

Special Needs Offenders

a publication of the Federal Judicial Center

BULLETIN

There are certainly hundreds, very probably thousands, of street gangs in the United States. In 1994, the Justice Department estimated that the United States had close to 1,500 gangs with a total of more than 120,000 members. A 1992 survey of the 79 largest metropolitan police departments, conducted by G. David Curry for the National Institute of Justice, estimated that there were over 4,800 street gangs with almost 250,000 members. More recently, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's National Youth Gang Center estimated that the United States has nearly 23,500 street gangs with 665,000 members.

Nor, studies show, is gang activity confined to large cities. Gang expert Malcolm W. Klein estimates that 1,100 U.S. cities have street gangs. The National Drug Intelligence Center reports that two of the largest national street gangs are active in 115 cities—nearly half of which have populations under 100,000.

Membership in a gang is not by itself proof of criminal activity. Many experts and law enforcement officials report, however, that street gang members as a whole have higher rates of

criminal offending than non-gang youth. Gang membership also appears to be linked to criminal activity in adulthood. One study found that a large portion of dangerous juvenile offenders who were gang members became even more serious adult offenders. A California study found that convicted

Law enforcement officials expect this trend to continue.

Implications for the Federal Judiciary

The juvenile justice system is generally considered inadequate for dealing with hardcore street gang members who are minors. State juvenile codes

Street Gangs

by **Dennise Orlando-Morningstar**

gang members typically continued their lives of crime after being released from detention.

Worse, law enforcement agencies report that the number of felonies—assaults, batteries, robberies, burglaries, grand thefts, auto thefts, murders, and weapons violations—committed by street gang members is on the rise. As James C. Howell states in a report prepared for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the “gang problem is increasing from the standpoint of more violent offenses, more injuries, and use of more lethal weapons.”

were not designed for the serious violence that characterizes street gang crimes. Gang statutes, on the other hand, generally do not cover juveniles. In addition, many state and local prosecutors have expressed frustration at the lack of detention facilities for juveniles and at the corresponding frequency with which juveniles receive probation for felony convictions. Street gangs are aware of the significant differences between the juvenile and adult justice systems and often use juveniles to commit crimes.

To address these and related
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A growing problem

In 1988, 72% of all U.S. cities reported having a gang problem. In 1992, 85% of cities reported a gang problem. In 1994, 90% of police departments in U.S. cities reported gang-related activity.

Source: National Institute of Justice,
1995 Annual Report to Congress

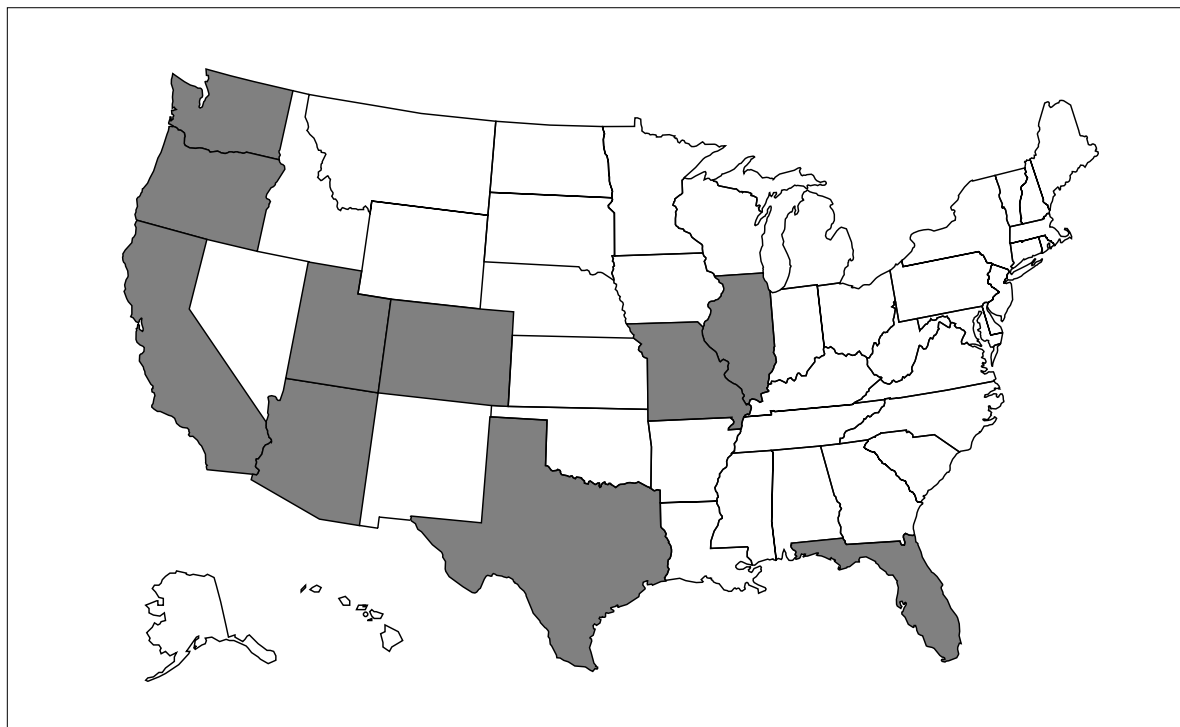
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The states with the most street gangs

According to a 1995 survey conducted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's National Youth Gang Center, the ten states reporting the most gangs were (in order) California, Texas, Illinois, Colorado, Arizona, Florida, Missouri, Washington, Oregon, and Utah.



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concerns, Congress has broadened the federal courts' jurisdiction in significant ways. Notably, provisions of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 are

bringing more types of cases—including cases against street gang members—into the federal judicial system.

Specifically, the Act authorizes adult prosecution of those 13 and older charged with serious violent crimes. The Act also prohibits the sale or transfer of firearms to, or possession of certain firearms by, juveniles, and it triples the maximum penalties for using juveniles to distribute drugs in or near protected zones such as schools, playgrounds, video arcades, and youth centers.

