonal. More recently, the violence has decreased markedly. Possible explanations are disenchantment resulting from the killings, benefits of gang oriented social services, and economic changes that promote older members remaining with the gang and serving as a moderating effect.

Amount of Gang Activity and Area Violence

Even more limited than the research on gang membership and violence is research on the concentration of gangs within an area and violence. Spergel's (1984: 205) research has suggested that establishing such a connection is problematic. Between 1978 and 1981, Chicago gang homicides were scattered throughout the

city, with about half of the seventy-five communities having at least one homicide between 1978 and 1981. There were no clear associations of community type to gang homicide rates. Three predominantly black, very poor areas with high delinquency had no gang homicides. Two middle-class, white areas with subgroups of Hispanic and black youth had particularly high rates. Moore also found that in Los Angeles, gang violence was scattered between many neighborhoods.

One way of determining a connection between violence and gang concentration is to show that the spread of gangs is followed by an increase in violence. Kornblum (1987:100) did write about the movement of juvenile gang violence from small to large cities. There is, however, considerable difficulty establishing that a gang has "spread." The same name or an overlap in members does not necessarily indicate a structural tie between groups in different geographic areas, but may instead indicate cultural diffusion (Hagedorn and Macon, 1988:79; also see Short, 1990:148). Media and police claims that gang activity is spreading have been unfounded in some particular cases, as exemplified by Zatz's (1987:133) finding that in Phoenix, the news of potential gang spread from L.A. was more related to police budgetary concerns than any actual change in rates of violence. Although some prison administrators have reported the spread of prison gangs, Camp and Camp (1985:viii) could not find any pattern of movement. Instead of interconnected gangs, they found cases in which, for example, inmates in new prison settings tried to reproduce organizations to which they had previously belonged or charismatic leaders

imitated what they have heard about other gangs.

Parallel to the reasoning relating concentrations of gangs to concentrations of violence within an area, if we could find a connection between increased gang activity over time and increased violence, this would be evidence of an association. For entrepreneurial New York Chinese gangs, Sung (1987) presented police department figures for the years 1955 to 1978 to show that there was a dramatic increase in the gang-related arrests of Chinese in the Chinatown area during the 1970s. Before 1967, there were never more than nine arrests in any one year; however, in the 1970s arrests totaled over 100 for several years. Many of the arrests in the 1970s were for violent acts. She attributed the change not so much to the existence of youthful gangs, but instead to their involvement first with the Tongs, and then independently, in organized criminal activity.

In sum, cross sectional studies of gang membership and individual measures of violence provide some indication of an association, but at the same time the findings raise questions about spurious relationships and, when official data are used, the extent to which the gang label is applied selectively to people who are violent. At the area level, we really do not have any research that adequately compares communities or periods differing in levels of gang concentration on either rates of crime or rates of victimization.

THEORY

Theory identifies the individual, group, cultural and structural factors that promote a high prevalence of gangs

that are linked to violence within a geographic area, that promote membership in such gangs, or that explain how the violence comes about. By definition, the factors that support the emergence of and membership in fighting gangs would be relevant to explaining violence. Factors supporting the emergence of or membership in entrepreneurial and prison gangs are relevant insofar as these gangs promote violence.

Economic Marginalization, Illegal Markets, and Organized Crime

Variations in the opportunity structure --through the legitimate economy, illegal markets or organized criminal groups --have long been identified as influences on the formation of gangs and the violence of members. Presently, various geographic concentrations of racial and ethnic groups are experiencing economic circumstances different from those of the succession of immigrant groups which benefitted from the availability of laborer jobs in the earlier part of the century. In the North Central and Eastern regions, industries that previously provided work for the unskilled have moved or otherwise changed, drastically limiting the opportunities for urban blacks (Wilson, 1987). For Hispanics, the economic realities may be similar (Moore, 1989), though there is some evidence that economic marginalization is moderated for immigrant Hispanics who have escaped from poverty of a different nature; and in some areas by "enclave communities" where thriving Hispanic owned businesses have developed, and church and family structures remain relatively functional (Moore, 1989:276). Yet, unlike the situation faced by many immigrant groups earlier in the 1900s,

there are Hispanics communities where unemployment and underemployment have persisted for some families across generations; there is limited assimilation, and there is an influx of new immigrants (Moore et al., 1983:188). Finally, in many urban areas there has been a growth in "informal businesses," which operate largely unregulated, often requiring work at home, and which provide marginal employment for increasing proportions of immigrants (Sassen-Koob, 1989).

Due to the lack of any system to accurately monitor the proportion of youth involved in either fighting or entrepreneurial gangs there is no way to precisely document the connection between increased economic hardships in an area and increased gang activity. As a partial exception, there is evidence that the restricted legitimate opportunities in selected communities promote lengthened involvement with gangs (Moore, 1978; Spergel, 1984; Horowitz, 1983; Perkins, 1987), though this tendency may be limited to males (Hagedorn and Macon, 1988:125). Also, several studies have shown the dynamics through which economic conditions affect both entrepreneurial and fighting gang violence.

Economic Opportunity and Patterns of Economically Motivated Violence

In general, there is evidence of a connection between economic marginalization and participation in economically motivated violence both in the drug market and in other illegal activities. But, the same connection also has been documented for groups that are not labeled as gangs. Also, in most cases illegal market activities do not explain variations in violence

between gang members. One exception is when there is a historical connection between organized crime activities and youthful gangs, which is the case in New York City's Chinatown.

Drug Dealing and Gang Violence

Because dealing drugs often involves violence in the service of business (e.g., Johnson et al., 1989), increased recruitment of gang members into "crews" in which members use and distribute drugs (Williams, 1989; Taylor, 1989; Perkins, 1987:62) might account for a new variety or intensity of gang members' violence. Groups dealing in drugs do exhibit more business related violence, and the cocaine and crack markets account for high levels (Fagan and Chin, forthcoming in la Rosa et al.). It should be noted, though, that the preexistence of a gang or gang membership are not clearly implicated in causing violence, and as already noted, there is considerable reason to believe that drug dealing crews are only tenuously if at all connected to fighting gangs.

