



National Institute of Justice

Research in Brief

Michael J. Russell, Acting Director

December 1993

Street Gang Crime in Chicago

by Carolyn Rebecca Block and Richard Block

Street gang activity -legal and illegal, violent and nonviolent, lethal and non-lethal- occurs disproportionately among neighborhoods and population groups. Types of incidents tend to cluster and increase in bursts in specific neighborhoods and among specific gangs.

Neighborhoods often differ sharply in the predominant type of street gang-motivated incidents they experience. For example, one city neighborhood may be unaffected by street gang activity, while another close by may be a marketplace for a street gang's drug operation, and yet a third may be plagued by frequent and lethal turf battles.

In addition, the chief criminal activities of one street gang often differ from those of another. For example, one outbreak of lethal street gang violence may be characterized by escalating retribution and

revenge, while another may be associated with expansion of a drug business into new territory. Consequently, street gangs and the crimes in which they engage cannot be viewed as monolithic in nature.

This Research in Brief describes these and other patterns of street gang-related violence in a major U.S. city-Chicago. All available information, including Chicago police records of illegal street gang-motivated activity -from vandalism to drug offenses to violent offenses (both lethal and nonlethal)- was examined across time, neighborhood, and street gang affiliation. Individual, gang-level, and neighborhood-level characteristics were also analyzed to determine the relationships among these three factors. The results of the analysis give one of the most complete pictures of street gang crime available today.

Study methodology

Researchers examined Chicago gang homicide data over a 26-year period, from 1965 through 1990, and detailed information on other gang-related crime from 1987 to 1990. Two methods of analysis were used to determine the extent to which neighborhoods differed in the type and concentration of street gang activity and to examine the neighborhood characteristics that were associated with high levels of lethal and nonlethal street gang activity.¹ The information analyzed was primarily from Chicago Police Department (CPD) records, which were organized into three sets of data on Chicago homicides, street gang-motivated offenses, and street gang territories. Neighborhood characteristics and population data for rate calculation were obtained from the U.S. Bureau of the

Issues and Findings

Discussed in the Brief. A study supported by the National Institute of Justice of street gang-motivated violence in one major U.S. city-Chicago. Analysis of police homicide records over 26 years and gang-motivated incident records over 3 years revealed the street gang affiliation of every offender and the location of each offense, which gives a detailed picture of gang activity and the relationships of individual, gang, and neighborhood characteristics.

Key issues: Gangs -and gang-related violence and drug trafficking- are growing problems across the country. Street gangs and the crimes in which they engage cannot be viewed as monolithic: One neighborhood may be unaffected, while nearby, another is the marketplace for a gang's drug operation or the center of lethal turf battles. Bursts of gang-related violence appear among specific gangs and suddenly stop.

Key findings: For a 3-year period, 1987-1990, the study results included the following:

- Gang-related, high-crime neighborhoods can be classed into three types: turf hot spots, where gangs fight over territory control; drug hot spots, where gang-motivated drug offenses concentrate; and turf and drug hot spots, where gang-motivated crimes relate to both.
- Gang involvement in violence and homicide is more often turf-related than drug-related. Only 8 of 288 gang-motivated homicides were related to drugs.
- The city's four largest street gangs were identified with most of the street gang crime. Representing 51 percent of all street gang members, they accounted for 69 percent of recorded criminal incidents.

- The rate of street gang-motivated crime in the 2 most dangerous areas was 76 times that of the 2 safest.
 - A gun was the lethal weapon used in almost all gang-motivated homicides. Use of high-caliber, automatic, or semiautomatic weapons dramatically increased.
- These and other findings of the research have policy implications for formulating intervention strategies:
- Programs to reduce nonlethal street gang violence must be targeted to the specific street gang problems in each neighborhood.
 - Effective intervention strategies must be built on continuously updated information.
- Target Audience:* Law enforcement officials, community leaders, policymakers, and researchers.

Census. This information was gathered by tract and aggregated into the 77 Chicago community areas (exhibit 1).²

Researchers geocoded the address of each homicide and street gang-motivated incident. Boundaries of the community areas were mapped, geocoded offenses were aggregated by community area, and offenses were analyzed in relation to population and other community characteristics. Finally, the densest concentrations (hot spot areas) of individual addresses of street

gang-related incidents were identified regardless of arbitrary boundaries and related to gang turfs, gang activity, and community characteristics.

Data on homicides. One of the largest and most detailed data sets on violence ever collected in the United States, the Chicago homicide data set contains information on every homicide in police records from 1965 to 1990.³ More than 200 variables were collected for the 19,323 homicides in this data set. The crime analysis unit of the Chicago Police Department has maintained

a summary-Murder Analysis Report (MAR)--of each homicide over the 26-year period. On the basis of these reports, 1,311 homicides were classified as street gang-motivated.

Data on street gang-motivated offenses.

This data set included information on 17,085 criminal offenses that occurred from 1987 to 1990 that were classified by the police as street gang-related. These offenses were categorized as follows:

- 288 homicides.
- 8,828 nonlethal violent offenses (aggravated and simple assault and battery).
- 5,888 drug offenses (violations related to possession or sale of hard or soft drugs).
- 2,081 other offenses (includes more than 100 specific crimes ranging from liquor law violations to intimidation, mob action, vandalism, robbery, and weapons law violations).⁴

Data on street gang territory boundaries. This data set included the location of street gang territory boundaries in early 1991. These boundaries were based on maps drawn by street gang officers in Chicago's 26 districts, who identified the territories of 45 street gangs--both major and minor--and noted areas that were in dispute between one or more street gangs.⁵