Other significant provisions of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act include

- ◆ expansion of the federal death penalty to cover about 60 offenses, including murder of a federal law enforcement officer, large-scale drug trafficking, drive-by shootings resulting in death, and carjackings resulting in death; and
- ◆ newer and stiffer penalties for violent drug trafficking crimes committed by gang members.

Since January 1997, some 12 bills that address youth violence or street gangs have been introduced in Congress. Some, if passed, would expand the federal court's role in prosecuting violent juvenile offenders. For example, the Anti-Gang Youth and Violence Act of 1997 would provide for federal prosecution of serious and violent juvenile offenders and detention of juveniles prior to sentencing. The Juvenile Crime Control Act of 1997 would reform the federal juvenile justice

Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act

The federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) has been law enforcement's most effective tool for combating organized criminal activity for 20 years. The Act was designed to facilitate prosecution of criminal organizations' leaders and to allow the government to seize the leaders' assets.

U.S. agents have begun using RICO to prosecute members of street gangs and nontraditional orga-

nized criminal threat groups. Among the gangs whose members have recently faced RICO charges are the Latin Kings, the Abdullahs in Atlantic City, N.J., and the Bottom Boys in Shreveport, La. Due to increased federal investigation and prosecution efforts, the Bureau of Prisons anticipates an increase in the number of inmates who are members of the Vice Lords, Crips, Bloods, Latin Kings and other street gangs.

About the Special Needs Offenders Series

The offender and defendant population arrested, tried, and incarcerated in the federal judicial system is evolving. Changes stem primarily from public pressure for stricter law enforcement, new legislation that broadens the jurisdiction of the federal courts, and changes in law and policy resulting in larger numbers of offenders receiving prison sentences followed by supervised release.

The changing profile of federal offenders and defendants poses new challenges for federal probation and pretrial services officers. To help districts meet this challenge, the Federal Judicial Center has developed the *Special Needs Offenders* series of educational products, on-line workshops, and satellite broad-

casts. The *Special Needs Offenders* series will provide officers the latest information concerning the unique offender/defendant populations on their caseloads.

The Center will produce approximately two *Special Needs Offenders* programs a year. Each program will deal with a different offender/defendant population and will be introduced by a *Special Needs Offenders Bulletin*. The bulletins will not be definitive studies of the offender/defendant populations at issue. Rather, they will serve as primers outlining the general characteristics of those populations. Each bulletin will be followed by a Center-sponsored on-line workshop or satellite broadcast in which officers will have an opportunity to

share effective case management practices and useful resources applicable to the offender/defendant population in question.

This bulletin on street gangs is the first in the *Special Needs Offenders* series. Officers can use the bulletin for individual or group study. It will also provide the framework for discussion during the October 1997 on-line workshop on street gangs, as well as the foundation for the satellite broadcast on street gangs scheduled for December 1997.

If you have any questions about programs on street gangs or about the *Special Needs Offenders* series, please contact Dennise Orlando-Morningstar or Mark Maggio at (202) 273-4115. ♦

system, combat violent youth crime, and increase accountability for juvenile criminal offenses. And the Federal Gang Violence Act would define juvenile delinquency as a gang crime and amend the sentencing guidelines to increase the offense level for activities committed in connection with a criminal street gang. As of July, all these bills had been referred to the House or Senate judiciary committees.

Despite the implications of the developments described above, some probation and pretrial services officers may ask,

Are street gangs really my “business”? The answer is yes.

The Federal Probation and Pretrial Services mission statement directs officers to protect the public, make appropriate pretrial release decisions, and develop supervision plans that appropriately manage risk. Satisfying this directive

requires examination of all possible risks associated with a defendant or offender, including whether or not the individual is a member of a street gang. And even in districts where caseloads contain few street gang members, officers likely

will be making contacts in communities controlled by street gangs. Consequently, officers should be aware of the dangers that these groups may pose to their personal safety.

The *Special Needs Offenders* Bulletin

Clearly, probation and pretrial services officers and their supervisors need to add a knowledge of street gangs to their professional “tool boxes.” This bulletin is intended to address that need. It synthesizes information obtained from journals, research monographs, and interviews with federal probation and pretrial services officers.

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Some officers may ask if street gangs are really their business. The answer is yes.

Why Street Gangs Exist

American street gangs are not a new phenomenon. One of the first reports of disruptive youth gangs appeared in Philadelphia in 1791. In the nineteenth century, New York City experienced problems with youth campaigning for the Know Nothing Party and with Irish street gangs that started draft riots during the Civil War. And many Americans are familiar with the classic Broadway musical *West Side Story*, which depicts two twentieth-century street gangs.

Street gangs emerged in U.S. cities in the course of successive waves of migration, beginning with movement from farms to cities, followed by waves of foreign immigration through the present day. Until the first third of the twentieth

century, most street gang members were therefore primarily White Europeans (e.g., Irish and Italian). By the 1970s, however, about four-fifths of street gang members were either African American or Hispanic. Today, the proportion of White and Asian youths in gangs appears to be increasing.

Street gangs exist for many reasons. Historically, their formation has been influenced primarily by socioeconomic factors such as race, social class, limited economic advantages, and immigration. As Robert Maginnis of the Family Research Council explains, gangs offer “status, a sense of self-worth, and protection” to individuals at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder.

In the 1980s a new reason

for gang proliferation was embraced by the public, the media, and politicians—the rise of cocaine powder and crack. Maginnis and others, however, trace the growth and migration of street gangs in the past 30 years to multiple causes, including:

- ◆ removal of manufacturing plants from the city, leaving behind service jobs that city youth are ill-prepared to handle because of inadequate education and family support systems;
- ◆ migration of middle-class minority families from urban centers to more affluent suburbs, destabilizing the middle-class neighborhoods in the city;
- ◆ increased density of segre-

In general, no single explanation can adequately account for the formation of all street gangs. Each gang is representative of the social, economic, and racial makeup of its community. Federal officers should focus their attention on the specific gangs in their districts and evaluate the risks associated with each identified gang member on a case-by-case basis.