When just gang members are considered, there is no support of an association between drug dealing and violence. Fagan's (1989) study of gang members in three cities revealed that there was no violent gang that was not involved in drug sales, but there were gangs involved in drug distribution in which violence was not characteristics. Moore (1987:4) also found no relationship between deaths in gang warfare and the number of members dealing drugs. And, Klein et al.'s (1988:9) analysis of San Diego police data showed that drug related homicides did not disproportionately involved gang members. In fact, over time

just "nongang homicides have increasingly been characterized by drug involvement and drug related motives for the death. Thus, it does not appear that fighting gang members' drug dealing activities account for their violence. Instead entrepreneurial "crews" (which also are called gangs), particularly in the crack markets, are prone to business related violence.

Other Illegal Activities and Gang Violence

Whereas drug distribution does not account for the variation in gang member's violence, both legal and illegal opportunities do shape the extent and form of violence that is related to the generation of income among members of youth cliques, including gangs (Sullivan, 1989; also see Merry, 1981). Sullivan took a career perspective in comparing New York City boys (1) of Puerto Rican heritage in a deteriorating and poor neighborhood (La Barriada), (2) in a black housing project (Projectville), and (3) in a working class white area distinguished by a high proportion of homes with a father present and working (Hamilton Park). Only in the Puerto Rican neighborhood did the boys acknowledge that they were a gang. In every community, boys learned the techniques of violence through fighting in early adolescence. This knowledge was available as some boys turned to illegal activity as a regular source of income.

Particular circumstances in the community influenced the pattern and frequency in which the violence was used for economic gain. In La Barriada and Hamilton Park, theft from local factories provided a source of income in mid-adolescence; in Projectville, the absence of factories and the physical structure

of the project itself resulted in the frequent use of robbery from other project residents to provide income. In all neighborhoods, prior experiences, community intolerance, brushes with the law, family circumstances, and other individual factors influenced some boys to desist from economic crime, including violence. Not personal investment in education, but the availability of legitimate jobs, which depended heavily on a network of personal contacts that linked boys to these jobs, allowed many older adolescents in Hamilton Park to shift their source of income to legitimate pay, which they often combined with on-the-job theft. In La BARRIDA, systematic burglary was a primary source of income to older youths; and in Projectville, when the chance of recognition by a victimized neighbor became a serious risk, older adolescents shifted their activities to violent gold-chain snatchings at a distance from the project (i.e., in subways). The picture drawn by Sullivan is that gangs are not a necessity in either stimulating adolescent boys to engage in frequent fighting, nor do they fully explain the patterns of violence of members. The important influences, instead, are opportunities to make money, both legally and illegally.

Organized Crime and Gang Violence

A well developed adult organized crime group in a community also provides opportunity for the continued exercise of violence for profit for both individuals and groups. The influence of organized crime was observed by earlier theorists (Spergel, 1964; Cloward and Ohlin, 19) who described communities in which

juvenile gang members graduated into well established organized criminal groups. Similar crime networks may be absent from some contemporary communities (e.g., Milwaukee as described by Hagedorn and Macon, 1988), but they are present in others. For example, in the white, working class (Hamilton Park) area that Sullivan studied, the existence of organized crime activities and adult models in the family facilitated some boys' transition to employment as a "strong arm" to collect gambling debts.

There is presently a unique connection between organized criminal groups and youthful gangs in New York City's Chinatown (Sung, 1987; Chin, 1986). Sung (1987:137-138) described the role of Tongs, secret societies of individuals of Chinese heritage which have historically been engaged in such illegal activities as gambling, prostitution, and drugs. In recent years gambling has been their primary focus, and they have contracted with young gangs to work as strong arms, lookouts and guards as well as collecting gambling debts. By involving gangs with members under sixteen, the Tongs took advantage of the relative immunity of young offenders from severe punishment. With time, the relationship between Tongs and the gangs has itself become conflictual, as the gangs sought to work independently in extortion for protection. There also has been violent activity to protect "economic territories" from other gangs. Aside from some minimal documentation across cities that Chinatown gangs without an organized crime connection tend to dissolve (Joe and Robinson, 1980; Chin, 1986:220), there is no research on communities similar to New York Chinatown.

The Special Case of Prison Gangs

Prison gangs can best be understood as a form of entrepreneurial gang organized in the context of the inmate economy and the extreme deprivations of prison life. Moore et al.'s (1978:106-16) contrast of state-raised men with barrio men highlights the degree to which the inmate economy accounts for violence. Unlike the barrio men, who maintained a connection to people in their neighborhoods, the state-raised men had no outside resources, and thus relied heavily on violence to obtain goods and privileges. Moore (1978:116) interpreted her finding of no Chicano gangs in federal prisons as evidence that the lack of "real pay" combined with the absence of community supports, rather than preexisting fighting gang affiliations, accounted for the violence in California State Prisons. Consistent with Moore et al.'s (1978) emphasis on prison conditions (i.e., economic deprivation of state raised men) as a causative factor, Fong (1987:9) concluded from a review of available information that prison gangs had clearly defined economic goals involving "extortion, drugs, homosexual prostitution, gambling and protection," and that they used brutal and violent means to achieve these goals.

Organizational features besides the extreme economic marginalization appear to exacerbate the violence of prison gangs. Some scholars (Jacobs, 1977; Ekland-Olson, 1986) have attributed increased prison violence to court interventions that limited the authority of prison administrators. The hypothesized chain of events is that when administrative controls

were weakened (e.g., by prohibition of the use of selected inmates as "guards"), prison gangs formed for both self protection and to exert their own controls. Yet, the overriding dynamic in supporting entrepreneurial gangs remains the same inside and outside the prison. Just as economic marginalization in the larger society is connected with participation in illegal markets and related violence, the economic marginalization within the prison organization explain the development of entrepreneurial groups and their use of violence.

The Context of Poverty

In processes separate from the encouragement of the use of violence in order to earn an income, there are particular conditions of living in a poor, urban area that support membership in and formation of fighting gangs. For black suburban Chicago gangs, Johnstone (1981:366) found formation to be related to several indicators of poverty: concentrations of poor families, large numbers of youth, overcrowding, higher proportions of blacks, and to a lesser extent, concentrations of female-headed households and people with limited education. Writing about Great Britain, Patrick (1966:165) similarly attributed the presence of gangs in Glasgow and their absence in England to "teeming slums" and a lack of employment.