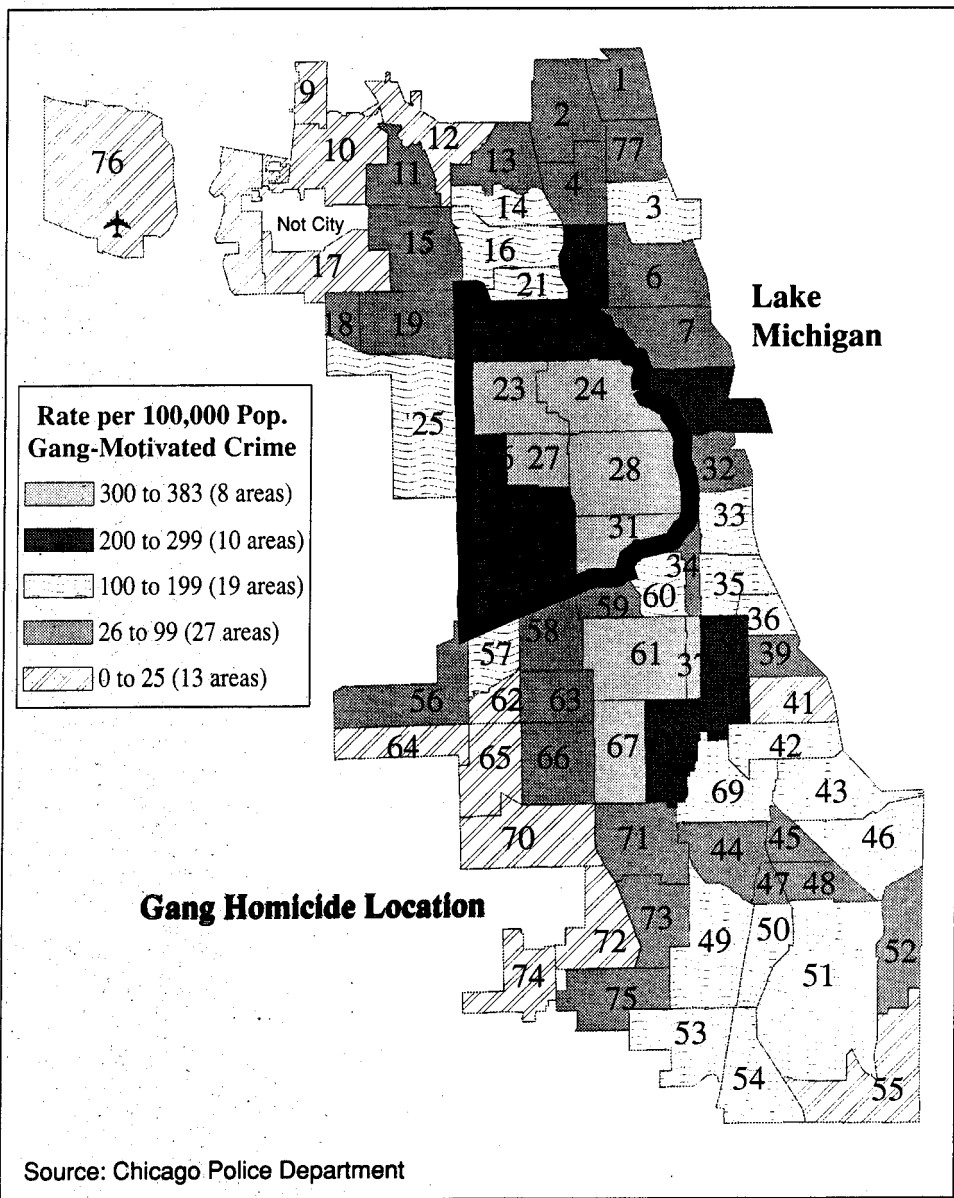
Defining gang affiliation. These three data sets included several possible aspects of street gang affiliation for each incident--for example, the street gang affiliation of the offender or offenders, the affiliation of the victim or victims (if any), and the location of the incident within the boundaries of a gang's turf. In this study researchers classified street gang-motivated criminal incidents according to the affiliation of the offender(s).

Street gangs in the city

More than 40 major street gangs are active in the city of Chicago.⁶ Researchers in this study concentrated on the four largest and most criminally active street gangs, each of which was responsible for at least 1,000 police-recorded criminal incidents from 1987 to 1990:

- *Black Gangster Disciples Nation (BGDN)*. Descended from the Woodlawn Disciples, BGDN is strongest on

Exhibit 1. Nonlethal and Lethal Street Gang-Motivated Crime, by Areas 1987-1990



Chicago's South Side. The gang is known for its turf wars with the Blackstone Rangers in the late 1960's and early 1970's and the Black Disciples in 1991.⁷

Latin Disciples. A racially and ethnically mixed street gang allied with BGDN, the Latin Disciples operate mainly in the integrated Northwest Side neighborhoods of Humboldt Park and Logan Square.⁸

Latin Kings. The oldest (over 25 years) and largest Latino street gang in Chicago, the Latin Kings operate throughout the city in Latino and racially and ethnically mixed neighborhoods. The gang is particularly active in the growing Mexican neighborhoods on the Southwest Side.

Vice Lords. One of the oldest street gangs in Chicago, the Vice Lords date from the 1950's. The gang operates throughout the city, but is strongest in the very poor West Side neighborhoods that have never recovered from the destruction that followed the death of Dr. Martin Luther King in 1968.⁹

Members of BGDN and the Vice Lords are almost all black men, while the Latin Disciples and Latin Kings are predominantly Latino men. Rough police department estimates indicate that the 19,000 members of these four gangs constitute about half of all Chicago street gang members.

In the mid-1980's BGDN and the Latin Disciples formed the Folk alliance. Soon after the Latin Kings and Vice Lords formed the People alliance. Both "super alliances" of street gangs appeared following an increase of street gang-related homicide.

The contrasting size and longevity of Chicago black and Latino street gangs is in part a reflection of the city's population dynamics. In general, the black population of Chicago has declined¹⁰ and some black neighborhoods have been abandoned, while the Latino population has grown and the population of Latino neighborhoods has climbed. For example, over the past 25 years, the population of East Garfield Park (area 27) has fallen by 60 percent and many commercial and residential buildings have been lost, while the population of South Lawndale (area 30) has expanded by 31 percent and changed from a Czech to a Mexican neighborhood (now called Little Village).

With the growth of the Latino population and the expansion of Latino neighborhoods, many small street gangs have emerged. Given their limited territories, these small neighborhood street gangs battle each other frequently and often have to defend their turf against the more established Latino street gangs.

Criminal activities of street gangs

From 1987 to 1990, the four largest street gangs were also the most criminally active. They accounted for 69 percent of all street gang-motivated crimes and 56 percent of all street gang-motivated homicides in which the street gang affiliation of the offender was known. Of the 17,085 street gang-motivated offenses recorded during this period, BGDN was responsible for 4,843 offenses; the Vice Lords for 3,116; the Latin Kings for 2,868; and the Latin Disciples for 1,011.

However, taken as a whole, street gangs other than the top four were responsible for more police-recorded offenses (5,207 from 1987 to 1990) than any one of the top four. Many of these smaller street gangs were relatively new, predominantly Latino, and fighting among themselves over limited turfs.

Drug offenses. The four major street gangs varied sharply in the degree to which drug crimes dominated their illegal activity (exhibit 2). For example, of the 2,868 incidents committed by the Latin Kings from 1987 through 1990, only 19 percent were drug offenses, compared to 56 percent of the 3,116 incidents attributed to the Vice Lords. More incidents of cocaine possession (the most common drug offense) were attributed to the Vice Lords or to the Black Gangster Disciples Nation than to all other street gangs combined. The Vice Lords were also active in heroin possession offenses, with twice as many incidents attributed to them than to all other street gangs combined.

