



**"L.A. STYLE"**

**A**

***STREET GANG MANUAL  
OF THE  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT***

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OPERATION SAFE STREETS BUREAU  
GANG DETAIL  
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## CHAPTER I - SOCIOLOGY OF GANGS



## **Introduction**

Street gangs have existed in Los Angeles County since the turn of the century. Historically, gangs have existed in nearly all previous societies. As of March, 2006 approximately 1,200 street gangs, with an estimated gang membership of 80,000, were active in Los Angeles County. The criminal conduct of these gangs contribute significantly to the overall crime problems that plague the urban sprawl of Los Angeles.

Los Angeles County is ethnically divided into three basic types of street gangs: Hispanic, Black, and Asian. With a few exceptions, White youth, with the ganging mentality, join Hispanic gangs if they live in neighborhoods dominated by such gangs. Outside those areas, White youth tend to join into motorcycle gangs, which operate more as organized crime units, or white supremacists that use the facilities of the gang to propagate their racist political ideals and fall into a criminal spectrum outside the philosophical boundaries of street gangs. Within the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department these racist groups are handled by specialized hate crime investigative units outside the domain of the Safe Streets Bureau, the Departmental unit responsible for street gang investigations.

Over the past three decades gang violence escalated at an alarming rate. Historically, gang fights involved fists, feet, chains, some knives, and a few guns, but today's gangs are well armed with sophisticated weaponry. At one time a death due to gang warfare was rare; today, hardly a day goes by without one or more deaths occurring in Los Angeles County due to gang violence. Today, senseless wanton acts of brutal gang violence have become a daily occurrence, rather than the exception.

In 1995, 807 persons died as a result of gang violence. While there was some decline in gang violence in the late 1990's it is still prevalent and accounts for nearly 50% of all homicides in Los Angeles County. Street gangs have developed into a serious consequence to all citizens of our country, as the gangs no longer prey only upon each other; they are spreading further afield and victimizing all members of our society. No other criminal entity presents a more clear and present danger to the citizens of this country than street gangs.

Few youth are forced into gangs, as is popularly believed, but seek out membership in an attempt to associate with other youth that have similar background deficiencies. Gangs have now infiltrated the middle- class areas. This infiltration is usually a result of families with children who are gang members moving into the area, which in turn attracts the local delinquent minded youth of that area who are fascinated by the gangster's alluring reputation.

Street gangs have been viewed historically as an aberration and a sign of the failure of inner city slum life, but today there is a segment of our society that is prepared to accept the gang lifestyle as an acceptable way of life. Clothing manufacturers, in some cases, produce clothing that is patterned after gangster style of clothes, thus exhorting the "thug life" so popular among those with the gang mentality. Special schools in some school districts accommodate street gangsters by creating schools for the affected gang. Community workers, many times mistakenly, reinforce the criminality of the gangs by forgiving them their crimes, using the excuse that the gang member is poor, uneducated, and hopeless, or by playing upon the racial issue. The gang member would be

better served by being placed in programs that build social skills, interaction with the community, and job training. The street gang life is a detriment to the gang member and his community.

A pattern of migration has also developed involving inner city Black gangs and, to a lesser degree, the Hispanic street gangs of Los Angeles County. It has become quite apparent that these gangs are moving not only into outlying parts of the county, but also are migrating to many parts of the nation. This migration is primarily due to family relocation, to escape pressures applied by urban law enforcement, or to avoid being victimized by rival gangs. Law enforcement seldom finds that gang members relocate from their home turfs solely to develop new markets for drug trafficking. Drug trafficking turfs generally result after the gang member has been relocated and discovers through his basic entrepreneurial skills that he has an opportunity develop a market in his new location. In these new areas the gang is at first cloaked in its anonymity, as local law enforcement usually has had no experience with street gangs and does not recognize the danger when it first presents itself. Law enforcement agencies in these areas are now becoming well acquainted with the Los Angeles based gangs.

In addition to the increased mobility of gangs, there has been an increase in violence directed toward law enforcement personnel. A higher rate of incidents involving gang members initiated confrontations with police is occurring daily. Gang members are becoming more sophisticated in their encounters, actually setting up ambushes with very sophisticated weapons.

With the ever-increasing police pressure placed on the street gang membership, it is incumbent upon law enforcement personnel to develop tactical approaches to deal with this increased gang-related activity. The information collected within this manual is intended to assist the individual officer in the identification of gang members and the legitimate collection of intelligence information.

More specifically, this information is intended to assist the officer in evaluating the threat level of each encounter with gang members. To accomplish this, street officers need to understand the gang member and what he stands for. It is only in this way that law enforcement will be able to project the future trends of the gangs and develop viable tactics with which to counter such activity.

### **Sociology of the Street Gang**

Street gangs began due to a myriad of social and economic reasons. Two of the most common reasons youth join gangs are the breakdown of the family as a cohesive unit and desperate poverty. Sadly, a map of the gang areas of Los Angeles overlays almost identically a poverty map of the same area. While there are obviously other reasons for joining gangs, when closely examined, these reasons are related either directly or indirectly to family situations and poverty. In recent years, street gangs have been observed in middle-class areas, but close scrutiny of these gangs, in general, reveals that the nucleolus for this formation is still found in the families' instability. In many cases, the families have moved from gang-infested neighborhoods, because of an improved socioeconomic condition and have simply transferred a hardened street gang member to virgin turf.

Not only is the citizenry in mortal danger from street gangs, but the influence wielded by the gangs has a trickle-down effect on all aspects of life for the residents of an area afflicted with a street gang. Street gangs prey upon their neighborhood much like a malignant growth that continues to spread through its host until only a wasted shell remains. To understand the world of gangs and what

makes them tick, one must have an understanding of how street gangs came to be the influential force that they are in our society. Many sociologists have advanced theory after theory on what a gang is or is not, and there are as many definitions as there are studies. The following definition is used by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to define street gangs:

"A gang is a group of three or more persons who have a common identifying sign, symbol or name, or whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal activity creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation within the community."

### **Recruitment**

There are a variety of reasons why youth join or become members of street gangs. Text after text has been written on this subject, and several theories have been advanced by the theologians who produced the studies. Some of these theories seem to have some validity. At the very least, they provide insight as to why youth join gangs. They also supply a common terminology for investigators, but few offer any viable solutions to the horrendous problem facing society today in the form of this malevolent entity, the "Street Gang."

At one time, most youth joined gangs because of economic depravity. Most gangs that originated in these low economic areas would commit crimes, such as burglary or robbery, to buy food and other essentials for survival. Of course, the sense of adventure was present, along with the need to belong, and the sense of family that the gang provided. Poverty is still prevalent in those areas, and many youth join to relieve their desperate circumstances. Others join for the imaginary riches that narcotic trafficking supposedly delivers at the end of the rainbow.

Some join gangs because of peer group pressure, or because it is just the popular thing to do. Oftentimes, a person joins a gang for protection against rival gangs. If an individual grows up in a gang neighborhood, the people he associates with, goes to school with, and possibly even his parents, are members of the gang. So it is understandable, in some cases, that a person may become a member of a given gang merely because everyone in the neighborhood is, and he knows it only as a common practice or thing one is supposed to do.



Depending on where the gang is located Hispanics are members of African-

geographically, very few American gangs and vice versa.

In the older, established Hispanic gang neighborhoods, one will find that African-Americans, who move into the neighborhood become members of the local Hispanic gang. This is especially true in areas of Watts, Compton, and East Compton. Sometimes, an Hispanic moves into an African-



American gang neighborhood and becomes a member of that African American gang; however, this is not a common occurrence. There is a trend today for Samoan gangs to align themselves with Crip and Blood gangs, and identify themselves as allies, rather than as members of the other racially divided gang styles.

The transformation of a youth into a gang member does not take place overnight, of course, but involves a slow assimilation. Older members have been informally observing the development of the recruit and gradually allow him to associate with the gang. Once he reaches an age where he can prove himself to peer leaders within the gang structure, he may perform some sort of rite of passage or ceremony that officially recognizes his full membership. This process is called "jumping in," or alternately, he may be "courted in," where he is simply accepted into the gang and does not have to prove himself in any particular way.

In many cases, the youth will have minimal financial or worldly assets; therefore, his most important possession becomes his reputation. A "hard look" or minor insult directed at a gang member by a rival gang member must be avenged, for such "hard looks" threaten not only his own self-esteem, but his standing within the gang and, by extension, his identity. The blood baths seen on Los Angeles streets are often the result of this attitude. A gang member seldom forgets or forgives a rival gang intrusion on his "space," whether it is his personal honor or his neighborhood.

### **Causative Factors**

Gangs exist because of a myriad of social and economic factors. Racism obviously played an early and important role in the formation of street gangs in California. A study of existing gangs revealed that few are racially mixed. African-American gangs are almost totally African-American. Hispanic gangs allow a few African American or White individuals to join; generally, these individuals are culturally Hispanic due to being raised in that community. On the other hand, White gangs are traditionally White only and tend toward a White racist philosophy.

The native Mexican immigrating to California in the early part of the 20th century was looked upon by the Caucasian population as a source of unskilled, cheap labor. This attitude, along with political and racist views, relegated Mexicans to barrios or neighborhoods comprised of an almost totally Mexican population. This situation was reinforced by a continuous flow of immigrants who preferred to live where their native language was spoken and customs practiced. It was not long before competition for jobs between the growing immigrant population and native Californians led to hatred and rivalries between the groups. These rivalries grew to neighborhood vs. neighborhood disputes as more and more Hispanics were packed into the barrios, and this demographic distribution led directly to the formation of today's Hispanic street gangs. The same set of circumstances, with only minor deviations, led to the formation of street gangs of African and Asian ancestry.

Another, and probably the most important, factor in the formation of a gang member is the family structure. It is primarily the family atmosphere that will influence the direction to be taken by the youth in the future. Investigators have found certain common threads running through most families having hard-core gang members.

The family is quite often, but not exclusively, a racial minority and on some form of government assistance. In addition, the family often lacks a male authority figure. A typical profile of a gang

member's family unit could be illustrated as a common-law state, with a male who very likely does not exercise positive disciplinary action over the children. This male figure may be a criminal or drug addict and, therefore, represents a negative role model. Typically, neither adult has more than an elementary school education. The children live with minimal adult supervision and tend to associate with other youngsters who come from homes similar to their own. When one of the children encounters law enforcement authorities for the first time, and for each subsequent incident, the dominant figure (usually the mother) makes excuses for the child when the youngster gets into trouble. These excuses normally take the form of accusations against society in general. Thus, children are taught early that they are not responsible for their actions and are shown how to transfer blame to society. By the time the youngsters reach mid-teens, they have become accustomed to blaming society for their problems.

A second type of family structure that is very common, and many times nearly indistinguishable from the first, is one that may have two strong family leaders in a mother and a father. In these cases, the parents are usually graduates from gangs themselves and see little wrong with their children; belonging to gangs. This type of structure is conducive to what is known as an assembly-line production of gang members. Law enforcement investigators and community social workers are thwarted at every turn by these families and have little, if any, success in influencing members away from their gang.

A third family structure that commonly appears is one in which the parents are non-English speaking, and their customs are from a cultural background vastly different than what is encountered in Southern California. The children tend to adapt rapidly to the American way of life and lose respect for their parents and the "old ways." These youth, who are generally English speaking, quickly become experts at manipulating their parents, and the parents lose all control over them. As is the case in many families, particularly immigrant families, both parents are working low paying jobs and cannot afford child care; thus the child is left alone to his own devices. These children are easily recruited by the gangs when they are on the streets without responsible adult guidance.

Many times these children of immigrants are picked on and teased by local youth and due to this hang out with similar youth. They feel disenfranchised from normal society and without the sophistication to deal with the situation form into protective groups that quickly become gangs. Another scenario is that this group will join a local gang, as the gang becomes a surrogate family that finds normalcy in the youth characteristics that he/she has been taunted about and shamed for by others.

Stereotype gang member family structures have been discussed. That does not mean, however, to imply that these are the only structures that occur, but that they are the most common. Many of these structures overlap in their nature, and often it is difficult to find a single, clear-cut example of one family type that does not share, in part, some elements with other family structures outlined above.

### **What Is Gang Activity?**

Gang activity is a complex term to define. Gang members will use the term "banging" or "gang banging," which in gang parlance simply means gang activity. Its meaning is as varied as the

background and perspectives of those attempting to define it. Many gang activities are not illegal and are frequently shared by a large portion of society; but when a gang is involved in a fund-raising car wash, a weekend party, or even a family picnic, the potential for violence and criminal activity is far greater than for any other group of people. Gangs pose a serious threat to society because of the inherent violence associated with their activities. A chance meeting at an amusement park between rival gangs all too often ends with innocent non-gang victims seriously injured. This type of incident is not uncommon, and police files are filled with similar and tragic examples.

A gang member views gang activity differently than does the general public. His idea of his neighborhood extends only to the gang. When he speaks of his neighborhood, he is not referring to the normal residents of the community, but only of his fellow gangsters. In the idiom of the gangster, neighborhood and gang turf are synonymous terms. Traditions of solidarity and neighborhood gang cohesiveness run deep. Pride in one's neighborhood, however poor it may be, is intense. The gang member has a driving need to belong and will often profess it in his last dying breath. This has manifested itself in such a degree that the greeting, "Where are you from?" has become the challenge of the street. Violence may well follow a response to that question. Challenge a gang member's barrio or gang, and the challenger is challenging the total being of the rival and his gang.

One should keep in mind that most gang members are unskilled and poorly educated, especially during their younger and active years. The member's lifestyle options are limited to such an extent that criminal activities increase the gang's cohesiveness and perpetuate the gang's identity. In turn, the gang offers the member protection, alibis, and total acceptance.

Gang activity on school campuses is evidenced by various symptoms. Acts of vandalism, arson and graffiti painting, although secretive in nature, are often gang involved. Stabbings and shootings between rival gangs take a toll of innocent students and teachers. Student extortion and teacher intimidation also exists. The presence of a sufficient number of gang members in a class effectively renders the teacher powerless to enforce discipline or teach.

Gang activity, when viewed from a law enforcement perspective, is a study in violent crime. A perpetual cycle of violence has been established within the street gang milieu. Gang rivalries dating back many years exist. As new generations of gang members enter the main stream, they are taught to hate their rivals as vehemently as their predecessors. In conversations with gang members, investigators have found that many times they do not know the reasons they originally became rivals of a particular gang. They only know of the more recent incidents. One gang member stated, "I don't know why we fight them. We've fought 'em since my father's time."

With this mentality affecting the socialization and personality growth of a child, it is easy to see why conventional law enforcement techniques are difficult to apply to street gangs. Many Hispanic street gang members see their violent behavior toward rivals as a legitimate endeavor in defense of their neighborhood. An affront to their machismo must be defended at all costs. African American gang members are somewhat different in their gang philosophy. By and large, African American members openly admit they are gangsters. Their primary motivations are monetary gain and to improve their station in life through any means necessary. Many times the unsophisticated gang member can only see the criminal lifestyle as his only option. He has neither the discipline, the motivation, or the adult guidance to explore other options open to him. His lifestyle improvement

may well involve criminal acts and may only work to enhance their individual criminal status. Again, this is not to say that their gang membership is not important to them because it is, only that compared to the Hispanic gang, loyalty to the gang is less of a priority than the advancement of the individual.

African-American gang crimes tend to be more in the area of robbery, burglary, and narcotic dealing than those of Hispanic gangs. Established law enforcement techniques apply much better with the African American gang member than the Hispanic, as the African American member's personal freedom is more important to him than his gang. He is more liable to deal or inform on his home boys, due to the lack of tradition and loyalty, than the Hispanic.