One characteristic of poor urban communities that has been repeatedly linked to gang formation is fear of victimization (e.g., Suttles). In his study of a South Bronx Puerto Rican community between 1983 and 1984, Edelman (1984:14) discovered the

dynamics through which fear has its influence. Carrying weapons was not considered illegal, but rather a reasonable response to living in a high crime area. In this context, youth viewed displaying a weapon as either a deterrent or as a challenge. Thus, the potential for violence was increased. The New York City Puerto Rican girls that Campbell (1984:252) studied also joined fighting gangs because of a perceived need for protection. The need for the protection among adolescents is stimulated by a real risk of victimization in a community with limited informal social controls (for documentation of higher incidence of victimization for gang members, see Singer, 1987:173). Victimization extends beyond peer group fighting to robbery in communities where there are limited alternatives for making money (e.g., see Messerschmidt (1986) on exploitative street life). Though not a necessary condition for gang formation (Johnstone, 1981:371 and Sullivan, 1989), racial and ethnic group "baiting," which often occurs in public schools where youth are combined from several neighborhoods (Rumbaut and Kenjii, (1988); Chin, 1986:217) can increase the fear of victimization and the related interest in joining a gang for protection.

The fear of victimization provides a basis for understanding thought and related group processes that explain how individual gang members come to engage in a violent act. Krisberg's (1980) research on black Philadelphia gang leaders revealed a certain desensitization to violence through frequent exposure (including victimization) at a very young age and a related acceptance of the possibility of an early death. Consistent with Short and

Strodbeck's (Short, 1985:253) conclusion almost two decades ago, that Chicago gang members' lack of social skills accounted for inter- and intragang aggression, the Philadelphia gang leaders tended to see violence as the only feasible response to any criticisms. There was group support for the tendencies towards violence: The gang hierarchy was based on individuals' displays of willingness to take part in violent confrontations (also see Short, 1985:256), and "having an attitude," a reflexive violent reaction to any offense, was accepted as part of human nature.

Writing about Chicano gangs, Vigil (n.d., 235) described a similar desensitization, "an aura of death that pervades drug use and abuse and barrio gang rivalries." An important adaptation to childhood mistreatments and aggressions and the fear of being further victimized was a "mind set" of "locura, which is an attitude of wildness or quasi-controlled insanity" (p. 231). According to Vigil (n.d., 238), the group support for locura resolved anxiety about fear. It also served the practical purpose of stopping attacks from gang rivals. Vigil (n.d., 238) asserted that locura explains variation in violence among gang members, with the most loco individuals having severe problems during childhood. These problems result in feelings of self-hatred, worthlessness and "a sort of 'psychosocial death'". There is a differentiation between youth who have the most severe problems, and are most disturbed, who are always in a state of locura; and those youths who have fewer problems, and exhibit locura aggression mainly in response to peer "tests" of their acceptability as a gang member. The locura behavior is

functional for the group for it provides protection from rival gangs it gives marginal gang members access to membership, and thus protection from tougher members.

Aside from the attraction to gang membership provided by the potential protection, there is often a void in more conventional group and institutional involvements in poor, inner city communities. This void has increased in the last decade with drastic cutbacks in social service programs. Cordilia (1986:169) described the attraction of gang membership for youth who were relatively isolated from conventional institutions, and the resulting availability of these youth to be influenced by status enhancing group processes, as well as a desire to cooperate with friends, that result in fighting and other delinquent activity (also see Short and Strodtbeck, 1965; Wade, 1967).

In light of the childhood fear and experience of victimization, the threat posed by racial and ethnic antagonisms, and the isolation from conventional institutions that might provide support and status, it is not unusual that some youths are drawn to fighting gangs. Still, we know that the majority of youths in many communities are not members, and that there is considerable variation in intensity of involvement. Individual and family factors appear to mediate the attraction of fighting gang membership, and though there is less research, also probably mediate membership in entrepreneurial gangs.

Individual and Family Factors Mediating Involvement in Fighting and Entrepreneurial Gangs

Among the individual variations that have been related to

the tendency to join gangs that engage in some level of violence are: school problems, which in some cases result from language difficulties of immigrants (Sung, 1987:147; Campbell, 1984:252; Peters, 1988:88; Joe and Robinson, 1980); family problems, such as lack of parental supervision (e.g., Adler et al., 1982:72; Rumbaut and Kenjii, 1988:97) and parental affection (Adler et al., 1982:72); and family stressors including handicapped or chronically ill members, criminal members, and sexual abuse in the family (Moore, 1988a:5-6). There is some evidence that girls who join gangs are from particularly troubled homes (Moore, 1988a: 18). Moreover, the complete absence of parents has been implicated for the estimated 5000 Taiwanese youth who have been illegally left in the Los Angeles area with friends or relatives in order that they can attend U.S. public schools (Chin, 1986:206-7).

There also has been analysis of the relationship of individual factors to the intensity of gang involvement. Using particularly detailed distinctions between regular, peripheral, temporary, and situational members, Vigil (1988:422; also see Buriel, 1984; Buriel et al., 1982) concluded from observations that the most involved youths were those most affected by "racial and cultural discrimination and poverty" and those with limited guidance through the family or schools. Moore (1983:192) found that several individual characteristics influenced boys to care more about membership, and thus more readily engage in violence to establish and maintain status in the group. Similar to findings already cited, these individual factors were family instability (e.g., frequent moves, parent in prison), parent-

child relations marked by extreme stress (also see Quicker, 1983:40-44; Vigil, 1988b:425), and parental absence. Researchers in very diverse settings (e.g., Klein, 1971 in California; Patrick, 1973 in Glasgow) also have noted that core gang members more often had intellectual and personal deficits and psychological problems.

Many of the individual factors influencing youth to join and identify closely with gangs are themselves direct results of economic marginalization, the problems that immigrant families face in adjustment, and in the case of Taiwanese youth, even blocked educational opportunities internationally. For example, in her research on Puerto Rican girls, Campbell (1984:241; also see Quicker, 1974) found that "[w]ithout a high school education, without a better command of English, they have little hope of success...[but] with the strength of the gang, they can achieve a measure of status and a means of economic survival." Thus, in order to establish a full model of causation, the links between structural conditions and individual or family factors need to be taken into account.

A misleading result of focusing on individual level variables without consideration of the context is illustrated by Vigil's (n.d.:232) finding from his study of Chicano gangs that "being raised in poorer homes, disproportionately mother-centered family situations with more siblings, and with problematic impoverished economic pressures (unemployment and welfare) " predisposed youth to join gangs. This finding suggests the importance of inadequacies of the family. But, when Sullivan

(1989:220) distinguished between individual and community differences he found that it was not so much a one parent family that explained criminal activity, but rather a concentration of families with no father in the home, and thus a community without the informal social controls that adult men could impose. Individual level research needs to consider the structural and related community conditions that can influence gang involvement and activity; and also it should be designed to allow a differentiation of the effects of individual and contextual influences.