The reintroduction of heroin to Chicago by the Vice Lords and Black Gangster Disciples Nation was particularly disturbing to police and community workers. From 1987 to 1990, the number of incidents of possession of white heroin rapidly escalated from 11 to 165, while possession of brown heroin declined from 77 to 64, probably

reflecting the reentry of Asian heroin into the Chicago market. Meanwhile, the number of incidents of hard drug possession involving the Latin Kings, Latin Disciples, and other street gangs remained low.

Definition of a Street Gang

The Chicago Police Department defines "street gang" as an association of individuals who exhibit the following characteristics in varying degrees:

- *A gang name and recognizable symbols.

- *A geographic territory.

 - * A regular meeting pattern.

 - * An organized, continuous course of criminality.

An incident is defined as street gang-related if the evidence indicates that the action grew out of a street gang function. Gang membership is not enough to determine gang-relatedness. To determine if an incident is street gang-related, police investigators analyze each case for application of the following criteria:

- *Representing-Offenses growing out of a signification of gang identity or alliance (such as hand signs, language, and clothing).

- * Recruitment-Offenses relating to recruiting members for a street gang, which include intimidating a victim or witness.

- * Extortion-Efforts to compel membership or to exact tribute for the gang.

- *Turf violation-Offenses committed to disrespect another gang's territory.

- *Prestige-Offenses committed either to glorify the street gang or to gain rank within the gang.

- *Personal conflict-Conflicts involving leadership or punitive action within the rank and file of a gang.

- *Vice-Activities generally involving the street-level distribution of narcotics by street gang members.

- *Retaliation-Acts of revenge for offenses against the gang by rival gang members.¹¹

Only 8 of the 288 street gang-motivated homicides between 1987 and 1990 were drug related.¹² Five of these, all of which occurred in 1989 or 1990, were related to the business of drugs. As researchers in Los Angeles also found, the connection between street gangs, drugs, and homicide was weak and could not explain the rapid increase in homicide in the late 1980's.¹³

Competition, violence, and other confrontations over turf. Most of the non-

lethal, nondrug offenses attributed to street gangs were violent confrontations (assault and battery) or damage to property (graffiti); see exhibit 3. Other Index crimes such as robbery and burglary were relatively rare, and only six sexual assaults were determined to be street gang-motivated from 1987 to 1990.¹⁴

Violent incidents involving the Vice Lords or BGDN were evenly divided between simple battery and assault (no weapon) and

aggravated battery and assault. Offenses attributed to the Latin Disciples, Latin Kings, or smaller street gangs (which were also mostly Latino) were more likely to be aggravated than simple assault or battery.

The Vice Lords' West Side turf (see exhibit 4) was remarkably free of graffiti. The gang was so much in command that they did not need many physical markers to identify their turf. In contrast, the constricted turfs of the smaller street gangs were well marked with graffiti and other identifiers. Driving south on Pulaski Road from Vice Lords' turf in North Lawndale (area 29) toward Two Sixers', Deuces', and Latin Vikings' territories in South Lawndale (area 30), researchers observed a remarkable transformation in neighborhoods. In North Lawndale stood many abandoned factories and apartments and empty lots, but not much graffiti. In thriving South Lawndale (Little Village), buildings were covered with multiple layers of insignia. Competing for scarce territory, the street gangs in Little Village had to identify and violently defend their domains.

Both the amount of graffiti and number of violent turf defense incidents appear related to competition. West Side gangs knew which neighborhoods were under the Vice Lords' control and infrequently challenged that control. In contrast, battles between rival street gangs were a regular occurrence in the expanding Mexican neighborhoods on the Southwest Side. Thus, symbolic "face maintenance," graffiti contests, and violent territorial defense actions were relatively frequent in street gangs more threatened by competition.

Exhibit 2. Street Gang Incidents by Offense Type: Four Largest and Other Gangs, 1987-1990

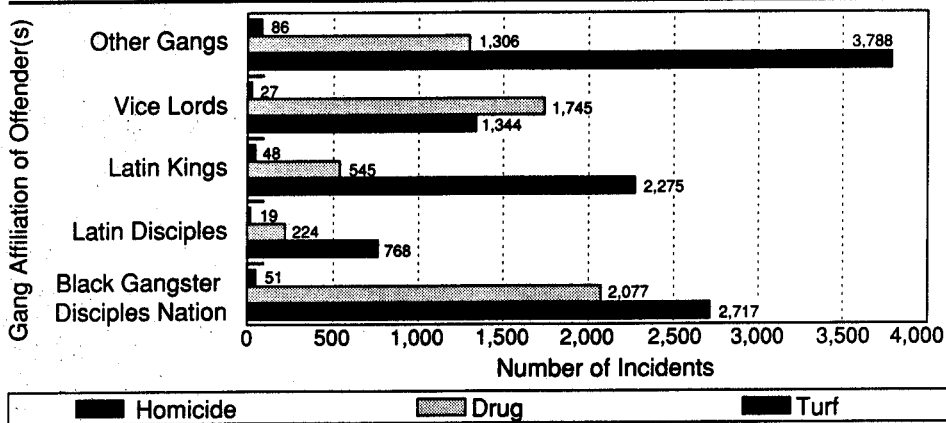
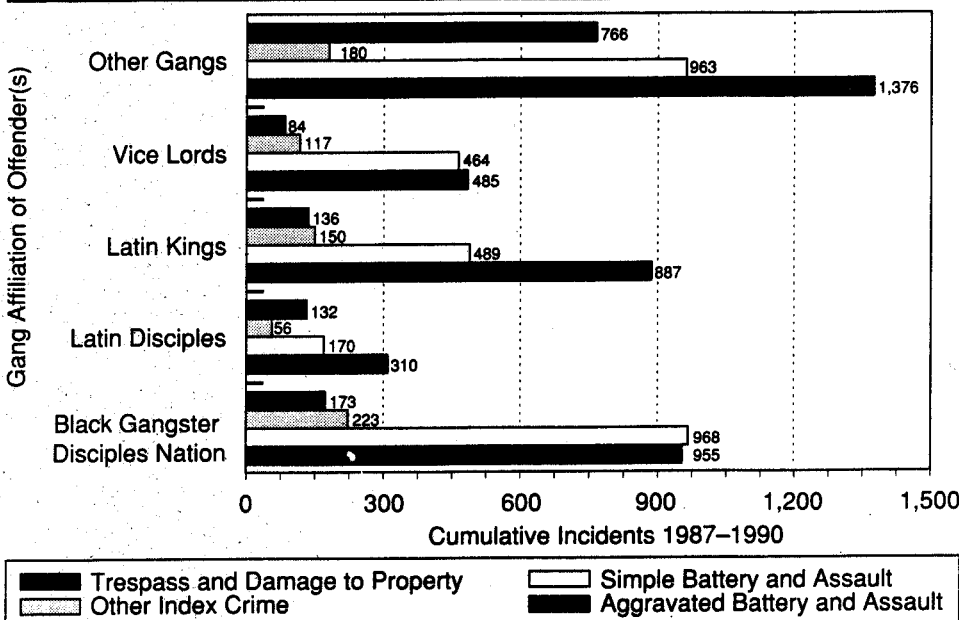