### **Gang Communication**

Street gangs communicate primarily through their actions. Unlike the gangs associated with organized crime, which prefer anonymity, street gangs need and seek recognition not only from their community, but also rival gangs. The gang's image and reputation depend on this recognition, and it is critically important to its members because such visibility enhances the reputations of the gang members.

Verbal as well as non-verbal gang communication are ever present and take a variety of different forms. One form of gang communication, and certainly the most observable, is graffiti (wall writings). Inscriptions in the form of graffiti can be found in every large city in the United States; however, most metropolitan graffiti can be attributed to the efforts of street gangs, or graffiti vandals known as Taggers. Tagger graffiti differs from gang graffiti in several ways.

Taggers, in most cases, see their efforts as art and take pride in their stylized master "pieces," as offensive as it is to the regular citizens of the community. They also take pride in the adventurous and in many cases dangerous manner that they go to in order to place their work on freeway overheads and buildings in defiance of the authorities. There is evidence that, as happened historically to marginal social groups, that many taggers groups are becoming street gangs, as evidenced by their own reference to their group as a tag-banger gang.

The bulk of the gang graffiti, especially in the greater Los Angeles area, is often the result of the efforts of Latin and African American gang members. These graffiti styles differ, not so much in the basic mechanics or in the meanings, but in sophistication and intensity. The primary reason for this difference is that African-American gangs lack the traditional gang philosophy common in most established Latin or Hispanic gangs. Graffiti is an important part of the Latin gang tradition. Latin gang members call their inscriptions "placazos" or "placa," meaning sign or plaque. It is not just graffiti. It proclaims to the world the status of the gang and offers a challenge to rivals.

By studying the graffiti itself, certain basic elements are found. For example, the main body of the writing will usually contain the gang's name (placa) or logo. Also, close by will be the "placa" (nickname or street name) of the writer or author of the inscription. Frequently, assertions of the gang's strength or power will also be included.

Valuable information relative to police work may be gained from gang graffiti. For instance, one may be able to determine what gang is in control of a specific area by noting the frequency of

unchallenged graffiti, as throwing a "placa" on a wall corresponds to claiming a territory. Gang writing that has not been marked out by rivals reaffirms the gang's control. Normally, the closer one moves to the center of a gang's area, the more unchallenged graffiti can be found. Conversely, as one moves away from the center or core area of a gang's power and territory, more rival graffiti and cross-outs are observed. Thus, if one gang had its graffiti on a building crossed out by another gang's graffiti marked nearby, it would indicate a contested location. A cross-out is a type of asterisk that covers that rival's graffiti and, in gang jargon, is referred to as "puto mark."

Many times the words "puto" (whore) or "rata" (rat) are scribbled next to, or close, by the crossed-out graffiti as further disrespect for the rival. Contested areas are common, and when both gangs arrive at the same place at the same time, a confrontation occurs. Homicides have resulted when gang members were caught desecrating a rival's territory with their own graffiti.

Another non-verbal form of gang communication is that of flashing gang hand signs. The purpose of these hand signs is to identify the user with a specific gang. Gang hand signs have certain things in common with graffiti. Where graffiti is often a challenge to rivals, completed at night by unseen gang members, flashing or tossing gang signs is a face-to-face challenge. Confrontations frequently begin with gang signs being flashed between rivals, which soon escalates into physical violence.

Even though the gang member uses graffiti and hand signs to identify with his gang, it is equally important for him to reinforce his sense of belonging through a more direct way, by adopting a gang style of dress. Most members are proud of their gang and openly display signs of their membership. Although, in recent times, many gang members in the greater Los Angeles Area are dressing in a more subdued manner in order to either divert law enforcement attention from them or to confuse rivals who may be in the area. Gang attire is still one of many factors to consider when forming an opinion of an individual's possible membership in a street gang. There are two basic types of gang clothing.

The first type of gang clothing will lead the observer to the conclusion that the individual belongs to a gang without specifically identifying which one. The clothing may indicate the type of gang, such as Hispanic or African-American, but not name the particular gang. The second type of gang clothing specifically identifies a gang. This is apparent in areas where street gang members wear jackets or sweatshirts with their gang name or logo on the back or clothing of specific color that identifies the primary gang of the area. Outlaw motorcycle gangs wear their "Colors" openly on occasion, and usually have distinctive vests or jackets that display logos or badges that identify their particular gang, rather than a particular color.

Tattooing, as a custom, is of ancient origin and is certainly not limited to gang members or the criminal element of any society. However, studies and field experience show that gangs also use tattoos as a method of communication and identification. The traditional Latin gangs have used tattoos extensively and often tattoo themselves with their gang "placa" or gang name and affiliation. They are usually on the body (arms, hands, face, or neck.) where they would be visible. These tattoos may be as small as a homemade dot in the web of a hand or so large that the logo covers the entire back or stomach. The wearing of a gang tattoo increases the probability the wearer is a gang member. Most of the tattoos hardcore gang members have on their bodies relate to their gang membership. When the gang member displays his tattoo, he is representing his gang, and if the gang is feared, the member may also be feared.

By contrast, African-American gang members are not enthusiastic about using tattoos to identify their membership with a gang. African-American gang members tend to be more individualistic and less inclined to permanently identify themselves with any one group.

Regardless of the method of communication gangs use, their messages are clear. The gang member is telling the world that his gang or barrio is number one, the best. He is also expressing his total commitment to turf and gang, for it is from these elements that he generates his sense of self-worth and identity. Without worth and identity, the gang member is lost and becomes a non-entity, a thing.

## **Gangster Rap Music**

(The following segment of Gangster Rap Music was submitted by Sgt. Ron Stallworth, Gang Intelligence Coordinator of the Criminal Investigations Bureau, Utah Department of Public Safety. Sgt. Stallworth is recognized as the nation's leading law enforcement expert on the relationship of gangster rap music and street gangs)

Gangster rap is one of many styles of music associated with the street oriented youth culture known as **hip-hop**. Hip-hop began on the streets of New York City in the early 1970s as a response to the then chic youth style known as "disco." Hip-hop is a culture which rejects the norms and values of the mainstream. It is a peer influenced way of life, one that demands unwavering adherence to its values and orthodoxies as a condition of acceptance. It is a male-dominated culture which emphasizes a macho encouragement of risk-taking (i.e., substance abuse, promiscuity, etc.)--of being a "player in the game" (i.e., hustling in the street as a means of survival). Rap music is but one of four components which comprise the culture of hip-hop, break dancing, deejaying, and graffiti artistry are the remaining three. Rap has emerged as the dominant feature of hip-hop.

Gangster rap is an outgrowth of the "thug" lifestyle adhered to by many urban minority youth. Its popularity has spread beyond the boundaries of urban America to be embraced by white youth in the suburbs and rural heartland, as well as throughout the world. It's a music reflective of the gang subculture, expressing its values and behavioral norms while, in turn, reinforcing a conduct that is the direct antithesis of the greater society.

Seven primary themes dominate gangster rap music. These themes are interrelated, that is one song may focus on one theme, but another will find its way into the lyrical flow. Those themes are the following:

1. Glorification/reflection of the gang lifestyle and mentality
2. Violence: directed at society in general and the police in particular, especially the black officer
3. Racism
4. Psychotic/psychopathic personality
5. Sexual stereotype of black males as "superlovers"
6. Misogyny
7. Female response to male sexism

The themes of gangster rap music give life to the gang mind set. It's a way of life that hinges on nihilism, coupled with fatalistic bonding of violence and anarchy. This mind set promotes the xenophobic lack of trust and acceptance by the gang member towards those not of his (her) world.

There also exists four secondary aspects to the music that prove to be a prevailing constant:

1. Liberal use of the derogatory epithet, NIGGER
2. Boastful claim of a city or geographic area (often referred to as "representing")
3. Use of metaphors to mask the various themes
4. Marketing of dual recordings: a clean or radio version, and a street or nasty version

A constant feature of gangster rap music is the use of profanity to express thoughts and ideas in support of the "G-Code," the gangster ethic and ideal. The profanity is interlaced within the lyrics by design for two distinct reasons:

1. The street nature of hip-hop dictates that adherents to the culture "keep it real," that is maintain authenticity to the reality of the inner-city street life. In the quest to "keep it real" the language of the street--profanity--is used to describe the "truth" of their existence.
2. The rap music industry is a billion-dollar-a-year institution. The possibility of gaining a slice of this pie has made the rappers entrepreneurs of the highest order. Their music conveys a variety of messages with the intent of educating their fans about the plight of their socio-economic existence. They are the language of the street to sell those messages to their followers.

The lyrics of gangster rap music provide an insight into the lifestyle and mentality of the inner-city street gang member (note-many gangster rappers are, in fact, gang members). They speak of their communities as "jungles" or "concrete Vietnams," an environment requiring the survivalist attitude of a "guerilla" warrior. They speak of two types of power: that through the barrel of a gun, and that gained by material acquisition (i.e., money, jewelry, property). Obtaining the latter is glorified (or reflected, depending on one's point of view) in songs advocating a criminal lifestyle. In this vein they see the commission of crime as a means of achieving a sense of legitimacy by the standards set by the mainstream.

The lyrics of gangster rap music speak of an American society that is inherently racist and designed to keep the minority inner-city inhabitant in a state of eternal dependance on the elite white political power structure. They view their inner-city communities as "colonies" subject to the whims of a government sanctioned racism that induces genocide (i.e., the predominance of liquor stores within the inner-cities; the self-destruction and community decimation brought on by the effects of crack cocaine; the abundance of guns circulating among the young within their communities; and the constant warfare between rival gangs). All of these issues combine to bring about the "I don't give a (expletive deleted)" attitude which defines their outlook on life. This attitude places them at the center of what they feel mainstream "Amerikkka" (a frequent spelling used to denote their belief that the political power structure in this country is designed to work against them) fears most--the young black male who lives his life unencumbered by societal restrictions on behavior, "America's Nightmare."

## **Street Gang Dynamics**

To fully understand the impact that gang-related activity has on society, you must accept certain definitions as they relate to gangs.

**Street Gang Definition:** A gang is a group of three or more persons who have a common identifying sign, symbol, or name, and whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal activity, creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation within the community.

**Gang-Related Crime:** Occurs when criminal activities are reported wherein the suspect is a gang member or the victim is a victim due to his gang affiliation. The purpose of classifying gang-related crimes is to show the frequency of gang members involved in criminal activity and how the total criminality of the gang and its members impacts the community. Criminal activity of the members, either individually or in a pack, is perceived by the community as an indicator as to the strength of the gang, and the public makes no differentiation between the individual member or the gang. Left unchecked, the gang can destroy the community as surely as their weapons destroy human lives.

**Gang Membership:** Gang membership involves very different levels of commitment and participation. The number of gang members in a given gang may vary from a few to hundreds. Gangs will recruit as many people as possible. The larger the gang, the stronger influence the gang will have in the community and more daring they can be with rival gangs.

**Gang Leadership:** The "L.A. Style" of gangs is a group much different than the Midwest gang style, which has identifiable leadership and in many cases a rank structure. The gangs of Los Angeles are in most cases without identified leadership or rank structure. Gang leadership is charismatic, and within every gang there are those members that possess the charisma to be a leader and will assume a situational leadership role. Usually this position is not limited to any one individual. This could be due to the gang size (biggest), involvement in drugs, charismatic qualities, intelligence, or a combination of various abilities. It is these hard-core, leader type individuals within the gang that guide its activity, both criminal and non-criminal, and are looked upon during times of crisis for their leadership.

With any attempt to control or alter a gang or member's behavior, it is necessary to recognize the leadership qualities within the gang or "set." If those youngsters with charisma to be natural leaders can be diverted from the gang/drug path, it may result in a significant response from the follower-type youth within his sphere of influence. Leadership qualities can be recognized at a very early age, and in those formative times, impressionable youth can be swayed by their peer groups, as well as authority figures, such as parents, police, and teachers.

The gang investigator must identify those individuals capable of inspiring others to follow their lead. The constant monitoring of gangs will identify these individuals and allow the investigator to apply pressure to them by targeting their criminal activity and vigorously prosecuting them for their criminal endeavors. The lack of cohesiveness and direction of the gang, created by the confinement of these influential members, allows the investigator to impact the gang's activity.



The investigator must remain vigilant at all times to recognize new and emerging leaders, as they attempt to fill the voids created by vigorous prosecution. These individuals will lead him to other gang members within the gang, assisting in the establishment of accurate and timely intelligence information on the gang and its activity. These leader types are generally recognized by certain characteristics such as their self-declaration of leadership, the obvious respect they command of their peers, and their consistent appearance at the scene of gang activity, whether it is criminal or not.

While there are obviously different levels of membership and activity of individuals within a gang, the membership generally falls into certain categories. It is many times difficult to identify when a person crosses over the line from mere acquaintance of the gang members to actual membership. There may be an official ceremony such as a ceremonial fight called “jumping in,” or some other form of initiation, but the difficulty lies in when the individual mentally accepts his position in the family of the criminal street gang. The three categories generally used by law enforcement are listed below. One must remember that the line between them is, at best, blurred.

**Hard-Core Member:** Those few who need and thrive on the totality of the gang's activity. This is the person within the gang who actively promotes and participates in the criminal activity of the gang. He is the individual most frequently arrested, due to this willingness to commit criminal gang conduct. The leader type of individual has the ability to orchestrate the gang's level of violence and criminal activity. Those leader types emerge from within this hard-core cadre. These hard-core members maintain the gang reputation for violence. The gang has many times supplanted the family of this hard-core individual.

**Affiliate or Associate Member:** An active gang member who readily identifies himself as a member of the gang, but is not generally involved with the heavy violence associated with the hard-core members.

**Peripheral Gang Member:** Generally a younger person who lives in the gang's neighborhood and hangs on the fringe of the gang structure. He will identify with the gang neighborhood but is not normally involved with the criminal activity associated with the gang, but is ripe for recruitment into the gang as a more active member as he matures. He may well serve as a lookout or runner for older gang members, and will usually display defiance and other at-risk tendencies in school and at home.

This individual is commonly referred to as a “wannabe”. Such a term does great damage to the social existence of the individual by placing him in a nebulous category of almost a gang member. He may find his educational and other social opportunities restricted, along with a new scrutiny by the adult community. An individual decides in his own mind if he chooses to be a gang member. It is only when his attitude and actions make him visible to law enforcement that he will be placed into an official category of gang member, an attainment of his own choice and desire. If he wants to be a gang member (wannabe) then he is, at least in his own mind, and that mental state will dictate his actions.

**Identification of Gang Members:** It is important to identify these associates or peripheral gang members, as they generally have not developed the traditional loyalties to the gang, nor have their personalities developed into the hardened “thug life” mentality that is so common among hardcore gang members. Due to the lack of traditional loyalties, these same individuals have the best chance

of being diverted from the gang lifestyle by the observant investigator, and can also be vital sources of information to the gang investigator that has gained their respect and trust.

While attempting to identify a possible gang member's affiliation, the investigator should recognize that gang members have certain identifying characteristics. When conducting an investigation or completing a field interview, a record of these characteristics should be noted. The purpose of recording this information is to positively identify the person's participation in gang activity. California and Federal intelligence file guidelines make it very clear that the officer placing an individual into the system must have a **reasonable suspicion** that the individual is participating in a criminal organization or enterprise, and that his association with known criminals is to further his own criminal conduct or that of the criminal enterprise. California state law, 186.22 PC (STEP ACT), establishes that street gangs are criminal enterprises or organizations; therefore, those individuals that meet established criteria for membership or criminal association are eligible for inclusion in the gang file.