Culture, Gender and Gang Violence

In the past, there has been considerable attention to the part that culture has played in supporting gang formation and processes. Culture has been variously conceptualized as attached to a class, an ethnic, or an age subgroup. Agreeing with much critical assessment of the cultural explanations, recent studies have shown that gang members in Chicano communities have fairly conventional norms relevant to work, education, and occupational success (Schwartz, 1987; Moore et al., 1978).

One theme that persists in theory to link gangs and violence is that gang members' culturally supported conceptualizations of masculinity can explain their violent activity. Specifically, several researchers (Erlanger, 1979; Horowitz, 1983, 1987:440; Vigil, 1983, 1985) have concluded that the cultural emphasis on machismo in Hispanic fighting gangs promotes and legitimates fighting within and between groups. In a comparative community study of Chicago, Curry and Spergel (1988) did find that the

percentage Hispanic in a community was related to the gang homicide rate after control for economic marginalization. Rather than a cultural interpretation, though, they explained the finding as a result of the disorganization of immigrant life.

Also contradicting the cultural explanation, the degree to which Hispanic cultures contribute to violence through the belief in machismo is problematic. Writing about Hispanic families, Baca Zinn (1980:20) criticized the tendency to "view machismo as a compensation for feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness." These feelings are sometimes attributed to the historical domination by the Spaniards in Mexico, and sometimes to contemporary economic marginality of Hispanics in the U.S. The possibility that feelings of worthlessness engendered in men during the Hispanic domination of Mexico are carried into the contemporary U.S. scene is highly questionable. Scholarship also has contradicted the view that Hispanic cultures promote a vision of masculinity in which domination and even violence are central (Ybarra, 1977; Baca Zinn, 1980). Specific to gangs, the norms of Chicano gangs studied by Erlanger (1979) did not condone or require violence, and violence decreased when gang members were given an opportunity to participate in political activism at the community level. Thus, the view that Hispanic cultural traditions, values and beliefs explain gang members' violence rests on poorly supported assumptions.

An alternative explanation is that the "culture" relevant to gangs is not a set of shared values and traditions passed within an ethnic, racial or social class group, but a collective

response to shared socio-economic conditions (Groves and Sampson, 1988). This alternative view is consistent with the argument of Hispanic scholars Baca Zinn (1982) and Chafetz (1979:54) that the connection of definitions of masculinity with aggressiveness is found in many lower class groups, including but not limited to Hispanics. Research across ethnic and racial groups has offered supporting evidence. Connell's (undated:9) recent study of young men in New South Wales showed that in response to the school's efforts to limit the power of boys who "fail," the boys claimed "other sources of power, even other definitions of masculinity." The alternatives were "sporting prowess, physical aggression, [and] sexual conquest..." This self definition was conducive to the boys' joining the "gangs." Krisberg (1980) provided a similar account of black Philadelphia gang leaders engaged in a "contest of manhood" through extreme violence that was often sparked by nothing more than verbal disagreements. Cambell (1986:124) also observed that for economically marginalized groups, for whom daily interactions are restricted to a small and stable group for which toughness is equated with masculinity, threats and insults frequently elicited a violent response. Although a self definition that supports violence is not invariably a result of living in low class communities, it is one adaptation.

One of the complexities of trying to connect images of masculinity to violence and related gang membership and activity is that although their numbers are small, there are some girls who participate in gang activity. In rare cases they form fighting gangs that have no connection to boys' gangs (Brown,

1977), but more often there is an affiliation (Quicker, 1984:25; Campbell, 1984:242-3). It makes no sense to talk about girls' strivings to be masculine.

Another difficulty is that in many feminist theoretical frameworks, a central theme is that self definitions in terms of social constructions of gender are undesirable and unnecessary. For girls and women who commit violent acts and who identify with gangs, exigencies such as a need for protection against victimization and for escape from sexual abuse in the family may shape their definitions of self. The issue may be less a matter of constructions of masculinity or femininity than more general self definitions. Campbell's (1987) study of Puerto Rican girls in gangs illustrated that girls defined themselves so as to incorporate ideas about gender that are consistent with fighting. Fighting represented a rejection of the stereotype of poor, Puerto Rican women as passive and as "whores". Although there are societal pressures against females' forming self-definition that support fighting (see Horowitz on Chicana gang members in Los Angeles), these are not deterministic.

Moore's (1988a:17) work has provided some further evidence of the connection between gang subculture and economic conditions in her explanation of increases in lethal violence in Los Angeles. Along with gun ownership and a shift to impersonal attacks (e.g., drive by shootings), she attributed the change to an evolution of the gang's deviant subculture. This evolution was marked by younger members' desires to out do the reputation of older cohorts and by increased value placed on

"locura (i.e., wildness) in the exercise of violence. Consistent with the notion that socioeconomic structure promotes cultural adaptations, Moore (1988a:17) linked the changes to young men's inability to get and keep a stable job and the related failure in formation of stable families.

Whether manifested in gendered definitions of self or in other facets of daily interactions, shared group values that support violence of gang members appear to be primarily connected to economic conditions. Therefore, the patterns cut across gender, racial and ethnic groups.

Group Characteristics and Violence

Much of the early work on fighting gangs and to some extent the more recent studies of fighting and entrepreneurial gangs provided detailed descriptions of group characteristics and processes that support violence. However, there appears to be considerable variation in the observed group processes when gangs that are thought to be similarly linked to violence are compared.

In many cases, recruitment is not an aggressive process, but rather, as already described, potential members seek membership for safety, because they know other members, or because they share economic motivations with members (e.g., see survey results in Fagan, 1989). In contrast, an aggressive, strong-arm approach has been reported for two types of entrepreneurial gangs with a primary focus of extortion. These are prison gangs (Fong, 1987) and the New York Chinatown gangs (Sung, 1987:144). In such gangs having more members increases the group's ability to frighten others into paying for protection, and thus perhaps

provides the motivation for such practices.