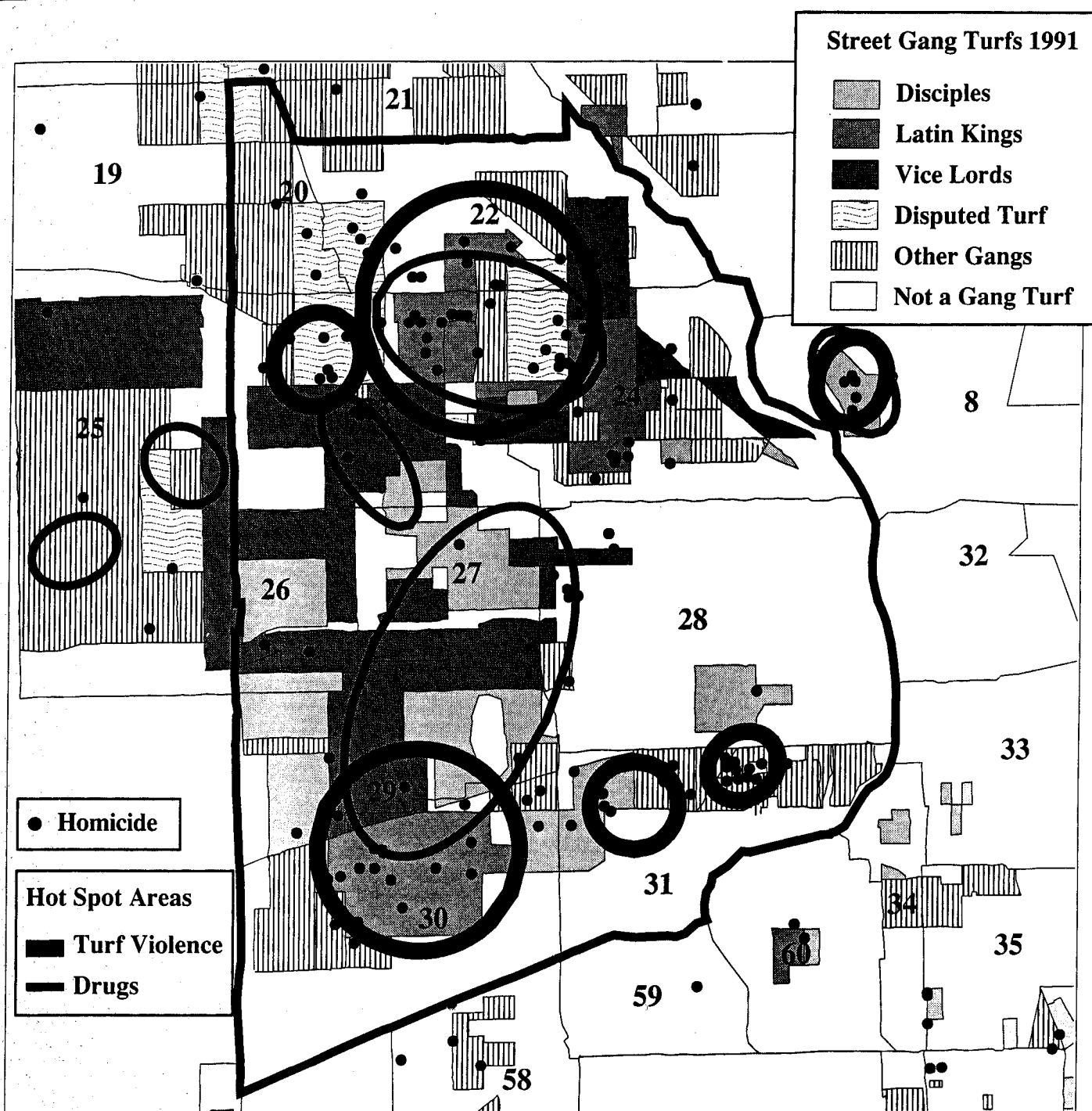
Exhibit 3. Nonlethal Street Gang Crimes: Four Largest and Other Gangs



Trends in homicides

In contrast to domestic or acquaintance killings, street gang homicides occurred in bursts (exhibit 5).¹⁵ Years with only a few homicides were punctuated by years with many. In 1965 only 11 street gang-motivated homicides occurred (2.8 percent of all homicides); but in 1970, 70 occurred (8.7 percent of the total). The risk of being murdered in a street gang confrontation was more than five times higher in 1970 than in 1965. This early surge in homicide reflected BGDN wars on Chicago's South Side.

Exhibit 4. Street Gang-Motivated Homicide, Other Violence, and Drug Crime, 1987-1990



Source: Chicago Police Department

Exhibit 5. Street Gang-Motivated Homicides, 1965–1990 (Number and Rate per 100,000)