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Officers can use it for individual study. Supervisors can use it as the foundation for district-wide discussion of case management strategies designed specifically for street gang members.

The information presented here is not comprehensive. Rather, it is intended to serve as a springboard for investigation in your district. The street gang phenomenon is complex: Gangs vary from region to region and city to city. Data on gangs is scarce. And gangs are inherently dynamic organizations whose membership, structure, culture, and existence are continually in flux; the gangs that exist today may migrate,

evolve—or vanish. When reviewing this bulletin, therefore, keep in mind that the only way to develop expertise in local street gangs is by working

closely with state and local law enforcement and by continually studying the gangs and gang-related activities occurring in your district. ◆

Definition

Assessing the scope of gang problems is complicated by inconsistent terminology. Ideas about what constitutes a street gang and gang-related crime vary from one state or local jurisdiction to the next. In general, look for the following indicators when seeking to determine if a group is a street gang:

- ◆ differentiated organization with hierarchical structure and visible leadership;
- ◆ distinct mannerisms and styles of dress and communication;
- ◆ discrete geographic territory;
- ◆ organized and continuous criminal activity; and
- ◆ tendency toward violent, criminal acts.

Gangs and Prison

Some experts refer to prisons as “gang training schools.” Gangs may form in prison and then emigrate. Incarcerated members, especially leaders of large organized gangs, may coordinate and order crimes that are committed outside prison. The cohesion associated with incarceration seems to amplify gang loyalty; prison is simply viewed as a home away from home.

A few prison gangs have influence over street gangs. For example, the Mexican Mafia has influence over Hispanic gangs such as the El Monte Flores and the Hazard Street gangs in East Los Angeles. The Mexican Mafia is feared, yet admired, by many Hispanic gang members who equate membership in prison gangs with membership in the “major leagues.”

Thus deprived of the traditional avenues for becoming productive members of society, many youths have turned to street gangs as a source of income, empowerment, acceptance, identity, or status. There are, of course, many other “risk factors” that increase the likelihood of gang membership, including academic failure, low expectations of success, low neighborhood and community attachment, early antisocial behavior, favorable attitudes toward drug use, greater reliance on peers than parents, friendships with drug users, alcohol and tobacco abuse, and association with gangs.

The editors of *The Modern Gang Reader* attribute the growth of gangs—primarily
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- ◆ gated minority populations in the city;
- ◆ employer discrimination and wage gaps in service jobs in the city;
- ◆ loss of federal and state social services in the city; and
- ◆ increases in the number of youths of gang age, without commensurate increases in community infrastructure for supervising youths.

Types of Street Gangs

There are many types of street gangs. This bulletin focuses on three general categories: Bloods and Crips, Folks and Peoples, and Hispanic or Chicano gangs.

Bloods and Crips

Los Angeles street gangs can mostly be broken down into interposing “sets” of the Bloods and Crips gangs. Subgroups of these two major gangs have also spread to other cities. Approximately 90% of Bloods and Crips are African-American males.

The Bloods, which emerged from the Piru gang in Comp-

ton, originally formed to protect members from the Crips. Smaller gangs that also formed to protect themselves from the Crips incorporated “Piru” or “Bloods” into their names to signify alignment with the Bloods. Bloods are typically from South-central Los Angeles. Although smaller in number than the Crips, Bloods are violent, loyal to their group, consider themselves shrewd businessmen, and share a hatred of the Crips. Some gangs associated with the Bloods include the Blood Fives, the Lot Boys, the Outlaws, and the Mid City Gangsters. Members gen-

erally wear the color red to symbolize their association with the Bloods.

The Crips were first reported in south-central Los Angeles in 1969. During the early 1970s, the gang grew and branched out to other parts of the country. The new subsidiaries, or realigned existing gangs, were known as sets and used “Crips” in their names. Crips have a reputation for violence, extortion, ruthlessness, individualism, loyalty to other Crips, and hatred of other Los Angeles gangs, particularly the Bloods.

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Gangs and the Military

Street gangs exist even in the military. An investigation conducted by *Newsweek* found gang members in all branches of the armed forces at more than 50 military bases. Although most gang activity has been limited to minor incidents, a 1994 gang symposium sponsored by the Justice Department warned that “some gangs have access to highly sophisticated personal weap-

ons such as hand grenades, machine guns, rocket launchers, and military explosives. Some street gang members who are or have been in the military are teaching other gang members concerning the use of military tactics. With arms, weapons proficiency, and tactics, some street gangs now have the ability to actively engage in terrorist activities within the United States.”

ates. Recently, however, various aspects of outward gang culture—clothing, tattoos, use of hand signals, and so on—have been picked up by manufacturers and the media and diffused across the country. Baggy pants, Pendleton-style shirts, high-top shoes, ball caps worn backward or at an angle, graffiti styles, words like “homey” and “hood,” and other signs of affiliation have become part of the larger youth culture. . . . It is no wonder that “copycat” behavior is found among many youth, and when youth groups get into rivalries, they play out the gangster roles. . . . It does not take an urban underclass to foster this movement. American youth . . . have learned the gang patterns. ♦

(“Exist” from page 5)

Hispanic gangs and gangs in small cities—whose existence cannot be adequately explained by socioeconomic factors to what they call the diffusion of

gang culture. “For decades,” the editors write,

various fads and styles of gang costume have been limited in use to gang members and close associ-

(“Types” from page 5)

There are numerous Crips gangs, such as the Main Street Crips, the 43 Gangster Crips, the Rollin 40’s, and the Westside Crips. Blue is the Crips’ color, and members usually wear a blue rag or handkerchief as an identifier.

Folks and Peoples

Virtually all gangs in Chicago are aligned under the concept of “nations,” of which there are two: Folks and Peoples. Both alliances were established in the 1980s in the penitentiary system by prisoners who formed coalitions to protect themselves. The alliances do not follow traditional racial bound-

aries and contain White, Black, and Hispanic members.