The use of fighting both among gang members and with members of other gangs as an initiation right in fighting gangs already has been discussed, and this initiation process has been observed for both girls (Campbell, 1984; Quicker, 1974; Brown, 1977) and boys (Moore, 1978; Vigil, n.d., etc.) There is considerable variation in the use of a violent initiation. In a comparison of Los Angeles Chicano youth over time, Moore (1988a:9) found that being "jumped into" the gang (i.e., being initiated by a physical beating by other members) was more usual for 1970s cohorts than 1950s cohorts. A cross sectional survey of gang members in two California cities and in Chicago revealed considerable variation in contemporary methods of initiation (Fagan, 1989:659).

Although the ethnographic and interview studies noted above have provided accounts of how group processes include fighting as an aspect in initiation, and in some cases violence in order to recruit new members, there have been few attempts to link specific group characteristics to the amount of violence attributable to group members. An exception is Fagan's (1989) research, in which snowball samples of gang members in San Diego, Los Angeles and Chicago were surveyed. Gang members were identified by community agency staff and area informants, and the definition of gangs encompassed groups of adolescents or young adults who were involved in enough illegal activity to elicit a negative response by either neighbors or law enforcement officials. Independent of members' involvement in drug dealing or use, the most violent gangs were characterized by a higher

degree of organization and cohesion. In particular, members reported joining for a specific reason, related either to the deficits of conventional institutions or to the gangs strength in exerting social control (Fagan, 1989:633). Gangs that used violent methods of initiation and to enforce gang codes also had members that engaged in high levels of violence outside of the gang context.

In considering the probable effects of group characteristics on members' behavior, it is critical to recognize the variation according to an individual's tie to the group. At least for the fighting street gangs, as Short (1985:257; also see Patrick, 1973:100) concluded from his seminal observations of Chicago youth, "loose criteria of membership, frequently changing membership, and relatively low cohesion except under special circumstances mitigate against strong effects, with the possible exception of effects on leaders and others with major roles." Klein's (Klein, 1979:11) research beginning in the 1960s also revealed low cohesion in gangs. Gangs studied in more recent research also are relatively loosely structured (Moore in Hagedorn and Macon, 1988:185), spontaneous and short lived, lacking cohesion (Horowitz, 1983; Spergel, 1983, 1984; Stumphauzer, Veloz and Aiken, 1981), and rarely allied with other gangs (Klein and Maxson, 1989:210). Thus, it is not surprising that with the exception of group fighting, violence and other illegal activity by gang members is primarily an activity of a few members rather than an entire, organized membership. The exception seems to come when groups are organized primarily for illegal business activities (e.g., see Fong, 1987:63 on prison

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INFORMAL AND FORMAL SOCIAL CONTROL OF GANGS

Writing about immigrants to Chicago in the early 1900s, Thrasher advanced his notion of community disorganization as an explanation of the emergence of gangs. Informal social controls through the family and through effective community institutions, in particular the schools, were often lacking to contain both nuisance and illegal behaviors of gang members.

In contemporary studies, communities vary in the amount of control (Moore, 1989:275) and the reasons for lack of control over gang members. Similar to Thrasher's formulation, many contemporary theorists have traced the limited controls back to social and economic problems within a neighborhood. (An exception is Horowitz (1987), who attributed some lack of control to Chicano cultural expectations regarding "honor" and masculinity.) Sullivan's (1989:135; 226) research on New York City Puerto Rican youth revealed a weakening of control efforts due to economic circumstances that limited the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. Thus, few adult males were present to exert controls at the community level (also see Sampson, 1986; Cohen and Felson, 1979). In their study of youth groups, some of which were violent streetcorner groups that might be categorized as gangs, Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1985: 170ff.) identified several adverse socioeconomic conditions that reduced community stability and cohesion, and thus reduced social control. For example, labor market conditions that support low

wages, employment instability, and resulting income inequality disrupted residential stability, and thereby weakened controls (also see Yancey and Ericksen, 1979:258). In a more specific case, instability was introduced by resettling neighbors for a construction project, and thereby destroying mutual-aid networks. Lack of community stability subsequently resulted in increased violence.

Within the community, the failure of educational and social institutions historically has been pinpointed as a stimulant to gang formation (e.g., Tannenbaum, 1938:21). In fact, the well known Chicago Area Project had the objective of organizing community members to improve the response of schools and other institutions to troubled youth. More recently, Moore et al. (1983:188) identified estrangement from school as the impetus for strong identification with the Chicano neighborhood, and thus an investment in "turf" that is conducive to violence. Also, Taylor (1989) identified the closing of community programs for youths (e.g., drop in centers) as a stimulus to more scavenger gang youth becoming involved in drug marketing and eventually corporate gangs.

Besides weak informal neighborhood social controls, there is some evidence of the failure of more formal efforts. It is difficult to provide a full perspective on what might work, since much of the meager research has limited generalizability (Woodson, 1988) or deficient design (Thompson and Jason, 1988). Yet, a lack of demonstrable positive effects is not altogether surprising given the continuous socioeconomic, cultural and

individual pressures towards membership in either fighting or entrepreneurial gangs that support violence.

In the area of law enforcement and criminalization, despite gun control legislation, a majority of the black males in Milwaukee gangs illegally owned a handgun (Hagedorn and Macon, 1988:144), for the fear of victimization has made gun ownership the norm. Also, a deterrence and inter-gang conflict resolution oriented program in Los Angeles also failed to produce documented reductions in violence, though serious problems in implementing the program may account for the outcome (Maxson and Klein, 1983). Law enforcement efforts have been documented to produce undesired displacements of criminal activity. For instance, in Texas prisons, the permanent lockup of gang members resulted in their increased interest in drug marketing outside of the prison for the purpose of providing a new source of income for incarcerated members (Fong, 1987). Similarly, in New York City's Chinatown, a police crackdown on the gambling establishments that employed street gang members for protection was followed by gang members increased involvement in robbery, extortion and street crime (Chin, 1986:236).

