here 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 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. 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.”

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 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 problems, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention recently prepared a report highlighting the need for increased emphasis on prevention and intervention strategies, as well as the development of comprehensive policies and programs to address the challenges posed by street gangs.

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
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 of 1994 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 violent juvenile offenders. For example, the Anti-Gang Youth and Violence Act of 1997 would provide for federal prosecution of violent juvenile offenders. For example, the Anti-Gang Youth and Violence Act of 1997 would provide for federal prosecution of violent juvenile offenders. For example, the Anti-Gang Youth and Violence Act of 1997 would provide for federal prosecution of violent juvenile offenders. For example, the Anti-Gang Youth and Violence Act of 1997 would provide for federal prosecution of violent juvenile offenders. For example, the Anti-Gang Youth and Violence Act of 1997 would provide for federal prosecution of violent juvenile offenders. For example, the Anti-Gang Youth and Violence Act of 1997 would provide for federal prosecution of violent juvenile offenders. For example, the Anti-Gang Youth and Violence Act of 1997 would provide for federal prosecution of violent juvenile offenders.

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.

(continued from page 1)
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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 broadcasts. 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.

About the Special Needs Offenders Series

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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-
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 (continued on next page)

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 Compton, 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 generally 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.

(continued on next page)
Gangs and the Military

Street gangs exist even in the military. A 1994 Newsweek investigation 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 weapons 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.”

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 associates. 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.

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 boundaries 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 stay with relocating families;
- to avoid apprehension and prosecution;
- to avoid retribution from rival street gangs;
- to participate in private and public training and rehabilitation programs;
- 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 enforcement to determine the impact of gang migration in their districts. 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.
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.

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.

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. ➤

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 rival’s name in a rival gang’s territory.

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 together by their... shared incapacities rather 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 membership status. Police in Omaha, Nebraska, have encountered these terms: A G (gangster for life), BG (baby gangster), foot soldier (lowest-ranking member), homeboy (fellow gang member), hoostaa (gangster), killa (killer), wannabe or mark (want-to-be gang member), queen (female gang member), and triple OG (third-generation gangster).
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.

**H and signs**

Gang members use hand signs, known as “flashing,” to communicate gang affiliation or to challenge rival gangs. H and 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crips Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>Black flag</td>
<td>Kill</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chessmen</td>
<td>Crips</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dice</td>
<td>Hit</td>
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<td>Dog face</td>
<td>Infiltrator</td>
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<td>Garage</td>
<td>Cell</td>
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<td>Georgetown</td>
<td>San Quentin</td>
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<td>Hard candy</td>
<td>Knife</td>
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<td>Headlight</td>
<td>Money</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mafia</td>
<td>Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar's Bar</td>
<td>Bomb</td>
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<td>Mid city</td>
<td>Mainline</td>
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<td>Play house</td>
<td>Hospital</td>
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<td>Reporter</td>
<td>Informer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shark</td>
<td>Traitor</td>
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Sample of code words commonly used by the Crips.

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)
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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior type</th>
<th>Non-offenders</th>
<th>Nongang street offenders</th>
<th>Gang members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Street</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>6.74</td>
<td>16.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>9.71</td>
<td>21.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>13.67</td>
<td>23.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug sales</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>5.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol use</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>16.82</td>
<td>34.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug use</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>11.92</td>
<td>21.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

**Drugs**

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

1. 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 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.
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.

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.
References


Deck, Robert W. Untitled presentation on gangs. Chicago, Ill.: Chicago Police Department, undated.

Dart, Robert W. Untitled presentation on gangs. Chicago, Ill.: Chicago Police Department, undated.


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.

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/defendant’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

Federal Judicial Center
Thurgood Marshall Federal Judiciary Building
One Columbus Circle, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002-8003