Some common street gangs associated with the Folks Nation are the Black Gangster Disciples, Imperial Gangsters, Latin Disciples, Maniac Latin Disciples, and Spanish Cobras. Members of the Folks Nation wear all their identifiers on the right: earrings in the right ear, right pants legs rolled up, caps tilted to the right, arms folded in a manner pointing to the right, et cetera.

Gangs associated with the Peoples Nation include the Latin Kings, the Vice Lords, the 4 Corner Hustlers, and the Bishops. Members indicate their allegiance to the Peoples

by wearing all their identifiers on the left.

Hispanic or Chicano Gangs

Many independent Hispanic gangs, such as the Lomas Cholos, Barrio Azteca, and Los Solidos, first surfaced in this country in the early 1900s in Southern California. They grew and spread with the waves of immigrants from Mexico and Puerto Rico. Hispanic gangs are strongly influenced by Hispanic culture. They are very traditional, approaching gang involvement as a “way of life.” Gang members are proud, boastful, and loyal to the death. Involvement in these gangs is often a “family tradition.” ♦

Are Gangs on the Move?

According to some media accounts, street gangs in small cities are frequently satellite operations of gangs in larger metropolitan areas. Preliminary research indicates, however, that gangs emerge in smaller cities primarily because of family relocation and local gang evolution—not migration.

In a 1996 gang migration study, migration numbers were low in the cities studied, and gang migration neither influenced the local drug market nor caused local gang problems. Forty-seven percent of the cities in the study reported the arrival of 10 or fewer migrants in the previous year. Only 5% estimated that they had 100 or more recent arrivals.

Many experts think that gang migration is more a spread of street gang culture than the development of individual gangs with a national infrastructure. Some street gangs do have national scope, but the majority are local imitations of Los Angeles or Chicago gangs. Only in proximity to large cities (like Chicago and Los Angeles) has there been evidence of significant migration.

Experts say gang members migrate for any of eight reasons:

- ◆ to take advantage of new criminal markets and higher illegal profits;
- ◆ to reduce street gang rivalry and competition;
- ◆ to find communities that are easier to initiate and manipulate; and
- ◆ to take advantage of limited law enforcement resources and lack of recognition and awareness of the gang.

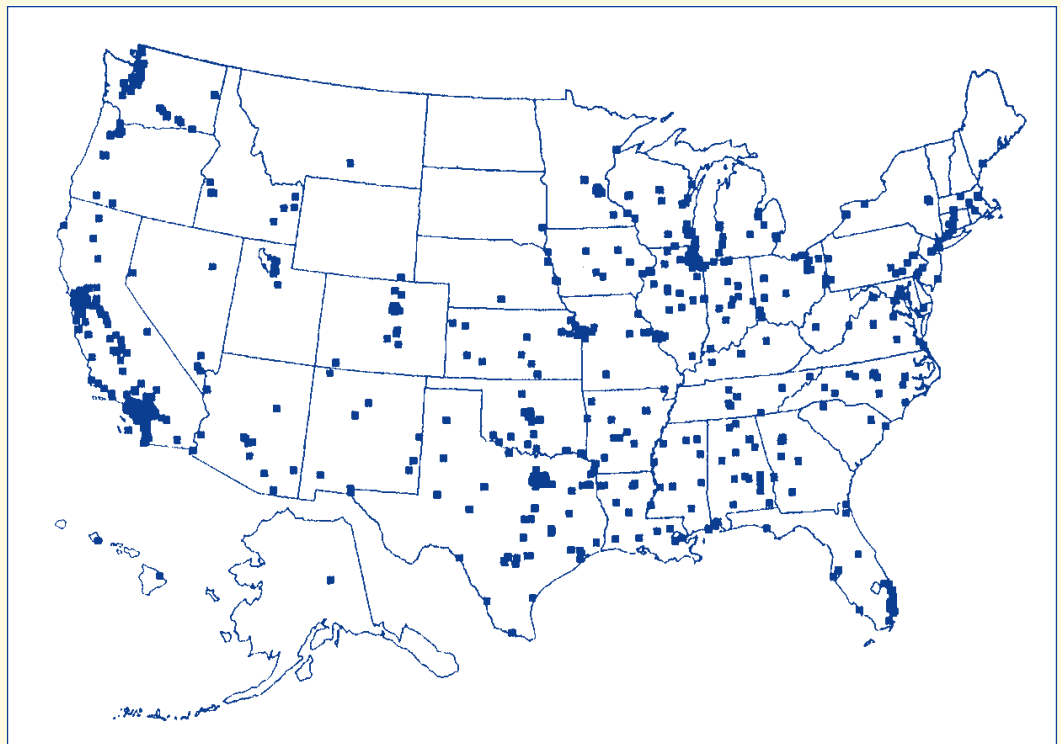
The gang members most likely to migrate are young African American and Hispanic males, who travel short distances and stay at least several months. They primarily migrate to stay with their relocated families (57%) or to expand a drug market (20%).

Federal officers should work closely with local law enforce-

ment to determine the impact of gang migration in their districts. As the National Institute of Justice stated in its 1995 report to Congress,

The character of gang migration at the local level affects the community's response to the problem. In cities where migration occurs primarily for social reasons, migrants can be targeted for prevention and intervention efforts. But cities whose gang migration occurs for the purpose of drug expansion confront a qualitatively different problem. In these cities research suggests that targeted law enforcement and suppression tactics, guided by anti-narcotic expertise, may have a beneficial impact. ◆

Contact state and local law enforcement agencies for information on the street gangs and gang members in your district. Many law enforcement agencies have a gang investigation unit that specializes in gangs and gang-related crime. Establishing professional relationships with these agencies and staff will greatly enhance your district's ability to gather intelligence and learn about street gangs. Contact the Sacramento Intelligence Unit (see page 14) for the names of known gang members released from Bureau of Prisons facilities to your district.



Street gang migration. In 1992, about 700 cities reported the arrival of gang members from elsewhere. The overall number of migrants appears to be fairly low, however.