Correctional efforts also have been documented as failures. Based on their review of detached worker programs, Maxson and Klein (1983:150) concluded that the efforts did not reduce delinquency, though they may have increased group cohesion and thus capacity to organize illegal activities. Incarceration has in some cases had particularly undesirable effects. In the 1950s, the simultaneous incarceration of youth from several Chicago gangs resulted in the formation of a particularly large

and organized group, the Vice Lords (Short, 1990:218); the growth of other large gangs was stimulated by support and organizational efforts from social service agencies in highly disorganized, low resource Chicago communities (Short, 1990:219). Other unintended results of social control efforts include a shift to recruitment on the streets rather than just in prison with the intensification of surveillance efforts (Fong, 1987); increased group loyalty, conformity, coalitions between gangs with different backgrounds, sophistication in structure, and group conflict following increased incarceration of Chicago gang leaders (Perkins, 1987:16-17); and reinforcement of ties to the gang and weakening of parental controls following negative police relations and incarceration (Moore et al., 1978:104; also see Hagedorn and Macon, 1988:162). In an historical analysis of Mexicano/Chicano Los Angeles gangs in the 1940s, Gonzalez (1981:121) contended that police and media depictions of gangs actually created gang rivalries and encouraged their formation. Although his research can be criticized for focusing on the labeling process to the exclusion of any other etiological factors, it does raise the possibility that police response plays some part in shaping unwanted gang activity.

In a case study of the history of Los Angeles Chicano gangs, Moore (1985) provided a particularly detailed description of the interplay between the form and activity of gangs, law enforcement efforts, and community reaction. In the 1940s, youth gangs engaged in aggressive fighting, but were not generally viewed as dangerous. As a result of the spread of heroin in the 1950s, law

enforcement resulted in large numbers of gang members being imprisoned, and thus increased cohesion, greater secrecy, and the growth of a gang mythology about coping with prison. The resulting negative community reaction was temporarily interrupted when street gangs and ex offenders were integrated into the Chicano movement, but as prison violence led to a relabeling of all gang members as dangerous, there was a return to community rejection.

In general, social scientists have tended to emphasize undesired effects of law enforcement and correctional efforts. Whether this is due to the actual distribution of outcomes is not known. Some desired effects of law enforcement intervention of gangs also have been described. Sung (1987) attributed a decrease in Chinatown violence to the raids of gambling joints that were paying the gangs for protection. Although imprisonment had long term undesirable impacts on the structure of Black Chicago gangs, the immediate effect was to splinter group hierarchies and reduce violence on the streets (Perkins, 1987:16). Sullivan's (1989: 154) New York city study showed that among clique members who were involved in crime, the possibility of imprisonment was a factor that led to a splintering of the group, with some members desisting from criminal activity. The more positive outcomes of formal social control efforts seem to reduce the benefits of group membership, either by increasing personal risk of loss or by interrupting the source of income.

WHAT WE KNOW AND HOW TO FILL IN THE GAPS

What We Know

Qualitative studies complemented by some additional types of research have suggested that a minority of youth and young adults are members of fighting gangs, and that a relatively small amount of all violence can be attributed to gang members or to gang activities. This in no way suggests that the violence is unimportant. The increased use of firearms in fighting gang confrontations has contributed to serious injury and death as a result of group conflicts; one of the dynamics that feeds into this pattern is the carrying of firearms in response to fear of victimization.

Also for the fighting gangs, there is considerable descriptive information on the context of gang development and on gang and individual processes that explain how violence comes about. Urban conditions that include weak social controls, the failure of institutions such as the family and schools to provide a supportive reference group, high rates of victimization, and race/ethnic group antagonism (often in school settings) support the formation of fighting gangs and the continued emphasis on fighting as part of the group process. At the individual level, family and individual problems, many of which are associated with unemployment, underemployment or the stresses of immigration, further contribute to youths' attachment to fighting gangs as well as gendered self-definitions that are consistent with the use of violence.

In recent years, increased attention has been paid to what are called entrepreneurial gangs. In many cases, the "colors," the concern with neighborhood "turf," and the

motivations for fighting other groups that characterize the fighting gangs are not present. The illegal activity of these groups is focused on making money. The nature of the illegal economic opportunity varies, and among other things can include an organized crime network, drug markets, or for the prison gangs, the inmate economy. In many cases members use violence both as part of doing business and in other contexts. In part because there is rarely a distinction between different types of gangs, the proportion of potential members who are drawn into entrepreneurial gangs and the proportion of violence attributed to them is particularly poorly documented. These groups are a separate phenomenon from the fighting gangs, and in some of the research the term "work crew" is used to describe groups that seem to be the same as the entrepreneurial gangs that are the focus of other studies. For neighborhoods with persistent unemployment and the related incidence of mother headed families, there have been recent high estimates of the proportion of youth and young adults involved in the drug trade and related violence.

The available research on gangs contradicts a number of popular ideas set forth by practitioners and recently supported in publications of OJJDP (McKinney, 1987).. There is no evidence that the types of fighting gangs that have been studied in previous decades have evolved into tightly organized, more violent drug dealing businesses. Rather, there is some indication that increased proportions of adolescents and young adults, including members of fighting gangs, have been drawn into economically motivated groups, some of which use violence to

attain their economic objectives. It may be that violent individuals are recruited and self-selected into the crack trade (Johnson et al., 1990) and also are heavily involved in certain types of gangs. However, it is misleading to portray the drug distribution crew as a mere evolution of the street gang (e.g., Kornblum, 1987: 103).

There also is no evidence that fighting gangs have begun to direct their violence primarily towards individuals who are not involved in gangs. Whereas economic crimes (e.g., robbery) do involve strangers, the violence of the fighting gangs usually continues to be directed towards other gang members.

Finally, cultural values (e.g., machismo) associated with a particular ethnic or racial group do not account for gang related violence. Variations in cultural orientations may influence urban gang members to some extent (Moore et al., 1983:193), but for a variety of racial/ethnic subgroups, the influences of economic marginalization, racial and ethnic group antagonisms, and both legal and illegal market structures have an important and similar effect on violence.

What We Don't Know

There are several major gaps in our knowledge about gangs and violence. First, as might be expected given the definitional issues discussed at the beginning of this paper, there are no nationally accepted indicators of the amount and rate of violence that is committed by gang members or that is more specifically related to the activities and processes of the gang. The Chicago Police Department is unique in the consistent use of a definition

of gang related homicide, which involves gang motives, over a several decades. Although the indication of gang related homicides could be affected by fluctuations in police resources to investigate and reveal gang motivated crimes, at least it is not subject to the problems that occur when police are free to use less stringent criteria to classify individuals as gang members and crimes as gang related. However, the requirement of a gang motivation skews the measure to apply primarily to fighting gang members. There is no recognition in any published indicators that there are different types of gangs that stand as distinct phenomenon and involve different people and settings.