Some of these characteristics are listed below, but one should not be limited to just these illustrations. A perceptive investigator will use all characteristics exhibited by the person to assist in classification of that person as a gang member. It is morally and ethically important that only those that meet the criteria for gang membership be included in any official gang file, and that the investigator not place in file those individuals not meeting the definition of a gang member. In California there is no specific requirement that a particular number of criteria be met by an individual to be included in the gang file, beyond the reasonable suspicion that an individual is involved in the gang activity of the criminal street gang. Many departments require that at least one of the below listed criteria be met before the individual is placed into gang files. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department demands that, at a minimum, two of the criteria be met before the person is placed into the Cal/Gangs gang file.

1. **When an individual admits membership in a gang.**  
The investigator should document each time a gang member admits his membership in a gang. Continuing and multiple admissions strengthen the officer identification of the subject as a gang member. This is particularly true when the admission is made to different officers at various times and dates. If the individual admits his membership during an in-custody classification interview as to jail placement and housing that admission will stand alone for inclusion in the gang file. Admission at any other time will serve only as one of the two required for input into file.
2. **When a reliable source or informant identifies an individual as a gang member.**  
The use of tested informants or reliable citizen contacts that identify a person as a gang member are very good forms of identification, but it is wise to further strengthen the identification with other qualified criteria and indicators of gang involvement. Included in this criteria is court ordered registration as a gang member such as is required by California Penal Code section 186.30.
3. **When an informant of previously untested reliability identifies an individual as a gang member, and identity is corroborated by independent information.** Untested informants absolutely require further criteria be established prior to submission.

4. **When an individual resides in, or frequents a particular gang's area, or affects their style of dress, use of hand signs, symbols, or tattoos, or maintains ongoing relationships with known gang members, and where the law enforcement officer documents reasonable suspicion that the individual is involved in gang-related activity or enterprise.**

When assessing the individual as a gang member, the investigators should look at the totality of the situation from the individual's demeanor and attitude to his usage of common gang slang and other gang-related symbols. Use of tattoos and other gang symbolism that show active participation and involvement within a gang structure. The officer should articulate what forms of identification he used to form his opinion and document that information on his report or Field Identification Report.

5. **When an individual has been arrested in the company of identified gang members for offenses which are consistent with usual gang activity.**

Subjects that are commonly found in the company of gang members and commit crimes while in that company are participating in gang activity and are acting as gang members, with the consent and obvious sanction of the gang. Therefore, they may be adjudged as a gang member by way of their participatory acts.

### **Relationship of Prison Gangs to Street Gangs**

Essentially, there has traditionally been very little relationship, in the sense that neither one is an extension of the other in any formal sense. From what evidence that has been found, it appears the street gang member is the future prospective raw material for the prison gang, and the majority of prison gang members were, at one time, members of either barrio, ghetto, or motorcycle gangs. The only other fact that is significant here is that since neighborhood ties are stronger than prison ties for most prospective prison gang members, the average ex-convict rejoins the street gang or outlaw motorcycle club he belonged to before entering prison.

Prison gang philosophy is very often diametrically opposed to that of the street gang. For example, loyalty is a primary requirement of both groups; but in the prison gangs, disagreements among members are many times settled by the murder of the offending member or members of his family. The killing of a home boy, on the other hand, is alien to most street gangs. When the street gang makes raids on rival gangs, the intent is not always to kill, per se, but to terrorize their rivals; but if the gang must kill to fulfill its aims, it will. The killing itself is secondary to the intent. While in a prison gang, the killing is of primary importance, with the terror, which the killing generates, as an added extra.

The street gang operates on pure emotion. Their planning is usually unsophisticated and spontaneous. Frequently, there isn't any one person selected to be a victim. The strike is against any member of the opposing gang, as the victim is not the target, but the gang itself. An attack on any gang member is an attack on the body of the gang as a whole; therefore, any member of the opposing gang will do.

A street gang member is too undisciplined and unsophisticated to be recruited directly into a prison gang. Prison gangs, with rare exception, seldom recruit from the street. The prison gang will wait

until the youthful offender has been seasoned by progression through the juvenile justice system from probation camps, youth authority training schools, and, finally, by incarceration in state prison.

A phenomenon which both youth authorities and prison officials have begun to note recently is a growing relationship between prison gangs and street gang members. The Mexican Mafia has begun to insert themselves into the daily business of the street gangs in Southern California, forcing certain conditions on the gangs that heretofore had not been an issue between the two entities. While there are street gangs that resist any pressure from the La EME, there are many that have acquiesced to their demands and are working in league with the prison based gang. One of the reasons that many of the street gang members acquiesce to the Mexican Mafia is that street gang members are consistently involved in criminal activity, and due to that activity tend to be arrested and incarcerated on a regular basis. During their incarceration the street gang members are subject to the will of the prison gangs and may be placed in mortal danger if they have opposed to the will of the Mexican Mafia.

Some prisons are reporting that certain street gangs have so many members at a particular institution that they are a force themselves. In fact, African-American street gangs tend to maintain their identity so well that the many separate factions of the Crip gangs from particular regions of Los Angeles; for example, combine to present a solid front of Crips against all other African-American gangs. New and powerful street gang organizations, such as the United Blood Nation (UBN), comprised of various factions of Blood street gangs, have become a significant force that authorities must contend with not only within the prisons, but on the streets as well.

## ***CHAPTER II - HISPANIC GANGS***

## **Introduction**

The structure of Hispanic street gangs is similar throughout the Western United States. Hispanic gangs have actually existed in Los Angeles County since the early years of this century. They are, as a group, very traditional and approach involvement in the gang as a "way of life," rather than random participation. Codes of conduct have been established from which traditions have evolved after generations of previous gang activity.

In the formative years, gangs developed certain styles of dress that affected their socialization into the surrounding communities and the developing Mexican-American community. These distinctive modes of dress alienated the gang member and, in many cases, his descendants from the rest of his community. This alienation established certain traditions that today have become known as the "movidas," or rules, Hispanic gangs live and die by.

The gangs basically began as local neighborhood groups that were oriented towards protection and self-preservation. By the late 1930's and early 40's, these Hispanic groups began to solidify into what we now recognize as street gangs. Gang rivalries evolved, and as gangs became larger, the rivalries grew in intensity, and gang violence increased. The earliest Chicano gangs established turf boundaries and rivalries that exist even to this day. Their loyalties to their turf are legendary, and much of the violence associated with the gangs can be directly related to this "turf protection" ideology.

In the past, Hispanic gang members considered themselves soldiers as they protected residents who lived in their turf from outside forces; however, today this is not the case. Many gang members rule their neighborhoods through fear and intimidation. They victimize the residents, the very people they say that they are protecting, and then threaten them if they report the crime to the police. The gang members threaten and intimidate witnesses in the same manner, making prosecution of the gang difficult. Gang intimidation does not always take the form of an overt threat; in many gang controlled neighborhoods the oppression of the gang is so insidious that the witness or victim does not even consider testifying as an option. They take the less lethal path of refusing to testify as a method of urban survival. In some neighborhoods the citizens live in a constant state of fear of the gang. To many gang members their neighborhood, this so-called turf, becomes their world, and they attempt to rule by subjugating the citizens. In some cases, gang members do not attend school because many of the schools are located outside their turf, and they must pass through turfs of rival gangs, which is dangerous.

A gang member is loyal to the death for his gang. He is proud, even boastful, of his membership. If, for some reason, the gang member's family moves from his home gang's turf, he will usually not exchange loyalties with a gang in his new home. The hardened gang member will either fight the local gang and return at every opportunity to his home gang's turf; if not, just refuse to move or run away from his family to live with fellow gang members in his home turf. Less hardcore gang members will return on weekends to hang with the home boys to demonstrate their loyalty.

In today's world, many of the Hispanic gang members come from respectable, hard-working, and honest families. Partying with gang members is popular with the female population, as it lends a sense of adventure and daring to their lives; therefore, young men will party with gang members to meet females providing an atmosphere ripe for recruitment. This is dangerous, as they are always

subject to becoming a victim from a rival gang, or they may be called upon to commit an illegal act against a rival gang. Another quality that attracts gang membership is the perceived popularity of being a gang member by certain elements of today's society.

Female gang members, by contrast, have no inherent right in the gang, but belong only at the sufferance of their male counterparts. This sufferance is maintained, however, only insofar as the females conform to the mores of their male counterparts. Females have their place within the gang structure and adhere strictly to that place. The female members are, by and large, separate cliques of the larger male gang. There also are very few female gangs that are totally separate entities.

Involvement in Chicano gangs has become a "hand-me-down" tradition. Many younger gang members have older family members that belong to the same gang. Chicano gangs are now into the third or fourth generation. For the most part, those reasons for joining gangs that attracted the early gang members still exist:

### **Reasons for Joining:**

- **A feeling of belonging** - Many gang members of all ethnic groups seek an identity. This is a result of low self-esteem and other factors that lead today's youth into gangs.
- **Identity** - Within the gang, you are a home boy, yet set apart from society. You are noticed and recognized and are usually given a moniker to re-enforce your identity, yet set you apart.
- **Lifestyle** - The lifestyle of a Chicano gang member is a "total" approach to life. Being a home boy is not random; it is the most important and dominant aspect of their life. It replaces the family in importance. The idea of gang involvement from the early "pachuco" to today's "cholo" is the crazy life. The "vato loco" is the epitome of the Chicano gang member. Their attitude is to be the craziest, most feared, respected gang member by whatever means necessary.

### **Drugs**

The drugs used by Chicano gang members are split along age groups. The older "veterano" is more likely to become involved with heroin, while the younger gang member is more inclined toward marijuana, crack cocaine, and methamphetamine (speed). Some gang members will still use PCP, but is not as common as it once was.

### **Style of Dress**

Traditionally, Chicano gang members have chosen to wear clothes that are distinct and set them apart. Khaki pants are worn by most gang members. The pants are heavily starched, usually worn high above the waist, and very baggy. Pendelton shirts have been the favorite of Chicano gang members, buttoned at the collar and otherwise unfastened. This style of dress is not as popular as it once was and is being worn less and less by the Los Angeles gangs. Gang members have replaced the traditional "Cholo" dress with the oversized levis, T-shirts, football jerseys, "Starter Jackets" and baseball caps. A popular indicator of gang membership is the military style of sliding belt buckle. The belt buckle will have the initials of the gang such as "MMV" for the Marianna Maravilla gang of East Los Angeles. In fact, this may be the only outwardly overt item of dress that points to gang membership.

## Language

Most Chicano gang members are second or third generation Americans that are not fluent Spanish speakers. They feel they are caught between two worlds without an identity. To further set themselves apart from the mainstream, they use a slang language that is a combination of Spanish and English called "calo."

## Monikers

Monikers are generally associated with physical features or personality of the individual gang member. It many times will take a form that matches the macho image that the member has or wishes to portray of himself. Similar monikers can be used by two members of the same gang if they belong to different cliques or by adding a numeric designator to the moniker such as Flaco II or Bear II. They may even further delineate the person's moniker by the addition of person's size, which may be more an indicator of age rather than size, such as Big John or Little John. As indicated, monikers are important to the gang member and are essential to the investigator's overall knowledge of the gang, as many times rivals, and in some cases even members of the same gang, only know the other gang member by his moniker. Examples of typical gang monikers are:

"Chato"- Nose	"Maton"- Killer	"Gordo"- Fat	"Shorty"	"Oso"- Bear
"Pelon" - Bald	"Flaco"- Skinny	"Pata"- Feet	"Wino"	"Toro"- Bull

## Gang Structure

Leadership roles in Hispanic gangs are not formally recognized positions. No one is elected president, Vice-President, King, or Prince, as they are in some Eastern gangs. Leadership positions are not usually assumed by any one individual on a permanent basis, but by any member who has demonstrated unique qualities of leadership needed by the gangs at a particular moment.

Chicano gangs function as one group with many "cliques," or subsets. These cliques are smaller groups of the gang whose members are similar in age or live within certain areas of the gang's turf. Some gangs will be so large that the members will not necessarily know all other members of the gang; therefore, the infamous question "Where are you from?" developed among the gang members. This was to prevent mistaken assaults upon fellow home boys or allied gangs. On the whole, these street gangs lack a solid infrastructure or chain of command and cannot operate efficiently as a total unit. Therefore, by necessity, they have divided themselves into groupings called cliques, normally formed according to age. A clique will have its own name, such as "Winos," "Locos," "Tiny Locos," and the like.

The gangs themselves usually adopt names that have some geographical significance (street names, valleys, hills, and occasionally old, traditional neighborhood or regional names) to their neighborhood. Examples would be "Maravilla" (regional), "18th" (street), "Lomas" (hills), or a combination such as "Geraghty Loma" (street and hill).

The following is an illustration of the Varrio Norwalk gang (VNWK) and the growth of its clique structure. This example is typical of the method on which most Chicano gangs are built.



Year / Clique

1970 - VNWK  
1973 - VNWK - Chicos  
1976 - VNWK - Termites  
1979 - VNWK - Enanos

Year / Clique

1981 - VNWK - Dukes  
1985 - VNWK - Tiny  
1988 - VNWK - Locos

There is an 18-year difference between the first and last clique of the Varrío Norwalk gang. Although the veterano and youngest gang members may have differences in choice of drugs and style of dress, the one thing that remains traditional is the gang itself. It is the most important aspect of their lives. They are both equally dedicated to its defense and upholding traditions.

**Graffiti**

To many members of the public, graffiti represents thoughtless vandalism or childish pranks. To the youth gang member, however, graffiti is a clear marking of territorial boundaries and serves as a warning and challenge to rival gangs. The purpose of all youth gang graffiti is to glorify the gang.

**Miscellaneous Information**

In recent times the Hispanic street gangs have, through the influence that the prison gangs have had on the incarcerated street gang member, divided the state into Northern and Southern California, similar to the legitimate political divisions that already exist. Hispanic street gangs south of Central California, roughly from Fresno or Bakersfield, to the Mexican Border, refer to themselves as Sureños (Southerners). Sureños sympathize with the Mexican Mafia (La EME). Gangs involved in the Sureño movement have adopted the numeric symbol 13 as an identifier for their gangs, and use the aka of Sur or Sur-13. Those gangs north of that demarcation line are known as Nortenos (Northerners), and use the numeric symbol of 14 as an identifier. The Nortenos affiliations or sympathies lie with the Nuestra Familia Prison gang, or as it has become known, the Northern Structure. Nortenos and Sureños are powerful forces within the Hispanic gang world and are mortal enemies.

There are gangs that have resisted the demands of the Mexican Mafia and have not complied to the imposed taxation and refuse to pay tribute or homage. The prime exception to the Sureño movement has been the Maravilla gang members of East Los Angeles. The Maravilla gangs are several gangs that inhabit an area known as Maravilla, which is located in the unincorporated area of East Los Angeles. These gangs will add the word Maravilla or “MV” to the end of their gang name such as Marianna Maravilla, Lote Maravilla, Arizona Maravilla, etc.

The Maravilla gangs do not recognize themselves as a part of the Sureño gang movement. They simply consider themselves Maravilla. Historically, the Maravilla gangs warred with one another as they did with any other gang. The umbrella organization of Maravilla was not a factor in their warfare, but with the resistance that developed toward the Mexican Mafia, they formed an alliance to stand against La EME and entered into a tenuous truce.

In the early 1990's the Mexican Mafia issued a edict which prohibited Hispanic street gangs from conducting drive-by shootings as the resulting publicity and police presence had begun to interfere with the narcotic trafficking of La EME. The Mafia also began to tax the local gangs a percentage of the money obtained from their drug sales, and encouraged those gangs that sold very little drugs

to begin sales in order to pay their taxes. The early results of this edict was a down-turn in drive-by shootings, but an increase in gang-related homicides as the Hispanic gangs began to do more walk-up shootings that produced more deaths due to the close ranges and stationary targets. La EME also ordered the Hispanic gangs to purge their gangs of those few African-American gang members that belonged to their gangs. This resulted in increased tensions between the races and several jail riots, along with school disturbances.