Source: National Institute of Justice Journal, February 1996

How Street Gangs are Organized

Virtually every gang evolves from a smaller group or “clique.” Cliques usually form around a particular concern—for example, racial or ethnic heritage, a desire to guard territory, or a need for protection from other groups—or around a particular money-making, criminal, or artistic activity. Many gangs have fairly short lives, often breaking up or drifting apart after a few months.

Once formed, a street gang can range in size from ten members to as many as 1,000 or more. The term “supergang” was coined in Chicago in the late 1960s to describe a gang

with thousands of members.

As FBI agents Alan C. Brantley and Andrew DiRosa observe, many gangs “last only a short time before they weaken and wither away, either because of successful prosecution efforts or lack of interest by members. More successful gangs excel at extending their economic base and recruiting new members.”

As the successful gangs flourish, Brantley and DiRosa explain, they may extend their reach into legitimate businesses and begin laundering money and corrupting public officials, eventually coming to resemble organized crime groups.

Understanding how gang organization progresses is important for several reasons, Brantley and DiRosa assert. Supergangs, they say,

generally change their tactics as their criminal focus evolves. For example, there are indications that the Los Angeles-based Crips gang is attempting to unify all Crips sects across the nation into one major organization with a chief executive officer-style leadership structure. To protect such entrenched criminal enterprises from the scrutiny of law enforcement, leaders of these gangs often suppress overt acts of violence. In fact, supergangs actually welcome the turf violence of other less-entrenched gangs because it diverts the attention of law enforcement.

Structure and Member Status

Research suggests that most street gangs are less sophisticated and hierarchical than traditional organized crime groups. Gang expert Malcolm Klein says most street gangs are “loosely knit and poorly organized groups that engage in ‘cafeteria-style’ crime—a little of this, a touch of that, two attempts at something else . . .” On the other hand, as Brantley and DiRosa’s comments indicate, supergangs, nations, and gangs organized around particular criminal activities can be highly structured. ➤

Female Street Gang Members

Females have traditionally played an auxiliary role in street gangs by transporting and hiding weapons or narcotics, gathering intelligence on rival gangs, and providing sexual favors. Female gang members, primarily aged 12 to 18, often have a history of victimization, low self-esteem, and lack of long-term goals. Gang membership provides them excitement, identity, money, drugs, and a sense of family. Although female members speak of the status afforded them by male members, most of the males view the females as insignificant and routinely subject them to physical and sexual abuse.

A National Institute of Justice study estimated that

less than 3% of the individuals involved in street gangs are female. Law enforcement officials note, however, that female gang members are becoming more aggressive. A 1994 FBI study indicated a 28% increase in the number of girls arrested for violent crimes, nearly twice the rate for boys. Female gang members are demonstrating an increasing willingness to use weapons when provoked; to assault teachers, innocent victims, and rival gang members to prove their fearlessness; and to go on crime sprees to steal things they cannot afford to buy. In some cases, young women have established their own autonomous gangs.

Many law enforcement officers do not perceive females as threats. You should assume, however, that female gang members are as capable of violence as male gang members. Since many female gang members believe they are “immune” from suspicion and searches by police, they often carry guns, razor blades, knives, and narcotics.

Identifying Gang Members

Street gang members use identifiers to signify membership, to promote solidarity within the gang, and to communicate with one another. Identifiers include colors, graffiti, tattoos, monikers, hand signs, codes and ciphers, and clothing. Many identifiers, such as tattoos and graffiti, contain symbols unique to the gang.

Some of the most common symbols are a five- or six-pointed star, a crown, pitchforks, the cross in various forms, a heart with horns, a spear, the

“all-seeing” dog, the gang’s initials, a cane, and various numerals.

Colors

All members of a gang will dress in the same or similar colors to indicate their gang affiliation. The Vice Lords, for example, wear red and black or black and gold; the Latin Counts, black and red; the Latin Kings, black and gold. Colors, which may change over time, may be displayed on members’ jackets, shirts, bandannas, shoelaces,

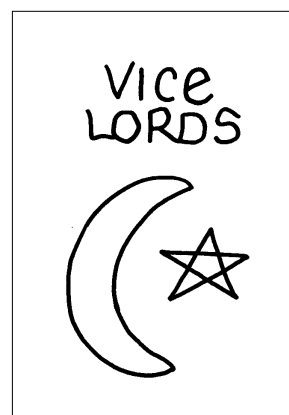
rubber bands (in the hair), and baseball caps.

Some youths have mistakenly been identified as gang members or victimized by gangs simply because they innocently wore clothing containing a gang’s colors.

Graffiti

Gangs use graffiti to stake out their territory and to challenge rivals—for example, by placing their name in a rival gang’s territory and crossing out the ri-

(continued on next page)



Graffiti associated with the Vice Lords often features crescent moons.

A gang’s exact structure depends on size of membership, extent of the gang’s illegal activities, and locale. Some gangs have formal leaders known as king, prince, prime minister, general, don, or chief. The higher levels of the organization may change because of the death or imprisonment of the leaders, or because of in-gang rivalry. The lower levels tend to be loosely organized. In some gangs, various factions or semi-independent groups may share allegiance to the leader or king.

According to Klein, street gangs mostly attract young males who have low self-esteem, are experiencing difficulty in school, have trouble controlling impulses, lack social skills, and have few useful adult contacts. “The gang is . . . an aggregate of individuals held more together by their . . . shared incapacities than by mutual goals,” Klein states.

Street gang members can

range in age from 8 to 25 years old. Although generalizing about the interpersonal dynamics that characterize street gangs is difficult, it is possible to classify members according to their level of involvement. Basically, there are three types of street gang members: leaders, hard-core members, and fringe or marginal members.

Leaders are usually the oldest members of the gang and have the most extensive criminal backgrounds. Leaders direct the gang’s criminal activity—frequently from prison. Studying the leader often provides insight into the culture and nature of the gang. A leader usually surrounds himself with trusted members and advisors, forming an inner circle. Leadership responsibilities are sometimes shared among various members of the inner group.