At the aggregate level, there are no comparative data on the concentration of gang activity (e.g., proportion of potential members involved, number of gangs or number of gang members) that can be linked to rates of crime or violence. There really has been no attention to how one would even obtain a measure of an area based concentration of gang activity that would be distinct from measures of violence or other criminality.

There is only rudimentary evidence of the causal connection of gang membership to individuals' violence, and almost none of the relationship of the concentration of gang activity to crime or victimization rates. An association between gang membership and delinquency is supported by cross sectional studies (Rand, 1987; Fagan, 1989; Johnstone, 1981). But there is a need for prospective longitudinal research that examines the time order of affiliation with gangs (and other peer groups) and violent offenses, the strength of affiliation at different times, the degree to which violence is tied to gang activities and purposes,

and the involvement of gang members and others in the violent actions. The advantage of such a career approach has been highlighted by Reiss (1986), who noted the tendency to focus on crime events rather than on criminal histories of offenders. Without a career approach, it is not possible to establish the degree to which gang membership contributes to violence, the forms of violence that result, or the possibility of spurious associations.

To understand the effects of gang involvement on violence, the dimensions of the affiliation must be specified and measured. In an application of network analysis, Ekland-Olson (1982) recommended that measures be taken of "the amount of information and opportunity for interaction that that flows between actors" (access), "the type of motivating influence that binds actors together" (content), "the degree to which interpersonal relationships are characterized by multiple motivational forces" (bond overlap), the value placed on the exchange in the group (salience), "whether the bond is positive or negative" (valence), and consistency in valence when there are multiple motivational forces. Because some delinquent peers do not encourage the illegal activities of others, Edelman (1984:13) similarly recommended an extension of the detail in data about peers to "the actual activities which are shared [with peers], the attitudes which are conveyed and the prestige and leadership hierarchies which are perceived in the peer network...[and] the respondents' experience with being either encouraged or discouraged from participating in crime by both delinquent and

non-delinquent peers." The complexity of an individual's relationship to a peer group is not a new focus of concern (e.g., see Stanley Cohen, 1980:xix), and some researchers have at least considered the strength of commitment (e.g., Fagan, 1989). There are obstacles, though, to a full examination of an individual's connection to a peer group: the instruments for such measures are generally lacking; the inclusion of such detail on peer relationships is often precluded in more general studies of causation by the need to include "competing" variables; and, the longitudinal research required to establish time order, and to account for changes over time (Short and Strodtbeck, 1965:207), is expensive. It may be that the ongoing OJJDP funded longitudinal studies of delinquency causation are collecting such detailed information on peer group involvement; if they are not, perhaps such data could be collected.

Another gap in our knowledge is the degree to which the group circumstances and characteristics that promote violence are unique to labeled gangs. The group characteristics that promote both the collective and individual violence of members have rarely been studied in a sample of adolescent groups that vary in either self or official designations as a gang. Existing studies (Sullivan, 1989; Merry, 1981) of groups that lack the gang label, that engage in both fighting and economically motivated violence, but that are not similar to work crews or gangs that are primarily motivated by a desire for income. As emphasized at the beginning of this paper, and as supported by Fagan's (1990) observation of deviant peer groups besides gangs, sampling beyond groups with the gang label is a key to understanding whether

there are unique features of a gang that promote group related violence.

The small amount of published information on contemporary efforts to control undesirable gang activity is characterized by the lack of attention to informal community and group level controls, and the emphasis on a narrow set of coercive responses embodied in law enforcement or individual corrections efforts. The predominant contemporary control orientations stand in striking contrast to our understanding of role that economic conditions play in stimulating attachment to fighting gangs that are prepared to protect members against violence and in supporting illegal, and sometimes violent approaches to earning an income.

Requirements for Future Research

Ethnographic studies and some survey research has provided us with some understanding of the connection of gangs and violence, but the fact that our independent variable is an imprecise label has made it difficult to draw any conclusions about the extent of the "gang problem" or the extent to which gangs of various types contribute to trends in violence. Existing official statistics are not assembled in any place, and even if they were (as was done in Miller's comprehensive survey), they cannot be accurately interpreted unless the numbers are supplemented by interviews and observations. This supplemental information would be needed to understand whether we are detecting changes in labeling or in gangs.

Future research, both qualitative and quantitative, is needed that includes a number of design features. Whether the point is to obtain an indicator of gang activity or to understand causation, there is a need to differentiate between the various types of groups that are labeled as gangs (i.e., prison, entrepreneurial, fighting), and to recognize that the label applies to more than one type of phenomenon.

There are several design issues that are related specifically to understanding the causal connection between gangs and violence. First, there is a need to deconstruct the elements of structure, process, organization, and labeling that typify groups thought to contribute to violence, and second there is a need to compare groups that vary on these elements including the gang label. Only then can we determine the features of a group that either alone or in some combination contribute to violence, whether these features are unique to gangs, and the effect of the label itself. Third, prospective longitudinal research is needed to document individuals' involvement in peer groups over time. This will allow for establishment of time order and for study of the mediating effects of type of involvement on outcomes of gang and other group connections. Fourth, contextual analysis is needed to fully understand the effects of individual level variables, that is to avoid erroneously concluding that individual rather than community variations explain violence.

In the area of evaluation research, careful thought must be given to the development of prevention and control strategies that address the causes of violence that are found to be

associated with gang membership or the geographic concentration of gangs. Once this is done, standard evaluation procedures should be used to study the implementation and the outcome of these strategies.

Aside from these rather practical considerations about how to go about designing needed research, there is a more fundamental question of what we want to learn about violence by studying gangs. An emphasis on the prevalence of gang membership, the concentration of gangs, and indicators of violence conveys the assumption that the gang itself is somehow the cause of problem; and that if we can somehow identify and count it we can eradicate it. My own reading of the contemporary literature on gangs and related topics instead points to a complicated set of social forces that appear to contribute to several undesirable outcomes. These forces include family and other disruptions related to immigration, economic marginalization that permeates communities, and the widespread failure of schools to educate and engage a sizeable proportion of youth. One undesired outcome is violent victimization. Another undesirable outcome that is lost when the focus is on statistical indicators on gangs is that for many adolescents and young adults, the most attractive opportunity for status recognition, peer support, protection, or an income is to be found through participation in a group that supports violence. In the areas of research and policy, the very difficult but critical issue is the development and application of interventions that respond to the attraction of membership in such a group.