Gang migration from California to other states has historically been looked upon as a Black gang movement. Crips and Bloods have made their presence known across the country, but in recent years there has been a noticeable movement among the Hispanic gangs, in particular those gangs that considered themselves Surenos. Gang members that move into other states and meet up with fellow Californians tend to form into a homogeneous group and call themselves the "Surenos." These gangs have been reported across the country and along the eastern seaboard.

The Sureno gangs fight each other regularly, and two of the larger rival Sureno gangs, the Mara Salvatrucha and 18<sup>th</sup> Street, have cliques in Central American countries such as Mexico, El Salvador, and Belize, along with several other countries. 18<sup>th</sup> and the M.S. (Mara Salvatrucha) gangs are particularly ensconced in and around Washington D.C., Virginia, and New York. Other California based gangs or groups that affect the philosophical and criminal direction of the Hispanic gangs significantly are the Fresno Bulldogs, Sinaloan Cowboys, and the Border Brothers.

The Fresno Bulldogs are an old established traditional Hispanic gang found in the city of Fresno, California, and the surrounding area. The gang is very large and impacts the prison gang population. The Bulldogs are inclined toward the Surenos, but key members have tried to maintain their independence from either the Sureno or Norteno movements. While there are a few gangs within the state that use the title of Border Brothers as a gang name, the term refers to male inmates in the prison system that come from South of the U.S./Mexican border. Most of the prison inmates are not street gang members, but group together for protection and align themselves with the Surenos, in most cases.

Sinaloan Cowboys are people primarily from Mexico that are involved in sophisticated narcotic trafficking, and may or may not have ties to South or Central American Drug Cartels. They do not tend to belong to any street gang, but will associate with known Hispanic and African-American gang members to facilitate their drug business. There is no one organization known as the Sinaloan Cowboys, nor do they tend to be all from the Mexican state of Sinaloa. There are various criminal groups and independent operators who tend to get lumped into a conglomerate known as the Sinaloan Cowboys.

## **CHAPTER III - AFRICAN AMERICAN GANGS**

## **Introduction**

African American gang members are divided into two distinct and separate groups: "Bloods" and "Crips." There have been many explanations as to where the terms Crip and Blood originated and how these gangs evolved. Many gang experts and gang members profess a variety of opinions relating to their origins.

Some sources suggest that the word Crip is a mispronunciation of the word "Crib," which is a term used by gang members in the East Coast states. The word Crib is synonymous with one's home. Some sources suggest that it was derived by gang members after they had watched the movie, "Tales of the Crypt." Still, others say that a group of gang members had beaten a man so severely they had crippled him, and so the term Crip was coined. Another origin, one that has some evidence of being factual, is that the term Crip is a derivative of the word "cripple" that was used to describe one of the individuals given credit for being one of the founding fathers of the first Crip gang, who was crippled. Gang historians suggest that he suffered an injury in an automobile accident or had been born a cripple. One thing is certain, he had a crippled leg and walked with a discernible limp. It is said that other gang members emulated this unique way of walking, and soon all of these gang members were referring to one another as Crips. Throughout the 1970's, gang members frequently used the term "Crippin," walking as if one's leg was crippled. Crippin also referred to the seeking out of rival gang members to assault.

The origin of the term Blood is just as hard to identify as that of Crip. Blood gangs formed in response to the Crip gangs as rivals. The early rival gang to the Crips used their individual set names such as Bounty Hunters, Brims, Piru, or a host of local neighborhood names. There was no unifying name "Blood" at that time. These individuals would normally refer to themselves as Anti-Crips or Crip Killers. At some indistinct point in the mid-1970's these rival groups began to unite under the broad umbrella of Bloods, but maintained their individualistic set names.

Some sources suggest that gang members who referred to themselves as Bloods, a term adopted from the African American soldiers of the Viet-Nam war era, chose the color of blood as their identifying color. Still, others suggest simply that there were only two colors (red and blue) of handkerchiefs, or bandanas, in the late 1960's that were sold at local stores. The Crip gang members had already adopted the blue handkerchiefs, so the Blood gang members were left only one color to choose, that being the red handkerchiefs. There is evidence that suggests the color of red was chosen or used by the Piru gang members prior to the term Blood coming about. The variety of colors that these gangs identify with will be discussed in more detail later.

Blood and Crip gang members originated in the cities of Compton, Watts, and the Willowbrook area of Southeast Los Angeles in the late 1960's. The youngsters who lived on and in the area of Piru Street, which is a street passing through this particular geographical area, formed a gang, and its members referred to themselves as the Compton Piru gang. As gang membership increased, the Compton Piru gang broke up into many different factions of Blood, or Piru, street gangs. These gangs became known as West Side Piru, Fruit Town Piru, Leuders Park Piru, Mob Piru, Tree Top Piru, and many more.

In time, these Blood gangs, such as the Bounty Hunters, Brims, Denver Lanes, and many more, spread throughout Los Angeles County. Many gangs outside of this southeast part of Los Angeles will not refer to themselves as Piru, but identify themselves as Bloods. When asked if they are

Pirus, they respond they are not from Compton, but they are Bloods. However, the terms Piru and Blood are synonymous.

Just as the Blood gangs formed, the Crip gangs formed in the same manner. Crip gangs are given credit for forming slightly before Blood gangs, which is true as far as the umbrella name is concerned. However, there were African American gangs already in existence that became rivals of the newly formed Crip gang. The Crips in the cities of Willowbrook and Compton were known as the Compton Crips. Other Crip gangs formed in Watts and surrounding areas. As membership increased, these gangs broke up into many different factions, such as Santana Block Crips, Fudge Town Mafia, Corner Pocket Crips, Grandee Avenue Crips, Mona Park Crips, 62 East Coast Crips, and many more.

Prior to the existence of Blood and Crip street gangs, there were other African-American street gangs in Los Angeles County. Some of these gangs were the Townsmen, Gladiators, Valiants, Slauson Boys, Businessmen, and many more. These African-American gangs of the past were significantly different than the Crip and Blood gangs of today. These gangs did have certain neighborhoods they lived in; however, they didn't identify these geographical areas as their territory. They were more similar in nature to social groups. They did not engage in gang activity against other gang neighborhoods. In fact, the only characteristic that associated them as being a street gang is that they identified themselves with a common street name, and they lived within particular geographical boundaries. They did not identify their gang with colors, graffiti, or other present-day gang identifiers. They were loosely connected and not as well organized.

Many gang members portray themselves as experts in African American gangs, but their knowledge of gangs on any large scale is very limited. They are usually only experts in the particular gang they are a member of. They are familiar with their specific neighborhoods, but completely unaware of what is occurring on a state or national scale. Their historical renderings of the gangs is based on folklore, innuendo, and myths. The reality today is that we have Blood and Crip gangs throughout Los Angeles County and cities across the nation, no matter the source of their gang names or the exact meaning of the name. The numbers of these gangs and their membership have increased and are still growing.

African-American street gangs of Los Angeles have little established time-honored traditions. There are no set rules or guidelines beyond using certain colors or verbiage to identify their gang. The basic characteristics concerning these gangs are the same; however, different geographical areas locally and nationally have shown varying differences in their identifying characteristics.

### **Reasons and Types of Membership**

There are many different reasons why people join African American gangs. The reasons are really no different than why anyone joins a social group or organization. Most of the time we join a club or group because our friends and associates are members of these organizations. The same is true when it comes to gang membership. The major difference, of course, is that a street gang is involved in criminal activity. Peer group pressure is a very potent force. The members of these gangs are almost always friends who go to school together, play sports together, go to parties together, go on dates together, etc. If one or more persons in a group become a member of a street gang, there is a great deal of pressure and influence on their friends.

Identity is another strong reason that people become gang members. Most gang members have low self-esteem. Being a member of a gang gives certain characteristics of identification, such as a sense of power, belonging, unity, a special name, a certain type and style of clothing, and even a special language.

Over the years, African-American gangs mostly appeared and flourished in poverty and low-income areas. There have been gang members who have actually committed burglaries and robberies to obtain money to buy food. Today, we see African-American gangs appearing in middle and upper middle-class neighborhoods as well. Some become gang members because they like the "life" of a gang member. They enjoy committing crimes and fighting against other gangs. Others become members for financial gain. This can be through robberies, burglaries, or narcotics trafficking. Still, others become gang members for protection against other gangs.

Gang membership has increased over the years, and the gang has become more influential in the neighborhood. Many families are bringing up their children as members of the gang. In some instances, this has created an atmosphere where it is acceptable to be a gang member. Usually, it is a combination of these reasons that draws a person into the gang. Being a gang member is not like deciding if you are going to be a Republican or Democrat; it is "a way of life." The gang is actually an extension of the family.

A term or word which has permeated the gang world and judicial system is "wannabe." We seem to use the term wannabe when describing that person who wants to be a member of a particular gang, or a person who identifies or acts like a gang member but really isn't. This seems to be the commonly accepted definition. The fact is that there is no such thing as a wannabe. If a person is identifying with or acting like a gang member and desires to be a gang member, it is highly likely that in his mind's eye he depicts himself as a gang member and considers himself to be one. When a rival gang drives by to confront his gang, his defense of only being a wannabe will not spare him.

One level of membership is the gang member who will direct and lead others in gang violence against other gangs and the public. He is in the main flow of the gang's criminal activity and often referred to as a "shot caller," because he has some type of leadership or direction in the gang. He is usually older and has gained the respect of other members of the gang as a result of his past criminal behavior. There can be one or more people falling within this category.

A second level of membership is the gang member who is a part of the leaders but is also in the main flow of the gang's criminal activity. He is generally younger, but not always, and is trying to get respect within the gang by his criminal behavior. The majority of the members of the gang usually fall within this category.

The third level of membership is that person who hangs out with the members of the gang but is not directly involved with the gang's criminal activity. He may or may not be dressed in gang attire, but associates with members of the gang. Many people will say this person is not a member of the gang and that he is merely a wannabe or associate; but, in fact, as previously discussed, he is a member of the gang. He is aware of the gang's criminal activity and promotes or defends that activity. He associates with members of the gang by hanging out at the gang's gathering places and is often a victim of rival gang violence. The reality is, if you associate with gang members, dress, talk, and act like a gang member, you are, in fact, a gang member to those in the surrounding world.

There are a variety of ways to become a member of a gang. The most common method of being initiated into a gang is through a process of being "jumped in" or "courted in." This means that you may have to physically fight two or more members of the gang for approximately 15 to 60 seconds. If you fight well, show that you are not afraid, and can defend the honor of the gang, you are accepted as a member.

Another way to get into a gang is to commit a criminal act, such as stealing a gun for the gang or committing an assault against a rival gang. By doing this, you can avoid being beaten up for initiation. Then again, if your older brother or a relative is a leader or influential figure in the gang, you can become a member by simply blending in and avoiding going through the normal initiation process.

When a gang member decides he no longer wishes to be a member of a gang, the common process is referred to as being "jumped out" or "courted out." This means that he will have to fight two or more members of the gang for 15 to 60 seconds to be allowed to honorably leave the gang. It is not a prerequisite to fight well in this process, only to survive. However, not many gang members actually get jumped or courted out of the gang. More often than not, a gang member simply moves to another geographical area to end his gang membership.

The term "jumped," as used in the described process, is most commonly used among today's gang members. The term "courted" is a term used in the 1970's, which is not commonly used any more. In fact, many gang members today are totally unfamiliar with the term "courted."

### Ages

Prior to 1977-1978, the African-American gang member was between 13 and 17 years of age. When a gang member reached 18-19 years of age, he was no longer in the gang. When a gang member went to prison for his crimes, he was no longer in the gang upon his return to the community.

During this period of time, gang activity was somewhat restricted to specific communities. If a Crip gang member moved with his family to a community of a Blood gang, the Crip gang member merely became a Blood gang member. The same was true when a Blood gang member moved to the community of a Crip gang. It was common for a gang member to become a member of the gang in his new neighborhood. Most gang members are unaware of this, and those who do know will not freely admit it.

It was common for drive-by shootings to occur on bicycles or on foot. The mobility of the gang member during this period of time was limited due to their age. The gang member did not own or have access to a motor vehicle and was not old enough to obtain a driver's license.

Beginning around 1978, there was a change in the age group of African American gang members. Now, when a gang member reaches 18-21 years of age, he remains in the gang. When he returns from prison to the community, he retains his gang membership. These older gang members are looked up to by the younger members of the gang and are role models.

Because of the age of the gang member at this point in time, his mobility increased dramatically. He was now old enough to own a vehicle, or have access to one, and obtain a drivers license. Because of this mobility factor, we find that it was not uncommon for gang members to travel significant distances to engage a rival gang. This new mobility allowed a gang member to move to

rival gang neighborhoods and retain his gang membership from his old neighborhood. In this situation, we find that the gang member spends most of his time in his old neighborhood, rather than his new home. If he has a problem with a gang in his new neighborhood, he needs only to summon his fellow gang members for any support he might need.

Today, a gang member may be as old as 40 and as young as 8 or 9 years of age. The emergence of narcotics has had a major impact on gang membership. Many people become members of a gang because of the profits that can be made in the trafficking of cocaine. There have been people beginning their gang membership at the age of 25, solely for the financial gain in trafficking cocaine.

## **Hierarchy**

We find that, in most organizations or groups, there is a defined position for their leaders, such as president, vice-president, etc. This is not the case when dealing with African-American gangs. The structure is much less organized and informal. There is not a single person or group of persons controlling the gang.

The leader-type person, or "shot caller" of the gang, more often than not, is the person who has the most money, nicest car, most women, and has gained the respect of the gang through some type of criminal act or behavior. This person usually has some type of leadership skills and degree of intelligence, or he would not have been able to acquire these things.

Usually, an African-American gang is divided into several different groups, according to their age. The gang members of similar age usually hang out with one another. These groups may fall within the following categories: 30-40 years of age, 20-30 years of age, 16-20 years of age, and 10-16 years of age. With these different groups, there may be several people falling within the role of this leader-type person.

In some gangs, the older, leader-type persons have a large amount of influence over members of the gang. This influence extends to all age ranges within the gang, from the oldest to the youngest. This has been seen in the Santana Block Crip and Grape Street Watts Crip gangs.

African-American gangs may have as few as five to ten people in the gang, or as many as 800 to 1,000. It was pointed out to an Anzac-Grape Street Crip gang member recently (1991), by a gang investigator, that the number of members in his gang had drastically been reduced from 3 to 10 as a result of gang violence. This gang member replied, "It only takes two; one to drive and one to shoot!" This attitude was indicative of how deeply rooted the gang life is.

## **Identifying Characteristics**

Members of African-American gangs identify their gang membership with certain colors of clothing. Blood gang members use red, while Crip gang members use blue. These colors will be reflected or represented in their headgear, earrings, shoelaces, handkerchiefs, belts, or bandanas, and sometimes in their vehicles. Usually, the only blue that a Blood gang member will wear is in Levi pants. Other than this, a Blood gang member will try to avoid wearing anything blue. Usually, a Crip gang member will not wear anything red.

Over the years, many gangs have adopted other colors, such as green, purple, African-American and brown, to signify their membership. In the Southeast Los Angeles area, green signifies being a



member of a Blood gang. This is the result of an extremely active gang known as Lime Hood Piru. This particular gang will wear green Boston Celtic attire and just about anything that is green. In other areas of Los Angeles County, green may not signify membership in a Blood gang, but may instead be associated with money and/or a Crip gang.

In recent years, the Grape Street Watts gang has made purple, in addition to blue, an identifying color for their gang. They will commonly wear Los Angeles Lakers attire. Several gangs have adopted brown, as well as blue, to signify their gang membership. Two of these gangs are Fudge Town Mafia and Spook Town Crips. One gang, known as the Santana Block Crips, has come to identify themselves with the color of African American.