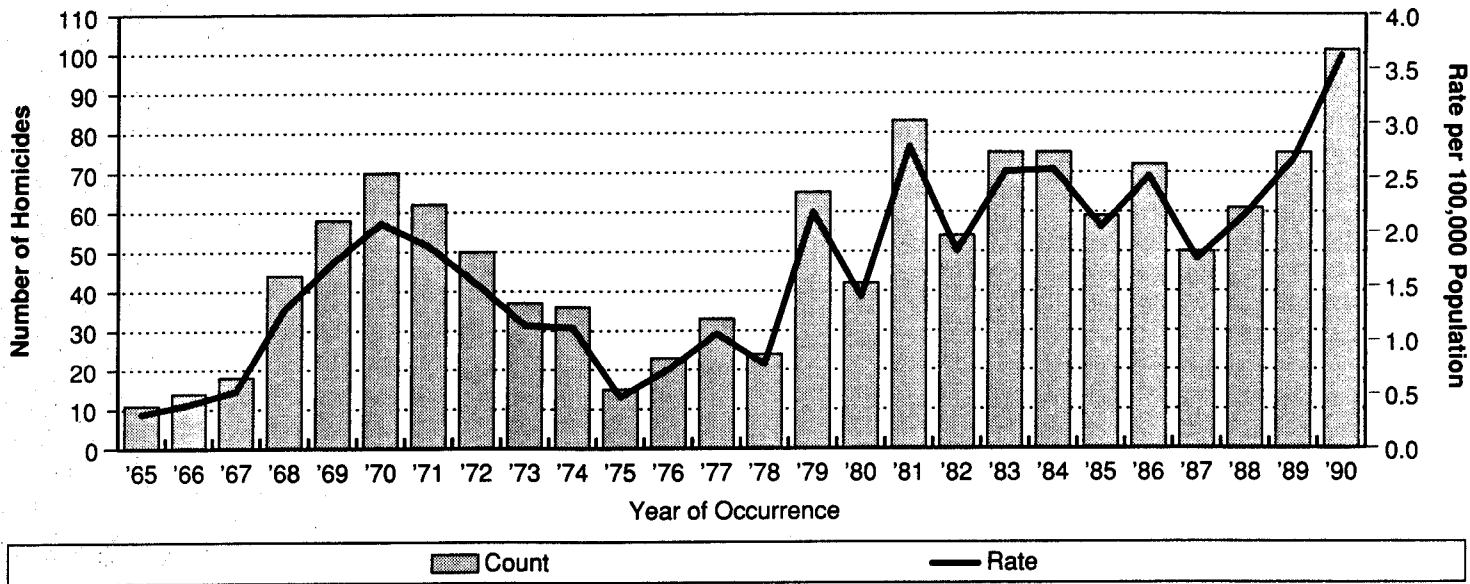
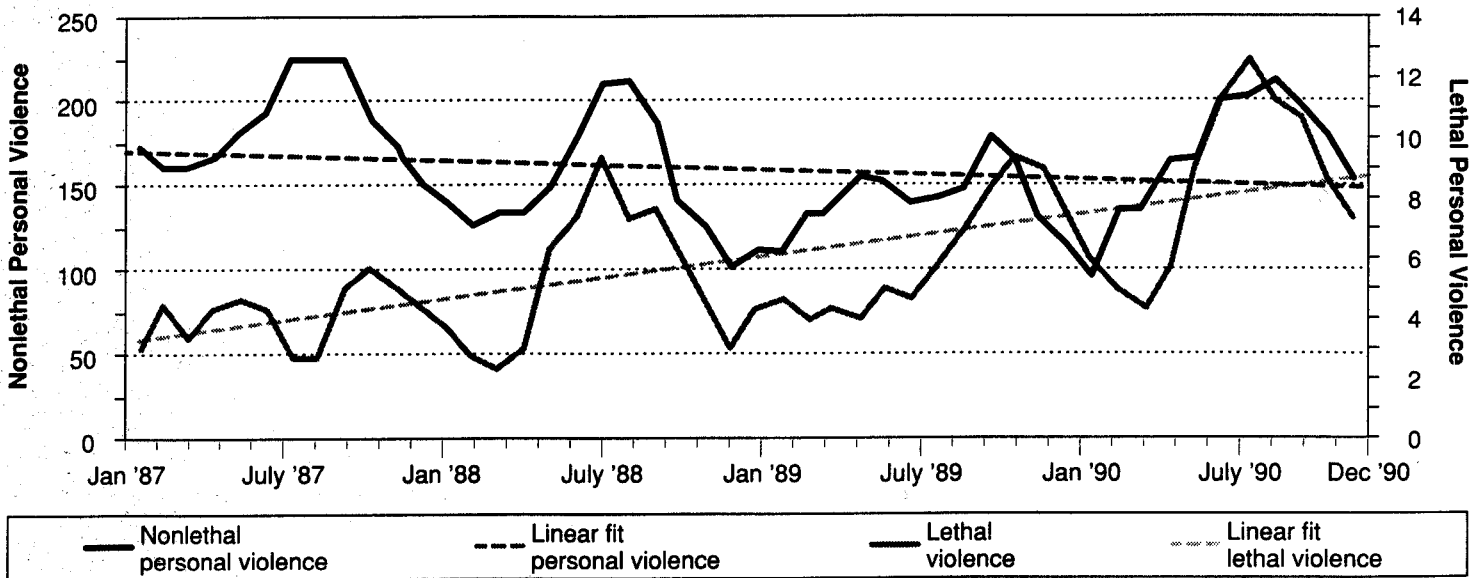


Exhibit 6. Trends in Street Gang-Motivated Violence, Lethal and Nonlethal



By 1975 the number of street gang-motivated homicides was again as low as the mid-1960's, even though 1974 and 1975 were record years for other types of homicide. This brief respite was followed by eruptions of lethal street gang violence in 1979 and again in 1981, when there were 65 and 83 deaths, respectively. However,

the formation in the mid-1980's of the two gang super alliances, People and Folk, may have brought relative stability in street gang-motivated violence for a few years. Only 50 street gang-motivated homicides were recorded in 1987, and the total number of Chicago homicides reached the lowest point in 20 years.

Unfortunately, the rivalries that developed both between and within alliances in the mid-1980's generated even more violence later in the decade when street gang-motivated homicide increased sharply to 101 in 1990 (then an all-time high) and surpassed that to 121 in 1991 and 133 in 1992. Although the overall level of homicide also

increased rapidly in those years, street gang-motivated homicide increased faster. It accounted for 12 percent of all homicides in 1990 and was responsible for 33 percent of the total increase from 1987 through 1990.

If street gang-motivated homicide is directly related to other street gang-motivated incidents and if the proportion of incidents with a lethal outcome does not change, then the pattern over time of lethal incidents should parallel the pattern of nonlethal incidents. Although the data show some similarity in the short-term pattern of street gang-motivated lethal versus nonlethal incidents, the overall trend is very different (see exhibit 6).¹⁶

- In 1987 1 street gang-motivated homicide occurred for every 44 street gang-motivated personal violence offenses known to the police.
- In 1990 there was 1 death for every 20 police-recorded crimes of personal violence.

Indeed, the number of street gang-motivated deaths in a typical month increased sharply over the 3-year period, even though the number of nonlethal violent incidents declined slightly. These divergent trends in lethal and nonlethal violence indicate that the proportion of incidents with a lethal outcome has increased.

The role of guns. One explanation for the increasing lethality of street gang-motivated violent incidents could be an increase in gang use of guns. From 1987 to 1990, the proportion of nonlethal street gang-motivated violent offenses that were committed with a gun increased slightly from 27.3 percent to 31.5 percent. In contrast, a gun was the lethal weapon in almost all street gang-motivated homicides—96 percent in 1987 and 94 percent in 1990.

Furthermore, the proportion of murder weapons that were automatics or semiautomatics increased from 22 percent to 31 percent over the 3 years (from 11 to 31 deaths from 1987 to 1990). In addition, deaths by large-caliber guns (38 or greater) increased, from 13 in 1987 to 39 in 1990.

Overall the number of street gang-motivated homicides increased from 51 in 1987

to 101 in 1990. The number killed with an automatic or semiautomatic (any caliber) or with a nonautomatic gun of 38 caliber or greater increased from 24 to 70 from 1987 to 1990. Virtually the entire increase in the number of street gang-motivated homicides seems attributable to an increase in the use of high-caliber, automatic, or semiautomatic weapons.