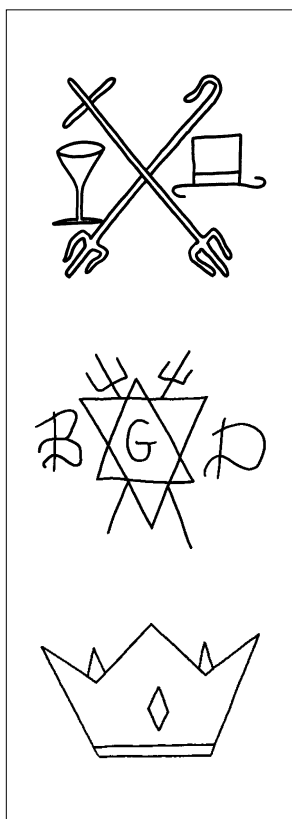
Hard-core members are usually the most violent and have committed the most serious

crimes. Since the gang provides them a sense of identity, their lives often center around the gang. Law enforcement efforts are generally directed at the leaders and hard-core members.

Fringe or marginal members are typically the newest and youngest members. They drift in and out of the gang depending on their needs. Fringe or marginal members generally lack the direction either to become hard-core members or to leave the gang.

Gangs have developed their own terminology for member status. Police in Omaha, Nebraska, have encountered these terms: AG (gangster for life), BG (baby gangster), foot soldier (lowest-ranking member), homeboy (fellow gang member), hoodsta (gangster), killa (killer), wannabe or mark (want-to-be gang member), queen (female gang member), and triple OG (third-generation gangster). ♦

Another type of gang member officers may find on their caseloads is the retired or nonactive member. Nonactive members often are employed and maintain good homes but occasionally associate with other gang members. Retired members are available if a war breaks out between rival gangs, may participate in illegal activities with their former gang, and sometimes assume leadership positions in the gang. Associating with former cohorts does not automatically mean an individual is involved in criminal activity, however.



Top, Vice Lords graffiti and tattoos often employ martini glasses, top hats, and canes, in addition to crescent moons (see illustration on previous page). Middle, the Star of David is sometimes used by the Black Gangster Disciples. Above, a symbol used by the Spanish Lords.

(continued from page 9)
val gang's name. Graffiti may also claim credit for a crime or eulogize slain members.

Gangs will place graffiti in most any open space. The more graffiti you see on buildings and walls, the closer you are to the gang's core territory. Gangs vigorously protect their graffiti from defacement by rival gangs, and degradation of a gang's graffiti may lead to gang wars, gang-related homicides, or drive-by shootings.

Tattoos

Tattoos are an extension of a gang's graffiti. Tattoos typically can be found on a gang member's arms, hands, chest, back, neck, or legs. There are no rules for the number, size, or ornateness of gang tattoos. Some are professionally done; many are homemade. Sometimes a gang member will hide the gang tattoo by putting a more intricate tattoo, such as a girl with long flowing hair, a peacock, or a spider web, over the gang tattoo.

Experienced probation officers suggest taking several Polaroids of an offender's tattoos during the initial supervision interview. Some of the photos can be kept in the file, the rest can be shared with local law enforcement.

Monikers

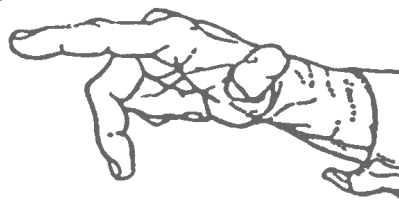
Gang members usually have nicknames or monikers that fit their personal traits—for example, Shorty, T-bone, Rebel, or Ghost. Gang members may only know one another by their monikers. Some gang members include monikers in their tattoos.

Hand signs

Gang members use hand signs, known as "flashing," to communicate gang affiliation or to challenge rival gangs. Hand signs are made by forming the gang symbol, initial, or other gang-related information with the fingers and hands.

One of the most common uses of hand signs is to show disrespect for a rival gang.

For example, to incite a member of the Disciples, a Vice Lord may make one of the Disciples' signs, such as the pitchfork, upside down. "Throwing down" a gang's symbol may lead to retaliation, even homicide. Gang members may also engage in false flashing to misrepresent their membership or trick another gang member into declaring his affiliation. The hand



sign pictured here translates, "I am going to kill you."

Codes and Ciphers

Codes are words or terminology that have a specific meaning to gang members. Ciphers involve substituting or transposing the 26 letters of the alphabet. Gangs use codes and ciphers for secret communication, often to thwart law enforcement. Refer to the figures below for sample codes and ciphers.

Clothing

Gang members often wear specific styles or brands of clothing. For example, many Hispanic gangs wear Pendleton shirts in gang colors. Omaha police reported that Crips and Bloods gang members wore Levis 501 or Dickie work pants and snakeskin or eel skin belts. ➤

Crips Term	Meaning
Black flag	Kill
Chessmen	Crips
Dice	Hit
Dog face	Infiltrator
Garage	Cell
Georgetown	San Quentin
Hard candy	Knife
Headlight	Money
Mafia	Police
Mar's Bar	Bomb
Mid city	Mainline
Play house	Hospital
Reporter	Informer
Shark	Traitor

Sample of code words commonly used by the Crips.

A	
B	
C	
D	
E	

Sample of a Latin Disciples cipher.

Street Gangs and Crime

Experts and law enforcement officials disagree over whether gangs tend to be more violent than other youth groups. The editors of *The Modern Gang Reader* claim that the “illegal acts most commonly engaged in by gang members are things like petty theft, truancy, smoking dope, writing graffiti, drinking alcohol, and just plain scaring people by seeming to take over the streets. . . . When we say gang members are into everything, that ‘everything’ is usually of the bothersome but not serious type.”

Gang members talk about violence much more than they commit it, gang expert Malcolm W. Klein says. For the most part they lead boring, aimless lives. “Gangs have potential for violence when things go wrong, but it usually takes a lot

to activate that potential,” Klein says.