Many African-American gang members will avoid wearing traditional colors in their neighborhoods to avoid attention by law enforcement. For this reason, Crip and Blood gang members will sometimes wear both blue and red, or neutral, clothing. This especially occurs when they are trafficking cocaine. Gang members who travel out of state to traffic cocaine usually wear some type of expensive sweat suit that may have both red and blue in it, or it may be neutral in color.

In past years, the Los Angeles Raiders and Kings caps and jackets have been worn by Blood, Crip, and non-gang members. The present-day, or current, wearing of such attire in African-American gang communities in Southeast Los Angeles is usually worn by Crip and non gang members. There are gang communities within Los Angeles County where Bloods still wear such attire, but it is fading out. In many communities, non-gang members have been robbed of this Raiders and Kings apparel by Crip gang members.

Another item which has become an article of wear signifying Crip gang membership is British Knights tennis shoes. The monogram on the side of these shoes is "BK," which means Blood Killer in gang terminology. Many Crip gang members wear British Knights tennis shoes to show that they are members of a Crip gang, and enemies of Blood gangs.

African-American gang members will wear the name of their gang, monikers, and the monikers of slain gang members on their headgear, shirts, and jackets.

One may find that when you experience gang members in other states, and even in other counties in California, their attire may vary or be drastically different than what has been described. This difference is often the result of local persons trying to emulate Los Angeles County-based street gangs. It is also often the influence of a gang member who has moved from the Los Angeles area.

Unique problems have occurred within various schools in Los Angeles County concerning school colors and students' gang membership. During physical education classes, it is customary that the student wear trunks that reflect the colors of the school. There have been occasions where Crip gang members refused to dress for class because the trunks were red, and Blood gang members refused because the trunks were blue.

There has been at least one school in Los Angeles County which has adopted a mandatory uniform for all students, which is a neutral color, to circumvent this problem and neutralize gang identification. Most schools that have experienced problems with gangs have found it necessary to establish dress codes to avoid gang identification. Many schools have strict rules against wearing gang attire.

African American gang members use a variety of terms and words to express their gang membership. They use terminology to indicate whether they are a Crip or Blood, and to identify what specific street gang they are a member of. Crip gang members identify themselves and greet one another with the word "cuz," which comes from the word cousin. The first letter of the word is "C," which is the first letter in the word "Crip." For example, a Crip gang member will greet another Crip gang member in this manner, "Hey cuzz, what it C like?" which basically means what's going on or what's happening? Another term used by Crip gang members is "BK," which means "Blood Killer." This simply means that you are a Crip gang member and you kill Blood gang members. A Crip gang member will usually avoid, if possible, using the letter "B" when talking and writing.

Blood gang members identify themselves and greet one another with the word Blood or Piru if they are from Compton, Watts, or the southeast portion of Los Angeles. The word Piru is synonymous with Blood. Both words are interchangeable, although many Blood gang members in other areas don't refer to themselves as a Piru. The word Piru comes from a street which passes through the city of Compton and the Willowbrook area of Southeast Los Angeles. The first Blood gang members actually resided on this street (Compton Piru and West Side Piru) and came to be known as Pirus to rival Crip gang members.

As time passed, Piru gang members referred to themselves as Bloods. Another term used by Blood gang members is "CK," which means "Crip Killer." This simply means that you are a Blood gang member, and you kill Crips. A Blood gang member will usually avoid, if possible, using the letter "C" when talking and writing. A Blood gang member will greet another Blood gang member in this manner, "Hey Blood, what it B like?" which simply means what's going on or what's happening?

It is quite common for gang members of school age to write their gang monikers and slogans on their homework assignments and school material. Students who are Blood gang members have actually handed in their homework assignments with the letter "B" substituted for the letter "C" throughout their paper. In addition, they placed the name of their gang at the top of the paper, along with their moniker. The same is true of Crip gang members substituting the letter "C" for "B."

There are many terms commonly used by Bloods and Crips alike. One of the most used terms is "OG," which means "original gangster." This refers to a person who has been a member of the gang for a long time or who has experience. However, it is not uncommon for young gang members, as young as 12-14 years of age, to refer to themselves as "OG." This term is synonymous with the Hispanic term, "veterano."

An African-American gang member will refer to his gang as a "set." The words "set" and "gang" are synonymous. One gang member may inquire of another gang member, "What set are you from?" or "Where you from?" He is actually asking what gang he is a member of. Another word used by Bloods and Crips is "hood." This word actually refers to neighborhood, or again, what gang you are from. The words hood and gang are synonymous.

African-American gang members refer to their firearm as a "gat." A "G-ride" is a stolen car, with the letter "G" referring to "grand" theft auto. The term "cluckhead" is a person who smokes rock cocaine. A "cluck bucket" is a vehicle temporarily traded to a gang member for a rock of cocaine. The term "cluck" is attached to any item that is traded for rock cocaine. A gang member may refer to his gat (firearm) as a "duece-duece" (.22 caliber), "tray eight" (.38 caliber) or "gauge" (sawed-off

shotgun). Gang members often refer to their drive-by shooting as a mission. When a gang member uses the term "gang bang," it refers to fighting with rival gangs.

Blood and Crip gang members use certain terms to insult one another. For instance, a Blood gang member will call a Crip gang member a "crab." A Crip gang member will call a Blood gang member a "slob." If a Blood gang member approached a Crip gang member and stated, "Hey crab, what it B like?" this would be a direct challenge to fight. The same is true if a Crip gang member approached a Blood gang member and said, "Hey slob, what it C like?" another word used by Blood gang members to insult Crip gang members is "E-Rickette."

Gang members will often mispronounce or change the letters in a rival gang's name to insult the gang. For instance, Blood gang members call Hoover Crips "Snoovers" and East Coast Crips "Cheese Toast." Crip gang members will call Bounty Hunters "Booty Holes" and Swans "Slims."

The important thing to remember about gang terminology is that it may vary according to different geographical areas. It is also important to know that an African-American gang member considers himself a "gangster," as opposed to a Hispanic gang member considering himself a "soldier," for his neighborhood.

African-American gang members identify their gang membership through a variety of hand signs, commonly referred to as "flashing." A Crip gang member will form a "C" with his fingers, generally by curling the thumb and index finger. He may also make this letter "C" by curling all of his fingers together, separated from his thumb. A Blood gang member will curl the index, so it touches the thumb, and point the remaining three fingers so that it forms a "P," representative of the word Piru or Blood. Almost all Crip and Blood gangs use these two hand signs to designate whether they are a Crip or Blood. Many gangs contort their fingers into other symbols or letters to indicate what specific street gang they are a member of. It is not unusual for a Crip to challenge a Blood by flashing a Crip hand sign to him and vice versa.

African-American gangs are very territorial and identify their geographical boundaries with graffiti to show it is that particular gang's "turf." Gang members will write their gang name, their monikers, names of their slain fellow gang members, names of gangs they are fighting, and gang slogans on residential walls, businesses, fences, poles, trees, sidewalks, and just about anything they can write on. In some areas of Los Angeles County, it is not uncommon for some African-American gangs to have a Hispanic gang member write the gang's graffiti on the wall, as Hispanics are noted for their detailed and intricate printing.

The final identifying factor concerning African-American gangs is their tattoos. They often tattoo themselves with the name of their gang, their moniker, names of slain fellow gang members, and gang slogans. Most tattoos are on the arms and upper torso. It is not uncommon for African American gang members to have Hispanic gang members place tattoos on them. As in graffiti, Hispanic gang members are noted for their delicate and intricate tattoos.

Three letters commonly written on walls of gang neighborhoods and tattooed on bodies of gang members are "RIP." This simply refers to a fallen member of the gang and means "Rest In Peace."

African-American gangs actually learned how to gang bang from Hispanic gangs, as Hispanics were involved in gang conflicts long before the formation of Crip and Blood gangs. In many African-American gang neighborhoods, Hispanic gang influence can be seen. Some African-American

gangs have recruited Hispanics as members. Some examples of this are in the Santana Block Crips, Leuders Park Piru, Lime Hood Piru, and Grape Street Watts gangs.

This influence can be seen in the clothes, graffiti, tattoos, and terminology of African-American gangs. We find that many African-American gangs dress like Hispanic gang members with hairnets, cut-off pants, and pendletons. These African American gang members will also, when writing graffiti, use the Hispanic method of listing all of the members of the gang and use "clouds" to signify the death of a fellow gang member.

### **Enemies**

All Blood gangs fight against Crip gangs. The two factions seldom get along with one another. The only exception to this rule has occurred in recent years, as a result of cocaine trafficking. It seems that, when large sums of money are involved, some Crip and Blood gang leaders have found that they can get along in the world of business.

Crip gangs fight against Crip gangs. Some Crip gangs are on friendly terms with other Crip gangs and unite together in their gang violence against other gangs. However, it is unusual for Blood gangs to fight against Blood gangs. Bloods are greatly outnumbered by Crips, in both number of gangs and amount of membership. Bloods have found it necessary to join closely together to defend themselves against Crips. A new trend, which has occurred in various areas of Los Angeles County since the early part of 1990, is gang violence between African-American and Hispanic gangs. In the past, African-American and Hispanic gangs coexisted in the same neighborhoods for years without confrontations of any kind. Most of these confrontations have been over territory, and some have been over narcotics.

When we talk about the number of members within a African American gang, it can vary greatly. There are African-American gangs in Los Angeles County that have between 800-1,000 members, while there are others with as few as five members. These larger gangs are broken up into varying age groups and activities.

### **Loyalty**

It has been said that, in past years, loyalty within African-American gangs was nonexistent. This was, and still is, true in many gangs. However, with the increase of age and membership in these gangs, gang loyalty has increased dramatically. Many members of these African-American gangs have moved to other cities, counties, and states, and have retained their gang loyalty. Many of these gang members have continued their gang lifestyles in these new communities.

### **Female Membership**

If one was to talk with a so-called female African-American gang member, it would be thought that the female plays a major role in African-American gangs. The reality is that females play an extremely minor role. There are just a handful of females who actually participate in the activity of these gangs. It is rare to find a female that has actually been "jumped in" to the gang. They rarely hide suspects, narcotics, or firearms for gang members. There have been a few female African-

American gang members who have participated in gang violence against rival gangs, but the number is not remotely proportionate to African- American male participation in the gang.

In some of the most hard-core Crip gang neighborhoods, you can find females wearing red attire. These same females will say they are members of the local Crip gang, however, evidence has shown this not to be so. The same is true in some of the most hard-core Blood neighborhoods. The females will wear blue attire and identify themselves as being Blood gang members.

### **Narcotics**

Prior to 1981, African-American gangs were not involved in cocaine trafficking to any great extent. Some were involved in trafficking phencyclidine and marijuana during this period. However, they did not travel out of state to sell their narcotics, and the drugs were basically sold within the Los Angeles County area.

African-American gangs began to get involved in cocaine trafficking in the latter part of 1981. The sales were basically within the Los Angeles County area. When it was learned that tremendous profits could be made in other cities and states, African-American gang members expanded their businesses to these areas. When doing so, they almost always went to a place where they had relatives or past acquaintances. The basic form of cocaine that they were involved in was "rock" or "crack." Gang members converted powder cocaine to "rock" form because they could double, and sometimes triple, their investment.

Some of the gangs that initially became involved in the trafficking of cocaine in other states were the Grape Street Watts Crips, Santana Block Crips, and West Side Piru. In time, many gangs became involved in this pattern of selling cocaine. Today, almost all African-American gangs in Los Angeles County sell cocaine at some level.

Prior to 1981, the cost of a kilo of cocaine in Los Angeles County was approximately \$55,000 to \$65,000. By 1984, a kilo of cocaine could be purchased for approximately \$12,000 to \$16,000. The supply level of cocaine had increased dramatically, and the price had dropped.

Just as in all illegal transactions where large sums of money and profits are involved, the gang member soon realized he had to justify his sudden wealth. Gang members began to invest their drug profits into auto repair and detailing, stereo shops, and a variety of other businesses to launder their drug money. They invested this money in businesses in Los Angeles County and in other States. Some gangs were now bordering on the edge of being classified as organized crime.

When these gangs initially began selling rock cocaine in their gang neighborhoods, the places of transaction were commonly referred to as "rock houses." The house would be the gang member's home or a rented home. Some gang members would rent several homes, or even pay a family, for this purpose. The gang member would almost always have security bars placed on the windows and doors to prevent law enforcement officers from entering the residences quickly, enabling the gang members or occupants to dispose of evidence. Large amounts of cocaine, as much as one to one and one-half kilos, were often kept at these residences.

These gang members soon learned how to avoid law enforcement and developed new methods of handling and selling cocaine. The use of pagers, beepers, and cellular telephones made it more difficult to detect their activities. Now, gang members hide their cocaine in several places, never

keeping the supply in one spot. When they are detected by law enforcement, they lose only a small portion of their cocaine and money.

In Los Angeles County, a gang member of any age, as young as 12 or as old as 35, may be selling cocaine. Some of these people are selling for another member of the gang, and others, for their own profit. Many gang members sell cocaine on a consignment or commission basis. This person receives a percentage, usually 50%, of what he sells.

The gang members use warning systems to alert fellow gang members of the presence of law enforcement when they sell cocaine on the street. When a gang member sees a patrol unit approaching, he will shout "One time!" or "Two times!" to indicate how many units are coming. Another term used, or shouted, to alert fellow gang members is "911." These persons, acting as "look-outs," are paid for their services in cocaine or money.

Gang members have adapted in other manners to avoid detection by law enforcement. They will avoid wearing gang-identifying clothing and colors. Sometimes, they will wear the colors of red and blue in their clothing to show that they are not gang members. Most of these gang members wear clothing that is neutral in color. This could be any color other than red or blue.

Gang members who are traveling out of state to other cities also try to hide their gang affiliation from law enforcement. They use a variety of transportation methods, including the airlines, bus systems (Greyhound Lines), Amtrak (rail), rental vehicles, Federal Express, and rental families. One must be careful to avoid profiling legitimate travelers. However an officer, utilizing his training, that takes into account the general description of the gang member and his associated activities, mingled with the gang mentality and attitude may be able to establish, based on a reasonable suspicion, the required criminal predicate that the individual is involved in criminal activity. Some of the common identifiers of illicit narcotic and associated criminal activities are as follows:

- Attire is often an expensive sweat suit, not displaying gang colors.
- He is usually between the ages of 20-25 years old.
- He may be accompanied by a female.
- He almost always has no identification.
- Almost all of his transactions will be in cash, and he will have large sums of money on his person.
- He will usually be wearing expensive jewelry.
- His hair will be closely cut or well groomed.
- Most of his business will be done out of local motel rooms.

The profits from the sales of cocaine are not distributed throughout the gang, as one would believe. The profits are not for the benefit of the gang as a whole. One or more persons, who are leader-type individuals, may control several trafficking networks within the same gang. These persons are often referred to as "high rollers." Each of these persons may have as many as three or four trusted persons who work alongside him in the distribution of the drug. In return for this trust and commitment, they are taken care of financially.

## ***CHAPTER IV- ASIAN GANGS***

## **Asian Gangs Overview**

This brief overview is intended to provide deputies, engaged in street enforcement activities with a practical understanding of the organization and characteristics of Asian gangs active in Los Angeles County. As with any criminal group, one will encounter individuals and specific situations which do not fit the general pattern of gang activities outlined herein. Field deputies should be alert to exceptions in specific situations and rely on their observations and experience in the interest of officer safety and successful prosecution of suspects.