Street gang activity by community area

Every community area in Chicago had at least one street gang-motivated offense between 1987 and 1990. However, the two most dangerous communities, East Garfield Park (area 27) and Humboldt Park (area 23), had a mean annual rate of street gang-motivated crimes (381.5) that was 76 times the mean annual rate (5.0) in the two least dangerous neighborhoods, Mt. Greenwood (area 74) and Edison Park (area 9); see exhibit 1. The community areas with the highest levels of street gang-motivated crime were on the West Side (areas 23, 24, 27, 28, and 31); in the south central neighborhoods of New City (area 61) and Fuller Park (area 37); and in West Englewood (area 67), the scene of a burst of street gang violence in 1990 and 1991.

Homicides. Street gang-motivated homicides were also concentrated in two corridors on the Northwest and Southwest Sides. Of Chicago's 77 community areas, 17 had no street gang-motivated homicide from 1965 to 1990. Many had only one. None of the 13 community areas with the lowest rates of street gang-motivated crime had a street gang-motivated homicide between 1987 and 1990. At the other extreme, the Lower West Side (area 31) averaged more than 6 street gang-motivated homicides per 100,000 people per year over that same time period.

The risk of becoming a homicide victim or offender was far higher for young Latino men than for other Latinos or for non-Latino whites, and equal to that for young black men. The risk of homicide for other Latinos was not exceptionally high,¹⁷ but the risk of homicide for non-Latino blacks was higher than for non-Latino whites, regardless of age or gender, and higher than for all Latinos except young men.

These individual differences were reflected in community differences as well.

Community differences. Black neighborhoods with high rates of street gang homicide also had high rates of other forms of homicide. But this was not necessarily true in other communities. For example, the mostly mixed and Latino neighborhoods on the Northwest and Southwest sides had many street gang-motivated killings, but relatively few killings for other reasons.¹⁸ As a result, the rate of street gang motivated homicide and the rate of other forms of homicide from 1987 through 1990 were only weakly correlated (.287) across community areas.

Compared to the relationship over time (exhibit 6), the relationship between lethal and nonlethal violence across geographic areas appeared to be higher, but the strength of the relationship depended on the type of violence. Five of the six community areas with the highest rates of street gang-motivated nonlethal personal violence (assault and battery) also ranked among the six with the highest rates of street gang-motivated homicide. In contrast, only one of the six community areas that had the highest rate of street gang-motivated drug crime in the years 1987 to 1990 also ranked among the top six in street gang-motivated homicide rates. Only one community area, Humboldt Park (area 23), ranked among the top six in all three rates—street gang-motivated lethal violence, nonlethal personal violence, and drug offenses. Overall the correlation across the 77 community areas between rates of street gang-motivated drug crime and homicide was moderate (.401), while the correlation was much stronger (.728) between street gang-motivated homicide and rates of street gang-motivated assault and battery.

Hot spot areas of street gang activity. Fifty-one percent of the city's street gang-motivated homicides and 35 percent of nonlethal street gang-motivated offenses occurred in 10 community areas on the West Side. Three kinds of neighborhood situations can be seen in this West Side map (exhibit 4).¹⁹

*Neighborhoods with a turf hot spot area (heavy concentration of nonlethal personal violent activity to defend turf).

*Neighborhoods with a drug hot spot area (heavy concentration of street gang-motivated drug offenses).

*Neighborhoods plagued by both a turf and drug hot spot area.

Residents in these neighborhoods tend to view street gang activity very differently. For example, a resident living in a drug hot spot area is likely to consider the neighborhood street gang problem to be primarily a drug problem. A resident living in a turf hot spot area may consider the neighborhood street gang problem to revolve around violent defense of turf. And a resident of a community in which a drug and a turf hot spot area intersect experiences the worst of both.

In specific neighborhood areas, the link between incidents of street gang-motivated nonlethal and lethal personal violence was far stronger than that between drug crimes and lethal violence. For example, street gang-motivated homicides tended to occur within or close to the boundaries of turf hot spot areas, and only rarely in drug hot spot areas except when a drug hot spot area intersected a turf hot spot area.²⁰ Of the 169 street gang-motivated homicides in the 10 community areas shown in exhibit 4, 94 occurred in hot spot areas, as follows: 37 in neighborhoods where a drug hot spot area and a turf hot spot area intersected (28 in Humboldt Park, 4 in Little Village, and 5 in Cabrini Green), 48 in turf hot spot areas only, and 9 in drug hot spot areas only. The turf hot spot area in Little Village (in the southwest corner) experienced more than 7 homicides per square mile, while the Pilsen hot spot area (southeast corner) experienced 48, and the turf hot spot area around Humboldt Park, which intersected with a drug hot spot area, was the site of 16 homicides per square mile over the 3-year period.

Highlights of major findings

This study painted a more complete picture of the reality of street gang crime than is usually the case in studies of gangs. By analyzing police records of lethal and nonlethal street gang-motivated crimes, examining temporal and spatial patterns of

those crimes, and describing the criminal activities of Chicago's four largest street gangs, researchers sought to uncover typical patterns of street gang life.

The patterns of street gang activity can be summarized as follows:

*Chicago's largest street gangs can be identified with most of the city's street gang crime. These four street gangs (representing about 10 percent of all street gangs and 51 percent of the estimated number of all street gang members) accounted for 69 percent of police-recorded street gang-motivated criminal incidents and 55 percent of all street gang-motivated homicides from 1987 to 1990.

*Street gangs varied in the types of activities in which they were engaged. Some specialized in incidents of expressive violence while others focused on instrumental violence (see "Expressive Versus Instrumental Violence"). For example, the Vice Lords and BGDN were much more involved in acts of instrumental violence (such as possession or sale of drugs), while the Latin Disciples, Latin Kings, and smaller gangs specialized in acts of expressive violence (such as turf defense). Most of the criminal activity in smaller street gangs centered on representation turf defense. The most lethal street gang hot spot areas are along disputed boundaries between small street gangs.

*Types of street gang crime clustered in specific neighborhoods. Street gangs specializing in instrumental violence were strongest in disrupted and declining neighborhoods. Street gangs specializing in expressive violence were strongest and most violent in relatively prosperous neighborhoods with expanding populations.

*The rate of street gang-motivated crime in the 2 most dangerous Chicago communities was 76 times that of the 2 safest. However, every community area in Chicago had at least one street gang-motivated criminal incident between 1987 and 1990.

*Most of the lethal gang-related crimes occurred in neighborhoods where street gang activity centered on turf battles, not in neighborhoods where street gang activity focused on drug offenses. Of 288 street gang-motivated homicides from 1987 to 1990, only 8 also involved drug use or a drug-related motive.