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Table 1
 PREVALENCE OF GANG AND VIOLENT DELINQUENCY FOR NATIONAL YOUTH
 SURVEY YOUTH AT AGE 17, 1976-1982

Offense	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Aggravated Assault	8%	3%	6%	9%	5%	2%	3%
Gang Fights	13%	9%	8%	9%	7%	2%	3%
Hidden Weapon	7%	7%	7%	10%	9%	3%	4%

Source: Delbert S. Elliott et al. The Prevalence and Incidence of Delinquent Behavior: 1976-1980. National Youth Survey Report No. 26 (Boulder Co: Boulder Research Institute, 1983), pp. 320-328, 335-343. Also Katherine M. Jamieson and Timothy J. Flanagan. Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics--1988. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

APPENDIX
SELECTED DEFINITIONS AND INDICATION OF GANGS

I. FIGHTING ACTIVITY

Source & Focus of Study	Definition/Indicator
Curry and Spergel, 1988 Chicago youth and young adults method: official homicide data	Gangs, compared to groups, engage in more violence within a framework of norms and values in respect to mutual support, conflict relations with other gangs, and a tradition often of turf, colors, signs and symbols. Subgroups may be differentially committed to such patterns as drug trafficking, gang fighting, or burglary (p. 382).
Hagedorn and Macon, 1988 Black, Chicano and White gangs in Milwaukee method: observation and interviews	Gangs are characterized by (1) age divisions, (2) wide variations in and between specific communities (3) a formation process involving first and increase, then a decrease in intergroup fighting (p. 105-6)
Spergel, 1984 Chicago youth and young adults method: official homicide records	The gang..has a primary commitment to achieving its interests through violence. It tends to be larger and better organized than most delinquent or criminal groups. It may comprise individuals of similar or varied ages...[Other characteristics are] leaders, core and regular members, individual or corporate leadership and usually a name, an insignia, or colors.
Pennell and Curtis, 1982 San Diego Region	A youth gang is an organization of individuals normally between ages 14-24. It is loose knit, without structure, and the strongest or boldest member is usually the leader. The gang has a name, claims a territory or neighborhood, is involved in criminal activity and its members associate on a continuous basis. Activities

include violent assaults against other gangs as well as committing crimes against the general population (pp. 18-19).

Tracy, 1979
Philadelphia birth cohort
method: official data of Phil. Juvenile Aid Division

Gang criteria include (1) stable leadership and turf and (2) an emphasis on intergroup fighting and defense

II. DELINQUENT ACTIVITY

Adler et al., 1984
Mexican-American youth
method: interviews

Groups classified as gangs (a) had well known names, insignia and territory; (b) had between 20 and 300 members; (c) were involved in antisocial activities (as subjectively judged by the community worker); and (d) were included in a list of local gangs compiled by the Sheriff's Office.

Breen and Allen, 1983
LA Area
method: observation, knowledge of law enforcement experts

A group of youths, known criminals or convicts from the same neighborhood or penal facility and generally of the same race banded together for antisocial and criminal activities. For Hispanics and Blacks, turfs, dress, language, fighting and drugs. For motorcycle gangs: dress, crime and drugs, turf, high organization (pp. 20-22)

Davis, 1982
Outlaw motorcycle gangs with white, lower class members

A group of people that has developed characteristics that set it apart from all others. These are criminal and shocking behavior, sociopathic members, and the use of women as property. Members are indicated by: mutual interest in motorcycles, vulgar language, ritualistic traits, a code of mutual support and criminal behavior and an emphasis on power and masculinity.

Klein, 1971
method: observation

Street gang refers to a denotable group of adolescents and young adults who are (1)

Sarnecki (1986)
Youth suspected of crime in a Swedish city, not including those in more permanent gangs
method: analysis of police reports of suspected incidents

III. GROUP CHARACTERISTICS

Fagan

Feldman

Fong, 1987
Gangs in prison
method: literature review

Fong, 1987
gangs in Texas prison
interviews with members and officials, prison records

Camp and Camp, 1985
prisoners nationally
method: survey of officials

generally perceived as a distinct aggregation by others in their neighborhood, (2) recognize themselves as a denotable group, usually with a name and (3) have been involved in a sufficient number of illegal incidents to call forth a consistent negative response from neighborhood residents and/or enforcement agencies (p. 13).

A group of juveniles who have been linked to each other by being suspected of joint delinquency by the local police.

Often organized along racial and ethnic lines, members have similar pre-prison experiences, adhere to a strict code of behavior, and are members for life (Irwin, 1980; Camp and Camp, 1985; Buentallo, 1986; Longergan, 1979; Beaird, 1986).

Texas Syndicate: para-military organization, strict code of conduct; democratic style of leadership; secret recruitment requires "facing up to business"

Mexican Mafia: para-military organization; dual emphasis on non-violence and bravery; strict rules; mixed democratic and autocratic leadership.

more disorganized than organized, slightly unstructured. more unsophisticated than sophisticated. half use an impersonal, half a personal style of conducting business. high camaraderie. 3/4 project

macho image. Membership based on race, prior association with members. (viii)

Morash, 1983
Boston youth in a working class and a mixed class community
method: interviews with a sample of youth

Short, integr. article
Chicago youth
method: observation and interviews

Gangs are characterized by (1) recurrent congregation outside the home, (2) self-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, (3) continuity of affiliation, (4) a territorial basis, (5) a versatile activity repertoire, and (6) organizational differentiation by, for example, authority or cliques.

IV. INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Phoenix Police Dept., 1981
(reported by Zatz, 1987:133)
Phoenix youth and young adults
method: observation, interview

Phoenix police officers were provided with a Latin Gang Member Recognition Guide composed of pictures of gang garb, a glossary of pertinent words and expressions in Spanish, and a six-point guide to identifying probable gang members. The criteria included tattoos or scars, informant information, written communication such as confiscated letters or gang literature, possession of gang materials (e.g., gang constitution, rules or instructions, shirts and jackets), and the officer's identification based on knowledge of known gang members.

V. GANG RELATED OFFENSES

Pennell and Curtis, 1982
San Diego Region

A crime is gang related if the suspect or victim is on file as a gang member or associate member, or the investigation strongly suggests that the incident involves a gang member or associate. The unit maintains a gang file containing names, nicknames, demographic characteristics, vehicle information and police contacts

for verified gang members. The criteria used to verify gang membership include tattoos, clothing, admission, association with a gang member, and prior police contacts (pp. 18-19, 97).