Asian gangs are frequently termed non-traditional when compared to street gangs of other ethnic groups. They are commonly referred to as organized criminal groups involved in street crimes. Most have financial profit as their primary goal. Many have national and international ties. Membership behavior codes are well defined and rigidly enforced. Acts of violence are not as random and are less frequent than with traditional gangs. Asian gang violence is committed primarily to achieve group goals. Secrecy and remaining anonymous to law enforcement is a constantly sought goals. Despite these aspects, much is known about Asian gangs. Asian gangs also share many characteristics of traditional gangs, such as territoriality, dress, graffiti, gang rivalries, etc., though these aspects are not always as obvious and are of less importance than with the traditional gangs.

### **Territory/Turf**

With Asian gangs, "turf" is less rigid and fluctuates. An Asian gang thinks of territory in terms of its victim population (victims usually of the same ethnic group as the gang preying on them). Acts of violence, due to gang rivalries, are infrequent, as activity which does not obtain monetary gain is regarded as pointless.

If, as is the case, Koreans begin migrating to the valley, a Korean gang will regard the valley as within its area of operations. In Chinatown, the "Wah Ching" (Cantonese Chinese) gang is the dominant group and regards Chinatown as its territory. During the early 1980's, the "Viet Chings" (Vietnamese of Chinese ethnicity) became active in Chinatown, and it was informally split into a southern section having a large number of Vietnamese businesses, and the northern area containing predominantly Cantonese Chinese businesses. The purpose of the division was to avoid conflicts that would result in warfare and consequently divert energy from the extortions and robberies that produce income.

Turf for Asian gangs is best regarded in terms of the locations and population clusters where the gangs' victim population (generally its own ethnic group) resides and/or owns businesses. Turf doesn't recognize municipal boundaries.

### **Identification**

Each Asian gang has its unique characteristics. Although the average age is between 16 and 25, Asian gangs may be found as young as 10 and as old as 40 and older. Hairstyles may be spiked or pompadour style, or the stereotype college student look. Clothing is most often the up-to-date styles (baggy look, fatigues, or college student look).



Tattoos and burn scars are often an indicator of gang affiliation; however, they are not to be counted on. Older hard-core gang members are most likely going to be the ones with the tattoos. These tattoos are usually symbols of power (dragons, tigers, eagles, sailing ships, etc.), and although they may not mean anything to Western society, tattoos have some significance in the intimidation of victims.

It should be remembered that, unlike attitudes in the West, tattoos for the most part by Asians are regarded as degrading. Most scars associated with Asian gang members are usually of the cigarette burn type and depending on the specific gang, mean different things (initiation, victory in a fight, or ranking). These scars are usually found on the hands, wrists, forearms, or the lower legs, depending on the specific gang.

### **Graffiti**

Graffiti is of minor significance to most Asian street gangs. It is not of any practical use, as it serves no purpose in achieving their monetary motives, their desire for secrecy, or maintenance of a low profile to the law enforcement community. The sophistication of these gangs varies from loosely organized street thugs to international criminal cartels. Their crimes cover the whole gambit of typical violent gang-related crimes to organized drug and theft rings. Generally speaking, the Asian gang crimes tend to be monetary motivated, but if challenged, they will react with violence just as any other street gang would.

### **Filipino Gangs**

Gang activity in the Philippines began in the 1940's, in the prison system. As members left prison, they banded together to control the Black market of Manila. Gangs such as "Sige-Sige" and "OxO" were formed. Approximately 10 years later, these gangs were heavily recruiting Filipino youths in an attempt to keep control of their gains. New gangs such as "Sputniks" (Sige-Sige) and "Crossbones" (OxO), as well as "Bahala Na Gang" and "Tres Cantos," were formed. Some of these gangs exist in the United States today.

In the mid-1970's, the emergence of several new gangs was apparent in Los Angeles County. Immigration to the United States from the Philippines had increased in the late 1970's and early 1980's, due to political unrest. The diversity of cultures and dialects in the Islands (approximately 2,000 inhabited islands, speaking 89 languages), coupled with the increased migration to the United States, caused the different cultures to be mixed together in the established Filipino communities here.

The youth that attended schools locally were faced with "street gangs" (as we relate the term to the occidental or African-American and Hispanic gangs) for the first time, as well as cultural confrontations. Some of the youth subsequently reverted to a system known as "Barkada," which allows the youth to meet together in groups of several members for the purpose of socializing.

Unfortunately, many groups call themselves by a name, as well as give each other nicknames. This was interpreted by both the occidental gangs as well as established Filipino gangs as "gang activity." The youth in the Barkada system then began their own means of protection, self-preservation, and retaliation. This was the birth of the Filipino gangs we see in California today.

Filipino gang members have had excellent role models in the African-American and Hispanic. They have learned how to dress, talk, and disguise themselves in nicknames. They have learned the business aspects

of dealing in stolen cars, guns, and narcotics. Further, they have learned to be "territorial" versus "turf"-oriented so as not to be "preyed" upon by other gangs.

Much the same as in the traditional gangs, Filipinos have family members in the gangs with them. These members are brothers, sisters, cousins, as well as neighbors and school friends. Further, the members may belong to different gangs (both allied and rival) while living in the same household. Different age groups will form different "sets" or "cliques" amongst their own friends, while still identifying with the "parent" gang.

### **Dress**

The Filipino gang member will generally dress in the current fashion. Some "sets" have shown descriptive traits, such as wearing African-American, 3/4 length trench coats, while others may wear all white shirts and pants or have a "uniform" type of appearance. Generally speaking, these kids look very neat, clean, and fashionable.

### **Vehicles**

The vehicles of choice are the newer, imported Japanese cars, which have been lowered, windows tinted, and have nice sound systems installed. They may have flared fenders and louvered back windows. This holds true for the mini pick-up trucks, again with the lowered suspension, tinted windows, and usually with wide tires and polished wheels. These trucks may or may not have shells on the back and may have truck club logos in the windows. However, not all Filipino gang members own cars, so they will drive virtually anything that their parents or relatives own.

### **Tattoos**

The overt physical identifiers that we associate with gang members are most notably tattoos. Since there is no one tattoo that all gang members have, there are certain things to look for when dealing with them. An innocent "+" on the left middle finger of one person may not mean much; yet, if all of his friends have one, it could be an indicator. One gang tattoos their personal initials on the inside of their left index finger. Another gang has a complete logo that is usually tattooed somewhere on the right side of their bodies. It can be anywhere from their calf to their shoulder.

Another identifier that has come to our attention is the cigarette burn mark. These burns can be located anywhere on the body but generally have been located somewhere on the hands (i.e., palm, back, or web). These marks appear to be a mark of courage or "machismo," and generally, the more marks the person has, the worse or "crazier" he is. These marks have appeared more frequently in the younger male and female gang members and are generally worn by the self-proclaimed "hard-core" gang member.

### **Weapons**

With the increase in membership of the Filipino street gangs and their sophistication, there has also been an increase in the weaponry that we are seeing. The weapons being seized by law enforcement are no longer limited to "balisongs" (or butterfly knives) and clubs, but are shotguns, rifles, and handguns. The ammunition for the rifles has been everything from light target type rounds to full jacketed military ammunition. The handguns are both small and large caliber, with the "automatics" being favored. It would appear that the gang member will use any gun that he can access. Due to the increasing market

in weapons, theft and resale is an extremely profitable business. Further, gang members have been seen at military bases attempting to trade drugs for weapons (including hand grenades) with servicemen.

### **Graffiti**

The graffiti of the Filipino gang member is very similar to that of the African-American or Hispanic in its design, as well as its usefulness to law enforcement. The gang's initials will appear on the walls in its neighborhood area, as will the names of some of its members and sometimes an alliance or rivalry. The Filipino gang member may have both the fantasy and cartoon type character name or nickname (resembling the Hispanic gang member), i.e., Sinbad or Aladdin, or he/she may have a gangster or Circa 1920's type name (resembling the African American gang member), i.e., Capone or Trigger.

### **Summary**

The Filipino gangs here have evolved from proud, well-educated and semi-to-very affluent families. Gangs not only terrorize their own neighborhoods, but will travel up to 50 miles to commit crimes in other Filipino communities. As we have seen recently, Los Angeles County gangs currently have subsets in Hawaii, San Francisco, Seattle, Las Vegas, and San Diego. With the mobility gang members have, now is the time to utilize the resources available, identify gang members in your area, and get the appropriate community assistance you need.

### **Chinese Gangs**

The "Bamboo" (Mandarin-speaking member from Taiwan) gang is well organized, with approximately 40,000 members in Taiwan. United Bamboo (Chu Lien Bon) is a collective, or umbrella, term for approximately 20 gangs. It is active in Los Angeles County, preying primarily on Taiwanese immigrants. The leaders attempt to purchase legitimate businesses to accommodate their money laundering, employment for members, and to present a facade of respectability.

The Wah Ching gang is comprised of primarily Cantonese Chinese who are active not only in California, but also in Washington and Canada. The members tend to be youthful, illegal immigrants that prey upon legitimate Chinese businessmen. The gang members are noted for extortion rackets and drug trafficking. Much of the media attention on Asian gang violence has been as a result of the activity of this gang, as the membership is known to be particularly violent.

### **Vietnamese Gangs**

Vietnamese gangs are active in welfare fraud, auto theft, commercial burglaries, and extortion. The membership is young and predominately "new wave" in their dress. Vietnamese gang members are opportunistic and will jump to another group for real or imagined personal slights and the promise of financial gain and peer respect. Vietnamese gangs are becoming increasingly sophisticated in extortions and have long been very adept at robbery. In recent years, Vietnamese gangs have become hired "muscle" for the more sophisticated Chinese gangs.

Like Chinese and Korean gangs, the Vietnamese prefer high quality firearms, including AR-15's and UZI submachine guns. Nearly all robberies of Vietnamese are perpetrated by Vietnamese gang members, just as most other ethnic Asian street crimes are committed by gang members of that ethnic group. Vietnamese robberies are almost always done with the advance knowledge of money and/or jewelry to

be found at the premises. Vietnamese gang robberies are carefully planned, with individual assignments allocated during the robbery.

Occasionally, they will even photograph the location as part of the planning. Tape or pre-cut rope lengths may be used to tie victims, and lookouts are often posted for approaching police units. Vietnamese robbery suspects are prepared to shoot it out with police and have done so on most occasions when the robbery is interrupted by the arrival of the police during the event.

A new Vietnamese trend is for a small group of Vietnamese to specialize in one or two financially productive crimes (GTA, robbery, etc.), traveling to several communities, wherever the information as to opportunities indicates good targets. These groups don't assume group names and may be separate from any larger gang or comprise a cell within a larger group.

### **Korean Gangs**

Although very little is known about Korean gangs, it is believed that most of their activities are similar to that of the Chinese and Vietnamese. It is believed, however, that there exists, in the United States, a nationwide organization which deals exclusively with prostitution. The organization strictly exploits young Korean and Vietnamese women. These women for the most part are tricked and lured into prostitution through false promises by a few older Korean women. These older Korean women, whom we term recruiters, have found that by using their fierce loyalty in their culture, they can make large profits for a small investment.

### **Japanese Organized Crime (Yakuza)**

Until now, Yakuza activity in the United States has been thought to consist mainly of obtaining contraband for shipment to Japan and maintaining and developing business investments in Hawaii and California. Commission research has revealed, however, that Yakuza members are involved with factions of La Costa Nostra in East Coast gambling operations catering to wealthy Japanese businessmen. This development represents a serious escalation of Yakuza activity in the United States.

For at least 20 years, Yakuza members have invested in U.S. businesses in an attempt to hide their illegally earned capital from the scrutiny of the Japanese government. In the 1960's, Japanese Yakuza groups bought into enterprises in Hawaii, both legitimate businesses and massage parlors and pornography. More recently, Yakuza interests in the Los Angeles area have included import/export concerns, real estate, oil leases, night clubs, restaurants, gift shops and tour agencies. At least three Yakuza groups are known to be active in the Los Angeles area. Police in San Francisco, Las Vegas, and Denver have also reported Yakuza activity in their areas.

## ***CHAPTER V - MISCELLANEOUS GANGS***

## **White Gangs**

Generally, White youth express their delinquent behavior in individual acts of criminality not within the street gang milieu. The White delinquent is not usually from a family situation that has consistent residency in a particular neighborhood long enough to form the strong friendships or dependence on his fellow delinquents that is required to establish a viable street gang. Those White youth that do join gangs many times join other ethnic gangs such as Hispanic or multi-racial gangs already established in the community.

Some White youth have chosen to involve themselves in the Skinhead movement that began in England in the early 1960's. American Skinhead groups are noted for their close ties to the White Supremacist movement and have been linked to the American Nazi Party, KKK, and other militant racist groups.

Skinhead youth seem to come from as similar circumstances and family structures as other ethnic gang members. The Skinhead group provides a surrogate family for the prospective recruit much like other gangs. The member will find fellow home boys that advocate philosophies and attitudes similar to his.

Skinhead groups are generally divided two categories known as racist or non-racist. The racist Skins advocate White supremacy through violent action, while the non-racist Skins have a multi-racial membership and adhere to the Skin movement because of the music and dress. The racist and non-racist Skins are rivals and are known to have violent confrontations. Skinheads are involved in all levels of criminality, particularly violent behavior, which has become their trademark. Hate crime against minorities is a common thread running through the racist Skin movement.

Skinheads adopt a particular style of dress that includes closely cropped hair or shaved heads, Air Force-style flight jackets, dark colored jeans, suspenders, and "Doc Marten" steel-toed boots. The Neo-Nazi Skinheads affect Nazi tattoos and emblems such as swastikas, lightning bolts, and iron crosses.

The practice of the occult, or Satanism, is not beyond the Skinhead groups. Adolph Hitler and other members of the Third Reich were known practitioners of occultism, and Skinheads tend to idolize the teachings of Hitler. Some of these Skinheads actually intellectualize the precepts of the brand of occultism taught by the Nazi movement. Others tend to wear the symbolic badges of the occult or the Nazis to shock the public and make them fearful of the group.

It is difficult to approach the overall Skinhead movement as a gang problem, as the groups are scattered across the nation, with membership drifting in and out. Many of the groups are under the influence of adult racists and do not act out in normal street gang patterns of criminal behavior. Law enforcement agencies tend to handle the Skinheads as violent political extremists rather than as street gangs. In some cases, the groups do claim certain neighborhood territory and are stable enough to be classified as street gangs.

## **Skinheads**

Note: The following section on Skinhead groups was prepared and submitted by Sergeant R.K. Miller of the Huntington Beach Police Department, Huntington Beach, California.

For a number of years, the street gang problem in Southern California was restricted primarily to two basic groups. The oldest of these was the Hispanic "turf" gang. The power base for these gangs resulted largely from the beliefs of their members that they were self-appointed "soldiers" protecting their

neighborhood from outside threats. The second group was comprised of the African-American gangs, the Crips and Bloods. The power base for this large group rested primarily on neighborhood identity, as well as criminal activity. The scale of their illegal ventures has become well-known to the public in the past few years, due to their involvement in the large-scale distribution of cocaine.

Beginning sometime in 1985, new and unique types of gangs started to appear in Southern California, as well as in other parts of the country. These groups were the early vanguard of the Skinhead phenomenon. Tracing their history back to England, where this lifestyle was first documented in the early 1970's, the power base of the Skinheads was derived from their racism and use of violence as an extension of their beliefs. Today, although relatively small in numbers, the Skinheads continue to have a significant impact on law enforcement. While committing crimes as an excuse to defend their race, they have established links with more traditional White supremacy groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).

The Skinhead movement began to appear in Great Britain in the late 1960's. The country was experiencing a time of internal turmoil, not unlike the social and political unrest that was happening here in the United States during the same period. Britain's attention was focused on its youth, changing social values, and economic upheaval as it was forced to deal with limited capabilities, both at home and around the world. A number of youth subcultures developed during this period. An offshoot of one of these groups adopted a mode of dress that was intended to reflect an association with the White working class.