Law enforcement surveys, on the other hand, suggest that gang members regularly commit serious crimes such as drive-by shootings, carjackings, drug trafficking, armed robbery, extortion, and intimidation. The National Institute of Justice asserts that over half of all recorded street gang crimes are homicides and other violent crimes. In Los Angeles, police reported a 250% increase in gang-related homicides between 1979 and 1990. In 1991, California reported 1,000 gang-related killings and at least 3,000 gang-related drive-by shootings.

Gang members commit crimes to:

- ◆ represent or identify themselves as gang members;

- ◆ recruit new members (initiation rites);
- ◆ intimidate victims or new members (to force them to join);
- ◆ protect turf that has been violated by rival gangs;
- ◆ glorify the gang or gain rank within the gang;
- ◆ settle intragang conflicts over leadership or violation of gang rules;
- ◆ extort money from local businesses; and
- ◆ retaliate when fellow members have been victimized by rival gangs.

According to a National Institute of Justice-sponsored study, certain gangs tend to commit certain types of crime. Specifically, the study revealed

(continued on next page)

Some gangs like to wear the sports jacket, cap, or athletic shoes of a sports team whose insignia contains the gang's colors or lends itself to a particular interpretation.

For example, a blue “Kansas City Royals” cap with the initials KC could identify a “Killer Crip.” Similarly, British Knight (BK) athletic shoes are popular with the Crips, who say that the BK stands for “Blood Killer.” Crips, who favor the colors blue and black, often wear Oakland Raiders or Los Angeles Dodgers sportswear. Bloods, who prefer red, green, and black, often wear clothing associated with the Chicago Bulls, the Boston Celtics, or

the Washington Redskins.

Accurate Identification

Officers can use identifiers and symbols to help distinguish gang members from nongang youth. Look for them when interviewing offenders, making employment and home contacts, and driving in the community.

Never make assumptions about gang membership based solely on one or two identifiers. Individual identifiers must be considered within the *total* context of the defendant's or offender's life. For example, an offender's clothing and use of hand signs may make him appear to be a full-fledged mem-

ber of a street gang when he is only an affiliate or a youth who has adopted gang clothing and gestures.

Accurate gang identification is based on (1) facts of record; (2) statements and interviews with the offender and collateral contacts, and with law enforcement, corrections, and Bureau of Prison personnel; and (3) observation of several identifiers. Be aware that gang identifiers change over time and are affected by many variables, including individual gang members' interpretation and tastes, regional differences, specific gang modifications, and the need to stay ahead of police intelligence. ◆

Mean delinquency scores of nonoffenders, street offenders, and gang members.

Source: Esbensen, et al. "Gang and Nongang Youth: Differences in Explanatory Factors" (see references).

Behavior type	Non-offenders	Nongang street offenders	Gang members
Street	0.00	6.74	16.07
Serious	1.49	9.71	21.85
Minor	4.93	13.67	23.76
Drug sales	0.00	4.05	5.64
Alcohol use	5.45	16.82	34.31
Drug use	1.50	11.92	21.69

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the following:

- ◆ Black gangs are more likely than Latino gangs to perpetrate acts of "instrumental" violence where the primary purpose is not to hurt, injure, or kill but to obtain money or property;
- ◆ Latino gangs and many small gangs tend to carry out acts of "expressive violence" such as turf battles;
- ◆ Latino gangs are also more likely to use guns or commit aggravated assault and battery than their black counterparts.

Gang Members Commit Most Juvenile Crime, Study Finds

Virtually every antisocial behavior increases during the years of gang membership, a recent University of Washington study of youth gangs in Seattle discovered.

The federally funded study, which tracked 808 youths for seven years, found that 15% of the juveniles studied committed 85% of the robberies, 54% of the felony thefts, 62% of the drug sales, and 58% of the juvenile crime overall.

"We've known for a long time that having delinquent friends is predictive of anti-social behavior," said David Hawkins,

professor of social work at the University, "but this study shows that being in a gang predicts a higher offense rate.

"Before this, I wasn't sure that gangs were any worse than groups of delinquents hanging out on street corners. But in fact, gangs contribute significantly to crime."

According to Hawkins, the higher level of criminal activity by youth gang members could be seen in juvenile court records and in the youths' self-reports of their activities to researchers.

Most of the planned, collective violence associated with street gangs is undertaken to expand gang territories or markets or to protect turf, research shows. Nevertheless, innocent citizens are increasingly becoming victims of drive-by shootings, robberies, and seemingly random homicides perpetrated by gang members.

Guns

Researchers are trying to determine the precise relationship between crime committed by youth and rising gun use. One explanation for the increasing lethality of gang-related violence is the availability of more powerful weapons and an increasing propensity to settle disputes with guns. Whatever the reason, law enforcement surveys indicate that street gang youth are better armed than nongang youth. For example, in a National Institute of Justice study, researchers reported that "the death weapon in most all gang-motivated homicides in Chicago was a gun" and that the increase in gang-motivated homicides noted at the time of the study coincided with an increase in killings committed with large-caliber, automatic, or semiautomatic weapons.

Researchers and law enforcement agents agree that the semiautomatic pistol (especially the 9-millimeter) appears to be the weapon of choice for many street gang members. Tec 10's, Uzis, and AK-47s are also popular. Gangs obtain weapons from older gang members with Firearm Identification cards, from underground markets, or

from military personnel who sell their weapons (see sidebar, page 6).

Drugs

As with the issue of street gang violence, there are two competing views about the role of street gangs in drug sales. Some observers believe that street gangs are well-organized drug traffickers who reinvest drug sales into their gangs. Others think that members act independently of the gang when selling drugs. Research supports the latter view and suggests that

some law enforcement estimates overemphasize the role of gangs in illicit drug sales.

For example, a study of street gangs and drug sales in two cities in suburban Los Angeles revealed that of the 1,563 cocaine sales incidents on record, the proportion involving gang members was about 30% in one city and 21% in the other. These rates indicate substantial gang involvement in, but not domination of, cocaine distribution.