Expressive Versus Instrumental Violence

A growing body of literature indicates that violence is not one type of event but many.²¹ Almost all acts of lethal violence begin as another type of confrontation—for example, as an argument between spouses, a fight or brawl between acquaintances, a robbery, an act of sexual violence, or a street gang confrontation—that escalates to death. To understand lethal violence, the reasons why some—and only some—of these violent events become lethal must first be understood. The answer differs for those fatal and nonfatal "sibling" offenses such as assault homicide and assault compared to robbery homicide and robbery, which occupy different points on the expressive-versus-instrumental continuum.

In general, the dynamics of a violent situation are governed by the degree to which expressive versus *instrumental* motives predominate as the assailant's primary and immediate **goal**. In an expressive violent confrontation, the primary goal is violence or injury itself, and other motives are secondary. In contrast, the primary purpose of an act of instrumental violence is not to hurt, injure, or kill, but to acquire money or property. In addition, situational factors—such as **possession** of a weapon—that might affect the likelihood of a fatal outcome operate differently in expressive and instrumental confrontations.

Street gang-motivated violence often contains many **expressive** aspects—such as impulsive and emotional defense of one's identity as a gang member, defense and glorification of the reputation of the gang and gang members, and expansion of the membership and territory of the gang. Though some of these turf activities may involve acquisition, the primary motive is expressive. On the other hand, other types of street gang violence, such as formation and maintenance of a lucrative drug business and other entrepreneurial activities, are fundamentally instrumental. In this study researchers found that some gangs specialized in expressive violence, while others specialized in instrumental violence.

* A gun was the lethal weapon in almost all Chicago street gang-motivated homicides from 1987 to 1990. Incidents involving a high-caliber, automatic, or semiautomatic weapon accounted for most of the increase in homicides over this period.

* Many community areas with high levels of lethal and nonlethal street gang-motivated personal violence and homicide had relatively low levels of other forms of homicide. Although hot spot areas of street gang-motivated drug offenses were usually low in street gang homicide, some were high in other kinds of homicide.

Policy implications

As this report shows, street gang violence has been a continuing problem in Chicago since the late 1960's. The years 1990, 1991, and 1992 broke records for street gang violence, and the number of incidents continued to grow in 1993.

Intervention programs whose aim is to reduce nonlethal street gang violence will probably also reduce lethal violence. To be effective, however, these intervention programs must be built on a foundation of current information about the types of street gangs and street gang activity in each specific neighborhood.

As shown by this research, street gang-motivated crime is not random. In Chicago it occurred in specific neighborhoods and was concentrated in limited time periods. Some street gangs spent much of their time defending or expanding their turf while others were actively involved in the business of illegal drugs. Programs to reduce street gang-motivated violence must recognize these differences. For example, a program to reduce gang involvement in drugs in a community in which gang members are most concerned with defense of turf has little chance of success.

Furthermore, because the predominant type of street gang activity in a neighborhood may change from year to year or month to month, and because the level of street gang-motivated violence tends to occur in spurts, effective intervention strategies must be built on continuously updated information.

Another focus of control over gang violence should be on weapons. The death weapon in almost all gang-motivated homicides in Chicago was a gun, and much of the increase in gang-motivated homicides from 1987 to 1990 was an increase in killings with large-caliber, automatic, or semiautomatic weapons. Therefore, reducing the availability of these most dangerous weapons may also reduce the risk of death in street gang-plagued communities.

Street gang membership, street gang-related violence, and other illegal street gang activity must be understood in light of both long-term or chronic social patterns, and current or acute conditions. Street gang patterns and trends reflect not only chronic problems, such as racial and class discrimination and adjustment of immigrants, but also acute, often rapidly changing problems stemming from the existing economic situation, weapon availability, drug markets, and the spatial arrangement of street gang territories across a city.

Obviously, the chronic problem of street gang violence cannot be solved with a quick fix; the ultimate solution rests on a coordinated criminal justice response, changes in educational opportunities, racial and ethnic attitudes, and job structure. On the other hand, while waiting for these long-term strategies to take effect, lives can be saved and serious injury prevented by targeting the causes of short-term or acute escalations in violence levels.

Notes

1. Two types of spatial analysis were used: correlational community area analysis and identification of hot spot areas of dense street gang activity concentrations. Hot spot areas were identified using the hot spot ellipse capability of the STAC (Spatial and Temporal Analysis of Crime) package, which was developed by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. STAC used an iterative search that identified the densest clusters of events on the map, calculated a standard deviational ellipse fitting each cluster, and mapped the events and the ellipses. STAC delineated, regardless of artificial boundaries, the areas of the map that contained the densest clusters of events. It was thus a data base-driven, objective tool for identifying nonarbitrary summary areas from the

actual scatter of events on the map. For further information about STAC, see C.R. Block, "Hot Spots and Isocrimes in Law Enforcement Decisionmaking," paper presented at the Conference on Police and Community Responses to Drugs: Front-line Strategies in the Drug War, University of Illinois at Chicago, December 1990.

2. Community areas are aggregations of census tracts, usually including several neighborhoods but sometimes only one, identified by an official name and number. Since the Chicago School sociologists first identified them in the 1930's, a plethora of data has been collected and analyzed by community area. For more detail, see exhibit 1 and Chicago Factbook Consortium, *Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area* (Chicago: University of Illinois Department of Sociology, 1980).

3. Data from 1965 through 1981 are currently available in the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data of the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, and a completely updated data set from 1965 through 1990 is being prepared for the archive. The ultimate source of all information for all years was the Murder Analysis Report (MAR), a two-page summary of each homicide maintained since 1965 by the Crime Analysis Unit of the Chicago Police Department. Since its inception in 1965, MAR has consistently flagged cases in which there was positive evidence that the homicide was motivated by street gang activity.

4. Although a single incident may have involved multiple offenders or multiple victims, data were analyzed at the incident level. If more than one offense occurred in an incident, the incident was classified according to the most serious violation. All data are from 1987 to 1990, except for homicides; the homicide data include murders that occurred from 1965 to 1990.

5. It is quite possible that the territories defined by police officers differ from the territories that would be defined by street gang members, agency workers, community members, or even by police officers assigned to another division such as narcotics. Also, because street gangs disappear, merge, or change names over time, it would have been preferable to have a turf

map that was contemporaneous with the street gang incident data. However, the turfs are probably a fairly accurate representation of the later part of the study period.

6. Chicago Police Department, Gang Crime Section, "Street Gangs" (internal report), 1992.

7. In the 1960's and 1970's, the Woodlawn Disciples battled the Blackstone Rangers (later called the Black P Stone Nation and then changed to El Rukins), which resulted in an upsurge in homicides. In 1991, renamed BGDN, the gang fought the normally allied Black Disciples gang for control of Englewood.