Beyond their style of dress, however, some members developed a philosophy that became more radical in its interpretation of, and reaction to, the social and economic changes taking place. Inevitably, they merged as gangs of militant White youths. Although identified by various names, they collectively became known as Skinheads. This name was derived from the practice of shaving their heads to eliminate the possibility of their hair being pulled when they became involved in street fights.

As the Skinheads grew in popularity, some supported beliefs that were motivated by an extreme form of nationalism mixed with a hatred of Jews and other minorities. England had by then been experiencing a large and continuing influx of immigrants from Third World countries such as Pakistan. The newcomers were viewed by the Skinheads as inferior people who stole jobs from the working class. Terms such as "Paki-bashing" came to reflect the radical philosophy of White supremacy which the Skinheads espoused. These events led directly to our current difficulties with Skinhead groups here in the United States.

It took a few years for the radical influence of the Skinheads to cross the Atlantic to this country. However, prior to their arrival with their extreme racial opinions, the fad of punk rock music assisted in setting the stage. It appeared to attract the same types of intolerant, dysfunctional youth who later became the first American Skinheads. By the middle of the 1980's, the Skinhead fad here in the United States had mutated in a manner comparable to what had happened in England. Some Skinheads began to associate themselves with the White supremacist ideology of groups such as the KKK.

The group's intolerant rhetoric was further reinforced by the United States tour of the English Skinhead band, Skrewdriver. The songs played by this band preached hatred, violence, and racism. In addition to its regular concerts, Skrewdriver also performed at KKK rallies. By October of 1985, there was documented evidence that a group of Skinheads attended a meeting of White hate groups in Minnesota which was hosted by a former Grand Dragon of the KKK.

The number of Skinhead groups increased during the next few years. Some established firm, ideological links with ultra right wing groups such as the KKK and the White Aryan Resistance, sometimes referred to as WAR, which has been organized by Tom Metzger. The gangs developed to such a point that, in 1989, a California Department of Justice publication stated that the Skinheads had the capability of becoming the KKK of the 1990's. This was primarily due to the fact that racist Skinheads provided a rejuvenation for the White Power movement that until then had consisted primarily of middle-aged White males.

Before continuing, a brief clarification is necessary. There are now basically two types of Skinheads. The first is racist. This group can be further broken down into three classifications: White Pride, White Power, and White Supremacy or Nazi Skins. The differences in these last three is based on the individual's level of commitment to the racist Skinhead cause.

The White Supremacy groups represents the hard-core and most dedicated level. For the remainder of this article, the use of the term "Skinheads" will refer to racist gang members. A second group, the non-racist Skinheads, still exists in some areas. They are leftovers from the faddish, early days of the Skinhead movement. While they may deny the White Power philosophy, their orientation is still towards violence, a common factor to both types of Skinheads. A third group is referred to as the Independents. They claim no allegiance and only want to make their own individual statements. While there still may be some Independents, many use the term in an attempt to avoid identification as a racist Skinhead.

Most Skinhead gangs do not have the staying power of, for example, the Hispanic turf gangs. Typically, Skinhead gangs will appear on the scene for a period of time and then begin to fall apart. This is primarily due to the nature of the individuals involved in the gang, as well as the fact that law enforcement focuses attention on them. Occasionally, a gang will appear that has more structure, and they may even attempt to establish some type of formal operation. They may use membership applications which are noted on by other members. Other groups have dues and regulations, and some conduct meetings during which formal minutes are kept.

New members are often recruited from school or popular hangouts. Evidence of this recruitment process can be found in the form of racist/antisemitic stickers and handbills. Such literature has been found in school lockers, stuffed between the pages of library books and newspapers, stapled to telephone poles, and stuck to walls in public areas. In their most organized form, usually under the guidance of older White militants, the Skinhead gangs have established phone hot lines, post office boxes, and even their own publications. This is all intended for recruitment and spreading the White hate philosophy.

To understand the Skinheads, it is necessary to explain their particular brand of ideology. For them, the White race is superior to other ethnic groups which are referred to as inferior or "subhuman." Some Skinheads associate themselves with the Christian Identity Movement, which preaches that the White, not the Jewish, race is the Lost Tribe of Israel or the Chosen of God. The phrase "White Warriors of the Streets" describes the Skinheads as they carry their beliefs into physical confrontations. The purity of the White race is an essential element in their philosophy. One of the greatest sins is to become a "race traitor." Worse yet is to be a part of "race mixing" or interracial relationships. Homosexuals are also targets because of their lifestyle.

Skinheads often portray themselves as representatives of the White working class. It is their belief that the efforts of White men were responsible for the development of this country into a great nation. Contributions of other groups in American history are viewed as insignificant.



Hatred of Jews in various countries can be traced historically for centuries. Here in America, this trail of prejudice can be followed back with certainty to the KKK. White supremacists speak of the "Jewish Conspiracy" and describe how all levels of American government and society are controlled by ZOG, "Zionist Occupational Government." Supremacists argue that the Holocaust was merely a gigantic hoax perpetrated by this conspiracy to win sympathy for the Jews, and that Hitler was not responsible for the extermination of millions of people.

During the Gulf War, one White Supremacy phone hot line was using the phrase "For all you Jews, this Scud's for you." On a more personal level, interviews with Skinheads regarding the Jewish race bring forth a rash of programmed rhetoric which focuses on how the Jews control the government as well as stereotypical comments on their cheapness and greediness. Upon being asked why he hated Jews, one Skinhead exploded with the statement, "Because they're the ones who crucified Christ!"

Skinheads believe that America is for Whites only, and non-Whites should not be allowed to emigrate to this country. As well as taking jobs away from the White working class, Skinheads also accuse non-Whites of contributing to the decline of the White race. Many Skinheads share the hope for a "White Homeland," free from the presence of all non-Whites. This is a theme repeated by such groups as WAR, the KKK, and the Aryan Nations.

It should be noted that not all Skinheads share the same beliefs; however, the overall tone of their ideology is clear and is utilized in their confrontations with others. Typically, a group of Skinheads will create a situation where they have to "defend" the White race against an insult, challenge, or threat. The parties responsible are usually innocent. The only reason they are targeted is that they are ethnic minorities, Jewish, gays, or merely perceived to be a member of one of these groups. The resulting clash often culminates in serious injury or death. Such confrontational tactics are illustrated by the statistic that one of the most common crimes for which a Skinhead is first arrested is assault with a deadly weapon.

This scenario has been repeated a number of times across the United States. The most publicized case involved a number of Skinheads from Portland, Oregon, who beat a young Ethiopian student to death. In addition to the criminal charges prosecuted in this homicide, a civil suit was filed against Tom Metzger, his son John, and their White Aryan Resistance organization. The judgement against them amounted to several million dollars.

There are specific indicators which can be used to identify gang members affiliated with Skinhead groups. One of the most obvious indicators is graffiti. Often called the "Newspaper of the Streets," graffiti can provide great amounts of pertinent information. Graffiti defines the names of members and their particular gangs. It further defines the boundaries of the area or territory claimed by a particular gang. Graffiti can be used to challenge opponents, especially when it appears in rival territory. It can be either of a public or personal nature. Personal graffiti consists of the writings and designs which a gang member draws on his personal papers and property. Public graffiti appears on buildings, vehicles, freeway over crossings, and any other surface accessible to gang members.

Within the context of the Skinheads, graffiti goes beyond the descriptions listed above and also indicates their racial and political orientation. Common Skinhead graffiti includes slogans against minority groups, as well as swastikas and lightning bolts. The name "Skrewdrivers," the original Skinhead band, or that of other similar musical groups, might be present. Abbreviations such as SWP (Supreme White Power), WAR (White Aryan Resistance) and WP (White Power) are common.

Hand signs are another indicator. For some time, the only Skinhead gang hand sign was the right hand and arm raised at an angle forming the Nazi salute. However, gangs learn from each other, and Skinheads have begun to adopt other hand signs. Skinheads have been seen forming the letters W and P for White Power, and the letters representing the initials of their gang.

Tattoos are an important part of gang culture, and the Skinhead groups are no exception to this fact. Tattoos can be considered a form of self-decoration and intimidation as well as being specific gang indicators. Within the Skinhead subculture, specific tattoos are regarded as making a very personal statement. In speaking with Skinheads about their tattoos, it is apparent that these designs are a constant visual reaffirmation of their beliefs. They are meant primarily as a reminder to the individual, rather than a statement to the rest of the world. The themes of their tattoos mirror that of their graffiti.

Common tattoos found on the body, including the face, neck, and inside of the lip can be broken down into several categories. Flag tattoos show American, Nazi, or Confederate flags. Symbols include swastikas, lightning bolts, crossed hammers, and the German Iron Cross. Some tattoos depict hooded Ku Klux Klansmen, skulls, guns, and boots. Phrases such as "Oi," "White Power," "Boot Power," "Skins," and "Sieg Heil" are also found. Popular abbreviations are "SWP" for Supreme White Power, "WAR" for White Aryan Resistance, and "KKK" for Ku Klux Klan.

A common method of recognition for most gangs is the utilization of specific attire and accessories; therefore, the chosen dress of a gang is usually an integral portion of the gang lifestyle. A member may not wear the full "uniform" all the time; however, the commitment is there even if only one particular item of the uniform is worn. This is especially true with Skinheads.

Most members of Skinhead gangs shave their heads. As well as serving a purpose in the event of a fight, it's also a form of intimidation. Due to the increased visibility of their gangs, however, some Skinheads are letting their hair grow. This does not mean that they have dropped out of the gang or renounced their beliefs. It is merely their effort to blend in.

The style of shirt most favored by Skinhead gangs is a polo shirt, preferably a "Fred Perry," an English brand difficult to obtain here. If these are not available, Skinheads wear any sort of tank top or T-shirt with a suitable slogan or design. An example of such a shirt might have a picture of Hitler with the words "Adolph Hitler World Tour, 1939 - 1945." Other common designs include the band Skrewdriver or Ku Klux Klan symbols.

The English refer to suspenders as "braces." These play a prominent role in the "full dress uniform" of the Skinhead gang member. A Skinhead preparing for a fight will often take his braces off his shoulders and let them hang at his sides, still attached to his pants. Keeping them over his shoulders would make it easier for an opponent to grab them in a fight. Braces may be African-American or various other colors, and are often worn in coordination with matching boot laces. The color white stands for "White Power," while red indicates a more militant neo-Nazi or "White Supremacist" philosophy.

The pants worn by Skinhead gang members are normally rolled up or tailored so that the full height of the boot is exposed. "Dickies" are popular, and sometimes gang members wear Levis. The more radical Skinheads frequently avoid Levis, however, out of the mistaken belief that the Levi Strauss Company is a part of ZOG - the Jewish conspiracy to control the United States and the world. Shorts may also be worn, especially when it is hot.

The wearing of flight jackets known as "Flights" is also part of the Skinhead uniform, the intent being to project a militaristic and larger-than-life presence. Black or olive drab are the preferred colors. The jackets frequently have personalized graffiti on the inside lining. The outside may be plain or embellished with pins and patches that, in a manner similar to tattoos, reflect the wearer's beliefs. Swastikas, iron crosses, lettering such as "Skinheads," or Nazi, American, and Confederate flags are common.

The boots worn by Skinheads are the most important part of the uniform. Often, they will wear just the boots and forego the remainder of the attire. As with Fred Perry shirts, the preferred English brand of boot is "Dr. Marten," a style which has carried over to America. These boots are often referred to by the gang members as "Doc Martens" or just "Docs." They come in a variety of colors, with ox blood and black the most popular. They are available with steel toes or soft toes.

Skinheads talk about their "Docs," using a slang based on the number of eyelets located along one side of the boot. If a member talks about having a pair of "10 holes," he is referring to the number of lace holes on one side. A pair of "14's" would then reach to mid-calf. The laces of the boots will often be color coordinated with the braces. Casual talk of a "boot party" refers to the fact that the members have attacked someone and used their boots in the assault.

When Skinheads encounter an individual wearing "Docs" and/or "Flights," he or she is either friend or foe. Often, if judged as unworthy of wearing such Skinhead attire, the person may be attacked by the group and the items of clothing or accessories confiscated. The accompanying violence can be brutal. In Skinhead slang, this is called "taxing." As a Skinhead's primary weapon, the boots play an important role in this as well as in most other assaults in which the gang members are involved.

The use of monikers is widespread with gang culture, and the Skinheads are no exception. Monikers come from a variety of sources. Often, a nickname is chosen because it reflects something about the individual. Sometimes these monikers are selected because of personal characteristics or possibly because they are a verbalization of the individual's opinions. Examples would be "Slugger" or "Thumper" for an aggressive personality, or "Tiny" for someone with a small stature. Monikers may be given to a member at the time of his or her "jumping in" process. Gang members often use their monikers when creating graffiti. It is not uncommon for one member to know another exclusively by his or her moniker and have no idea what that person's true name is.

One final area that should be discussed is Skinhead music. Like most other aspects of the present-day Skinheads, the music they listen to can be traced back to the early days in England. There are some experts who identify these roots as including a Black Jamaican influence. Skinhead music has come to be called "Oi" music. The term "Oi" was originally a form of greeting which the Skinheads turned into a buzz word that now signifies their attitude. Oi music came to reflect a sympathy for the White working class in England. Basically, its meaning focused on an "Us versus Them" mentality. As the movement became more radical, so did its music. The lyrics of today often echo the racial and political attitudes of the Skinheads, with a definite quality of violence added.

The prominent Skinhead band for some time has been Skrewdriver, led by Ian Stuart. He has been banned from visiting the United States because of his arrest record. The titles of some of this band's songs include "Hail the New Dawn," "The Klansman," "Boots and Braces," and "Fetch the Rope." Following Stuart's lead, Skinhead bands have evolved in this country as well. The music they play is meant to appeal to White youths as an alternative to the "race mixing" music currently popular. Skinheads consider a song such as "Ebony and Ivory" as an undesirable, race-mixing tune.

One of the leaders of the White Power movement has been quoted as stating: "Music is one of the greatest propaganda tools around. You can influence more people with music than you can with a speech." As we look at what is happening all across the music spectrum today, and not just with the Skinheads, it is clear that there is a great deal of truth to this quotation.

Skinhead street gangs present a very real threat to any community in which they operate. Although small in actual numbers when compared to other gangs, their potential for violence is just as great. When this propensity for violence is combined with the type of philosophy they espouse, the picture that develops is not encouraging.

The presence of Skinhead gangs is a problem that will continue for the foreseeable future. Everyone who comes into contact with Skinhead gang members should, for obvious reasons, exercise caution. To be dealt with effectively, this problem will require the cooperation of families, the community, the schools, and law enforcement agencies.

### **Stoner Gangs**

The Stoners, as a group, set themselves apart from everyone. The origin of their name came from other youth who observed them consistently stoned on drugs or alcohol. Those Stoners that form into gangs tend to be multi-racial (Mexican-American and White) in those neighborhoods that are racially mixed, but there have no African-American Sooner gangs recorded in the Los Angeles area.. They dress in red or black clothing, preferring athletic jersey tops with heavy metal music stars displayed. The hair is worn longer with less emphasis on "looking sharp." Image is not important.