Although some gangs sell drugs and some gang members

use drugs, few gangs are organized specifically to sell drugs. As Klein explains, “drug distribution requires good organization, and most street gangs are not well organized.”

Studies indicate that most narcotics sold by street gangs are sold at the street level by individuals or small groups of members, versus at the national level. The profits are primarily kept by the member selling the drugs and are not distributed within the gang. In general, individual use and low-level drug
(continued on next page)

Detecting and Addressing Street Gang Problems in Your District

Is a street gang problem emerging in your district? Here is a list of warning signs:

- ◆ Gang graffiti appears, starting small and getting larger as the gang becomes bolder. Typical places for graffiti include schoolbooks, school desks, basketballs, service station rest rooms, park benches, walls, and buildings. If the graffiti is crossed out, there is a high probability that more than one street gang is in the area.
- ◆ Assaults in schools and in the community increase.
- ◆ Calls to emergency law enforcement agencies involving “shots fired” increase.
- ◆ The number of violent crimes increases overall.
- ◆ The number of wounded persons being dropped off at emergency rooms by uni-

identified individuals, as opposed to arriving in ambulances, increases.

- ◆ The number of drive-by shootings and murders increases.

Additional warning signs may not have significance when viewed alone but, when noted in connection with the signs listed above, may indicate an emerging gang problem. These warnings include flashing of hand signs, the arrival of “new faces” in town known only by street names or monikers, the appearance or growth in popularity of certain types of clothing and tattoos, increased truancy, and the rise of certain types of slang.

Gaining expertise

There are four things you can do to confront a street gang problem:

1. Learn more about the specific street gangs in your district.
2. Establish partnerships and professional working relationships with local law
(continued on next page)

Gathering Intelligence

The best way to discover warning signs of street gang activity is to get out of the office and into the community. Talk with local law enforcement; local merchants; school officials; and the employers, families, and neighbors of offenders during home and employment contacts. Attend local and regional gang task force meetings. And establish relationships with

local police, FBI, DEA, and other law enforcement agents. Each of these contacts is a potential source of intelligence regarding street gangs in your district.

In addition, observe neighborhoods and their inhabitants in your community. Look for signs of street gang activity, such as graffiti or particular clothing worn by young adults.

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dealing are what first bring most gang members into the judicial system.

As noted earlier, some gangs are well organized and therefore capable of large-scale drug trafficking. The Bloods and Crips have established criminal organizations that capitalize on the trafficking and selling of crack cocaine and other narcotics. Even within these gangs, however, there are different levels of involvement, ranging from narcotic selling by adolescents to trafficking by older members.

The relationship between drug trafficking and street gangs varies from city to city and gang to gang. The best advice for federal officers is to contact local law enforcement to learn which gangs may be trafficking narcotics in their districts. ♦

Special Needs Offenders Bulletin

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enforcement to supplement and expand knowledge and district resources.

3. Work with management and colleagues to revise the district's case management practices to address the challenges that street gang members present.
4. Continually update your knowledge of street gangs through training and education.

The Center suggests that each district appoint a representative to

- ♦ talk to district officers and compile their strategies for investigating and supervising offenders and defendants suspected of being street gang members or of affiliating with gangs;
- ♦ participate in the FJC online workshop on street gangs and report the street

(continued on back page)

Sacramento Intelligence Unit

The Sacramento Intelligence Unit (SIU) is a joint operation of the Bureau of Prisons (BOP), U.S. Marshal Service, and U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services. It was established in 1990 to provide operational intelligence and direct investigation support to officers and field employees of these agencies and other federal, state, and local law enforcement and judicial organizations.

SIU is hosted by the BOP Intelligence Section, Central Office, and staffed by employees from each of the three agencies. While special emphasis is placed on street and prison gangs, intelligence is also provided for other threat groups who pose a danger to officers and the community. Selected SIU services include intelligence summaries on

gang or security threat groups, gang-related incident analysis, intelligence trends, assistance in gang membership validation procedures, support in analyzing threats to the judiciary, notice to officers of pending releases, and a wide variety of bulletins, guides, and investigative support materials such as the *Security and Threat Groups Symbols and Terminology Manual*.

SIU operates Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. (PST). For assistance or to order a copy of the *Security and Threat Groups Symbols and Terminology Manual*, contact Karen Meusling, Disruptive Groups Specialist, SIU, Suite 210, 2941 Sunrise Boulevard, Rancho Cordova, CA 95742; phone (916) 851-0204; fax (916) 851-0207.

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gang-related information, strategies, and issues that officers in the district raised;

- ◆ put together a list of resources in the district and community that officers can use to identify and supervise street gang members;
- ◆ serve as the Center's point-of-contact for the *Special Needs Offenders* program on street gangs. ◆

Read the AO's *News and Views* for announcements about the October on-line workshop and the December satellite broadcast on street gangs. Or contact Dennise Orlando-Morningstar or Mark Maggio at (202) 273-4115 for additional information.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The Federal Bureau of Prisons is reporting an increase in disruptive activities in prisons by street gangs such as the Bloods, Crips, and Jamaican Posse; by prison gangs; and by other security threat groups. The Bureau is requesting that officers include gang affiliation information in presentence and dispositional reports.

The Administrative Office directs officers to include in their reports the name of the gang to which an offender/defendant belongs; the names of major gang members, including associates or relatives of the defendant/offender; the defendant's/offender's role in the gang; the length of time the defendant/offender has been a member or associate of the gang; and known gang signals such as tattoos, colors, special terminology, hand signs, codes, and ciphers.

In a July 17, 1997, memorandum to chief probation officers regarding inclusion of gang information in presentence and dispositional reports, the Administrative Office stated that

officers must take care in describing the reasons for including gang-related information in the presentence investigation or dispositional report since it may be relevant to the imposition of the sentence or subsequent correctional treatment, including designation by the Bureau of Prisons. If the gang association can be attributed to the commission of the instant offense, such information should be included in the Offense Conduct Section of the report. If gang membership is not related to the offense, such information should be included in other relevant sections of the report.

Special Needs Offenders Bulletin

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