8. Much of the discussion on gang structure, history, and current activities depends upon two police department sources: L.J. Bobrowski, "Collecting, Organizing, and Reporting Street Gang Crime," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Chicago, 1988; and Chicago Police Department, "Street Gangs," 1992.

9. R.J. Sampson and W.J. Wilson, "Toward a Theory of Race, Crime, and Urban Inequality," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, San Francisco, 1991.

10. C.R. Block, "Lethal Violence in the Chicago Latino Community," in *Homicide: The Victim-Offender Connection*, ed. A.V. Wilson (Cincinnati: Anderson Pub. Co., 1993), 267-342.

11. For further information, see Bobrowski, "Collecting, Organizing and Reporting Street Gang Crime," and Chicago Police Department, "Street Gangs," 1992.

12. A homicide was defined as drug-related if drugs were a motivation for the crime or if the victim or offender was under the influence of drugs during the incident. Drug-motivated homicides included those involving the business or sale of drugs, those that resulted from a crime committed to get drugs or the money for

drugs, those that resulted from an argument or confrontation about drugs, and "other" (such as an infant starving to death because both parents were high). This definition follows that of P.J. Goldstein, "The Drugs/Violence Nexus: A Tripartite Conceptual Framework," *Journal of Drug Issues* 14 (1985): 493-506. Note that drug-related information was not available for nonlethal incidents.

13. M.W. Klein, C.L. Maxson, and L.C. Cunningham, "'Crack,' Street Gangs, and Violence," *Criminology* 29(4) (1991): 701-717.

14. Non-Index offenses, such as intimidation, mob action, and weapons and liquor law violations, are not shown in exhibit 3.

15. Yearly totals in exhibit 5, which refer to the year of occurrence of the homicide (year of the incident) may differ from police totals, which refer to the year in which the police "booked" the offense.

16. The data here are 3-month moving averages.

17. C.R. Block, "Lethal Violence in the Chicago Latino Community," 1993.

18. R. Block and C.R. Block, "Homicide Syndromes and Vulnerability: Violence in Chicago's Community Areas Over 25 Years," in *Studies on Crime and Crime Prevention*, v. 1. (Oslo/Stockholm: Scandinavian University Press, 1992), 61-87.

19. Because of space considerations, the actual locations of the drug or nonlethal violent incidents that formed the basis for these hot spot areas are not depicted in exhibit 4. The location of street gang-motivated homicides, which were not included in the calculation of the hot spot area ellipses shown on the map, are depicted by black dots.

20. Note that only nonlethal offenses, not homicides, were included in the calculation of hot spot areas depicted in exhibit 4.

21. For more information on this issue, see R. Block and C.R. Block, "Homicide Syndromes and Vulnerability," 1992.

References

Block, Carolyn Rebecca. "Hot Spots and Isocrimes in Law Enforcement Decision-making." Paper presented at the Conference on Police and Community Responses to Drugs: Frontline Strategies in the Drug War. University of Illinois at Chicago, December 1990.

--"Lethal Violence in the Chicago Latino Community." In *Homicide: The Victim-Offender Connection*, ed. Anna V. Wilson. Cincinnati: Anderson Pub. Co., 1993, pp. 267-342.

Block, Carolyn Rebecca, and Richard Block. "Beyond Wolfgang: An Agenda for Homicide Research in the 1990's." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 14 (1992): 31-70.

Block, Richard, and Carolyn Rebecca Block. "Homicide Syndromes and Vulnerability: Violence in Chicago's Community Areas Over 25 Years." *Studies on Crime and Crime Prevention*, v. 1. *Oslo/Stockholm*; Scandinavian University Press, 1992, pp. 61-87.

Bobrowski, Lawrence J. "Collecting, Organizing, and Reporting Street Gang Crime." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Chicago, 1988.

Chicago Factbook Consortium. *Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1980*. Chicago: University of Illinois Department of Sociology, 1980.

Chicago Police Department, Gang Crime Section. "Street Gangs." Internal report, 1992.

Cuny, G. David, and Irving Spergel. "Gang Homicide, Delinquency, and Community." *Criminology* 26(3) (1988): 381-405.

Goldstein, Paul J. "The Drugs/Violence Nexus: A Tripartite Conceptual Framework." *Journal of Drug Issues* 14 (1985): 493-506.

Klein, Malcolm W., Cheryl L. Maxson, and Lea C. Cunningham. "'Crack,' Street Gangs, and Violence." *Criminology* 29(4) (1991): 701-717.

Sampson, Robert J., and William Julius Wilson. "Toward a Theory of Race, Crime, and Urban Inequality." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, San Francisco, 1991.

Spergel, Irving A. "Youth Gangs: Continuity and Change." In *Crime and Justice. A Review of Research, vol. 12*, eds. Michael Tonry and Norval Morns. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990, pp. 171-275.

Wacquant, Loic, and William Julius Wilson. "Poverty, Joblessness, and the Social Transformation of the Inner City." In *Welfare Policy for the 1990's*, eds. Phoebe H. Cottingham and David T. Ellwood. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989, pp. 70-102.

Carolyn Rebecca Block is senior analyst at the Statistical Analysis Center, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. Richard Block is professor of sociology at Loyola University in Chicago. The authors acknowledge also the assistance of the Chicago Police Department in preparing this study, especially Commander Robert Dart of the Gang Crime Section, Commander James Maurer of Area Four Violent Crimes, Gang Crimes Specialist Lawrence J. Bobrowski of the Bureau of Operational Services, and Detective A1 Kettman (retired) of the Crime Analysis Unit.

Findings and conclusions of the research reported here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The National Institute of Justice is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

NCJ 144782

The City of Chicago is very rich in street gang history. Many people believe that the origin of the modern day street gang was founded in Chicago. The creation of the People and Folks Nations can be accredited to Chicago, and was well known for organized crime syndicates in the past. Street gangs are a secret underground culture and the gangs are not limited to gender, race, culture, or neighborhood. There are African American Gangs, Asian Gangs, Arabic Gangs, Female Gangs, White Gangs, Latino or Hispanic Gangs. They are on the west side, the north side, the south side and the east side of Chi... Villalobos. Street gangs in Chicago. 12th Street Players. Adidas Boys. Chicago Law Targeted at Street Gangs Up for Review Chicago cops make good on threat to gang-bangers Street gangs in Oakland, California Killers of 9-year-old Chicago boy lured him into alley and murdered him over gang beef with his father: police Twista To Curb Chicago's Street Violence With Youth Center Street Gangs in Sacramento, California Gangs of Chicago by. Herbert Asbury Gangs Turn Chicago Streets Into a Battlefield Let's Meet: Chicago Police's New Approach To Gangs. 271 Comments for "Street gangs in Chicago, Illinois". Oriental lazy bloodz. December 30, 2012 - 8:39 am.