Although Chicano gangs are considered traditional with close ties to family and a "Chicano" identity, a new element has entered the gang milieu, and that is the "Sooner" gang lifestyle. They are less concerned with keeping ties with family or identifying with their Mexican birthright. The "heavy metal" fad popularity greatly adds to the spread of their philosophy. Music has greatly influenced various groups, and with today's mass media, it has more impact on everyday life. Music has influenced several gang type lifestyles in the past. Some of the subcultures, many of whom have been associated with a gang lifestyle at one time, are the following:

Pachucos - Swing music	Nuros	- Dance, reggae
Cholos - Oldies but Goodies	New Wave	- Trendy
Surfers - Surf music	Punk	- Trendy
Breakers - Funk music	Black Street	
Mods - Psychedelic music	Level	- Rap music

### **History**

Stoners have been in Los Angeles County for approximately the last decade. Named for the "Rolling Stones" or "getting stoned," they have variously been known as "Hessians," "Hippies," "Rockers," "Rebels," "Neo-Pagangs," and, prior to that, "Loadies." Stoners or Loadies was applied to the group by their teenage peers, as they were consistently under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Some Sooner gangs were formed in defense from other gangs or groups.

Stoners are generally junior high or high school students and tend to be better students, as a group, than their more traditional gang counterparts. They usually stay in school and participate in athletics. Many groups are allied with fellow Sooner gangs and feud with other music subculture groups.

### **Evidence of Sooner/Heavy Metal Influence:**

1.     Symbolism:             That which deals with the occult or Satanism
2.     Writing Style:         Uses the occult symbolism, heavy metal music oriented, and heavily influenced with the drug subcultures.
3.     Musical Heroes:     Tend to be from the heavy metal orientation.
4.     Other Heroes of the Sooner Membership are:
  - A. Alister Crowley   C. Adolph Hitler
  - B. Anton Levey       D. Charles Manson

### **Criminal Activity**

Stoners tend to be involved in the drug subculture and commonly abuse such drugs as speed, LSD, rock cocaine, and PCP. They actively participate in both sales and use of these drugs. They easily flow into and out of gang areas because they are perceived as no threat.

Stoners tend to participate in animal sacrifice and ritual crimes such as graveyard or church desecrations. Suicides within the Sooner gangs are increasing, and many researchers feel this is due to the heavy metal music influence.

This phenomenon creates various problems for law enforcement in that these gangs are different from traditional gangs. Sooner philosophy and motivation differs greatly from traditional street gangs, but their criminal potential and propensity for violence are at least as great.

### **Pacific Islander Gangs**

Pacific Islander gangs are made up of people from a number of different islands spread across many thousands of miles of ocean. Pacific Islanders began migration to the United States following the end of WWII and have increased since the 1950's, but it has not been until quite recently that we have started to notice the growing phenomenon of Pacific Islander street gangs. Their members include Samoans, Tonans, Fijians, Guamanians, Hawaiians, and Filipinos.

It was in Carson, California, that the first Samoan youths were observed joining in street gangs. Like most similar immigrant groups who were few in numbers, they tended to join with gangs whose reputation was already established. This is what happened in the case of the Samoans, who joined the Mexican and Black gangs they found around them when they arrived.

As their numbers increased and they became more confident, they began to withdraw from the Mexican and Black gangs and to form their own groups with their individual and meaningful names. A unique

extract of the early gang involvement left the Samoan gangs with the learned behavior and attitudes of both Mexican and Black gang philosophy.

Like gangs around them, the Samoans began to identify themselves by writing their own graffiti on neighborhood walls, taking on nicknames so they would be more anonymous, acquiring tattoos, and developing similar initiation, or "jumping-in," processes. In short, they began to affect all the elements such as his style of dress, speech, attitude and behavior, which identify an individual as a gang member.

The early years of Pacific Islander or Samoan groups had no distinguished lines such as we recognize today as being Crip or Blood. They were involved in thefts of handguns, rifles and sawed-off shotguns. Because they were so universal among the various gangs, they found it profitable in selling these weapons to the gangs that allowed them to join. Soon, they were selling guns to their adversaries and were eventually forced to leave the very gang they had joined. Next, the Samoans joined Black gangs and, again, they were selling guns to their adversaries. By the late 1970's, the Samoans were large enough in numbers so that they started their own gang and soon rivaled their own kind, family members from across town.

Pacific Islanders are unique among the members of Los Angeles gangs in that they adapt very easily to their surroundings and accept those parts of it which they like. Their skin coloration means they can be mistaken for Blacks or Mexicans, and they borrow heavily from both groups. They enjoy anonymity and the code of machismo, which are the markers of Mexican gangs; however, they also enjoy the styles of dress fashion and street jargon of Black gangs. Because of their Island backgrounds, they fall easily into the pattern of using warrior-type names. Different from Mexicans and Blacks, they speak a native tongue which is radically different from English. This ability gives them yet another dimension.

In the early 1980's they began to change these patterns and claim allegiance to either the Crip or Blood gangs. This change occurred at approximately the same time as a number of Samoan extended families were displaced from their original settlement in Carson and moved to surrounding communities such as Long Beach, Lynwood, Compton, and Harbor City. Samoan street gangs have emerged in various parts of California, as well as Seattle, Washington; Portland, Oregon; and Honolulu, Hawaii. The same graffiti and gang names are prevalent in these areas.

With the moves of their families, the young people began to be exposed to numerous different Black gangs with their own complex arrangements of loyalties and enemies. The experience of being in contact with these groups on a day-to-day basis, either in school, or on the street, meant that the Samoan youths had to choose their allegiance, since they could no longer maintain a position of neutrality.

Within the Pacific Islander gangs, there are considerable historical reasons why they should not be united with one another. Although, to the outsider, all Pacific Islander gangs may look as if they present a single unit, this is not the case. Some of the fighting that takes place within Pacific Islander gangs is the result of ancient feuds among Samoans and Tongans, and Hawaiians and Samoans. In addition, there are recent feuds along island groups based on their religious preference, which is predominantly Mormon or Catholic.

One should understand that the Pacific Islanders have a cultural lifestyle that provides an inherent responsibility to take in all family members. Under this system, families are responsible for the wrongdoings of their children and must also provide work, monetary support, and shelter. Therefore, the Pacific Islander families who have established homes and work here in the Continental United States,

as well as Hawaii, are forced to live in large households. The average household, per dwelling, is six families and can number as high as 10 families in the home.

## **Tagger**

What is a tagger? Basically, a tagger is a person who adopts a nickname (tag) and then writes that tag in as many places as possible. Tagger prefer to call themselves “writers,” “piecers,” or “artists.” No matter what they call themselves, if they put graffiti on public or private property without permission it’s vandalism, and they are vandals.

The tags they choose are usually chosen because of the way the word they have chosen sounds. They usually try to pick a word they can change the ending of but still have the “tag” in it. For example, ‘BLADE’ could be changed to BLADES, BLADER, BLADEST, etc.

When tagging first began in the early 80's, the letters of a tag stood for something; such as ‘FEAR’--Fully Educated Art Rebel. Today this is almost never seen. Taggers usually go through several tags before deciding on one particular tag to use on a regular basis. However, unlike most gang members, who get a nickname and keep it for life, a tagger will drip a tag if caught by the police or challenged by another tagger with the same or similar name. Some taggers will also have a “back-up” tag already picked out and will also use that name, but less frequently than their main tag. Some taggers might belong to more than one tagging crew and may have different tag names for each tagging crew. Frequently, taggers substitute numbers for their tag name. These numbers may be totally random or may be a combination of birthdays, like 679 for June 1979. These numbers are usually called “roster numbers” and are only to be known by members of the crew. (However, they sometimes forget and tag both their name and the number together).

## **Why Become a Tagger**

The main reason a person becomes a tagger is to get recognition they would not ordinarily receive. Also, there is the element of excitement involved in going out and tagging. Most taggers belong to a group called a “crew”; unlike gangs, a tagger may belong to and/or associate with more than one crew at a time. People join crews for many of the same reasons a person joins a gang, problems at home or school, low self-esteem, etc. When tagging first began in L.A., many people, including some parents, believed tagging was an acceptable alternative to gangs; and in fact, most gang members didn’t really pay much attention to tagger, which contributed to the myth on an alternative to gangs. Today, that is no longer the case. For many, tagging is just a stepping stone to gang activity and gang membership. Many tagging crews in the Southern California area have either become a part of an established street gang or have become a street gang.

Tagging crews vary in size from two people to in excess of 100 members. The crews can have both male and female members. (Females may account for only about 2% of crew member ship). The average crew consists of from 6 to 12 members. The crew will have a leader, usually the person who started the crew. To get into the crew, a person draws his tag and if they meet the skill level of that crew, the person is then accepted into the crew after they “mob” a chosen location or object. Larger crews are less picky about ability as long as the applicant is “down,” supports, the crew and its activities.

## **Tagger Targets and Methods of Operation**

When selecting an object to tag, the two most important considerations are how long is it going to stay up, and how many people are going to see it. Objects like utility poles/boxes and traffic lights, which are called “landmarks,” are picked because these objects are the least likely to have the graffiti taken off; or as taggers call it, “buffed or buffing.” Etching windows, phone booths, etc., is also popular because the tag stays up for a long time due to the expense involved in replacing these items. Buses are another favorite target because they are seen by a lot of people. Bus routes that cover a wide area are particular favorites. Certain crews like the freeways because their graffiti is seen by a lot of people and there is less of a chance of being caught. Roof tops, bridges, and billboards are also favored. However, walls are still the most common target, especially when doing “throw-ups” (large bubble letters) and “pieces” (murals).

The style of graffiti used by taggers usually resembles handwriting and may be difficult or impossible to read. The letters may be intertwined and highly stylized. Some taggers develop their own individual alphabets of stylized letters. Tagger graffiti also commonly uses the large bubble-style lettering.

Weekends are usually the most active time for tagging because most tagger are in school during the week. (The majority of tagger are between the ages of 12-18 years old). What a tagger intends to tag affects the time of day tagging will tag place. Going to and from school are always good times to tag. Generally, the more time evolved to do the tagging will mean the tagging will take place at night of in the early morning hours.

When tagging a freeway, a tagger will usually wait until it is dark. Some taggers hit the freeways as soon as it is dark, while others wait until the early morning hours. Buses are a 24-hour-a-day target. If doing something that may take some time, a tagger will usually wait until the weekend during the early morning hours, when there is less of a chance to be seen. Throw-ups can take from 10 to 20 minutes to do and elaborate pieces can take several hours or sometimes a couple of days to complete. In L.A., most pieces are done in places called “yards.” These yards are usually located in out of the way industrial or railroad right-of-ways, where there is less chance to be caught by the police or street gangs. Some tagger do “legal walls”, where they have permission from the owner, but the prevailing attitude is , “If it ain’t illegal, it ain’t tagging.”

When going out to tag, taggers will usually go out in pairs or groups of three or four. Some taggers will travel with females to avoid suspicion. As mentioned earlier, most taggers are male and between the ages of 12 to 18 years old. Because of their age, they will commonly walk, skateboard, bicycle, or ride the bus to get to the areas they want to tag. Sometimes, a friend will have a car, or they might steal a car to use to go tagging. The majority of tagging a particular tagger crew will do, is near where they live. However, if the opportunity exists, they will tag wherever they are. Also, there are crews and taggers who are “all city” and cover a wider area with their graffiti.

Tagger crews used to settle disputes with other tagger crews by having a “battle.” This consisted of picking a target--bus route, street, freeway, etc.--and then putting as much graffiti on the target as possible within a certain time period usually over a weekend. A judge would then be selected and the crew with the most graffiti would be the winner. The losers would then usually have to drop their crew name, but other penalties have been imposed, like providing the winner with spray paint or marijuana. These battles were highly organized and had rules. Today, in L.A., battles are rarely held.

When a bus is selected as a target, there are different ways the crew will “mob” it. Sometimes, a group of taggers will board the bus and while one tagger holds open the back door, which causes the bus to be immobilized, the others will “mob” the interior with paint or markers. Another method is to wait until



a bus stops for a red light on a busy street and then “mob” the exterior of the bus. Bus turn-arounds and rest stops are also favored.

When freeways are chosen as a target, the walls or bridge supports are the usual targets. Sometimes, the overhead signs, referred to as the “heavens” are picked. Among taggers, doing a “heaven” gives a tagger greater stature among fellow tagger. To get up on the “heavens,” several methods are used, including using nearby objects, such as trees; bringing ladders; forming human ladders by standing on each other’s shoulders; and using ropes or garden hoses.

Currently, the most popular target of tagger is railroad cars, especially the blue ones. Railroad cars are popular because they are seen over great distances; the graffiti may not be painted out for a long period of time because of the cost (\$5,000 per car plus the cost of having it out of service); there is less of a chance to be caught by law enforcement, because rail cars are usually left in isolated industrial areas; and there is less of a chance of running into street gang members who don’t like taggers tagging on their “turf.”

### **Tagging Paraphernalia**

Spray paint, felt-tip markers, and “scribes” are the most common tools of the tagger. When it comes to spray paint, ‘Krylon’@ brand is preferred because different size spray can tips can be easily interchanged and the paint is less likely to run. Tips which produce different widths are taken off various products, which use spray cans, such as oven cleaner, window cleaner, carburetor cleaner, etc. Taggers often carry the tips in their mouths. They do this for two reasons, one, to avoid detection, and two, it keeps the tip clean, so it will be ready for the target of opportunity. A marker called a “meanstreak,” which is a large crayon in a tube, is a favorite, as well as one called a “sakura,” which is paint in a tube. “Scribes” can be anything that will cut glass or plastic. Glass drill bits shaped liked arrowheads are favored. Small pieces of sandpaper, rocks, pieces of glass, and sewing needles have all been used as etching tools. It is common practice to conceal the scribe inside and ink pen or mechanical pencil to avoid detection. Taggers will usually attempt to discard these items if they think the police are going to stop them. Most taggers will carry scribes in their pockets wherever they go. Some will attempt to conceal the scribes up their sleeves, in their socks, inside the waist band of baggy pants, or often, inside a small backpack commonly carried by students. (The backpacks carried by taggers are almost always covered with graffiti that has the tagger name or crew name prominently displayed).

People heavily involved in tagging will often cover school papers, books, etc. with their graffiti. They will also carry note books called “piece books.” These books contain examples of their graffiti and may also have practice drawings of letters or items they later intend to put up on a wall.

Tagger usually obtain their tagging paraphernalia by shoplifting, which they call “racking.” Any store which doesn’t lock up paint or other items wanted by tagger is a prime target. Because of the paint lock-up laws in the L.A. area, taggers have started using engine coating paint as a substitute for regular paint. Swap meets are another popular place to obtain paint.

### **Summary**

Over the years, tagging crews have become more violent. The longer this type of activity continues, the greater the chance of its evolving into street gang activity. As mentioned earlier, many tagger and crews have evolved into street gangs.

For some people who become taggers, tagging becomes a way of life. It is like drug addiction, tagger just can't stop themselves from tagging. As one teenager told us, "I tried to stop, you can't stop....if I get caught, I'm going to come out and mob again, I'll change my name, I don't care."

In conclusion, the problem of graffiti and taggers, like many other problems faced by society, must be dealt with as a community problem. It will take the combined resources of government, the schools, community-based organizations, and members of the community working together to have a chance to provide a lasting solution to the problem.

### **Midwestern Gangs**

The Chicago style of gangs, in most cases, identifies with a specific gang nation or alliance, such as the "Folk" or "People." Each of these umbrella groups will have many factions making up the entire alliance. Similar to their Californian counterparts, the gangs that identify with a particular nation do not necessarily get along well with other gangs in that nation. Warfare between gangs of the same nation is not uncommon.

The Folk and People Nation gangs are more stylized and adhere to traditional gang folklore and symbolism than the Crip or Blood gangs. Gangs that make up the nations personalize their individual graffiti symbols, but generally they have some common symbol that identifies their particular nation. They also tend to be better organized than their California counterparts. Folk and People sets have a more identifiable chain of command that maintains some centralized control, although Chicago police authorities report that this chain of command and respect of central authority is fading.

### **Folk**

One of the largest street gangs in Chicago is the Black Gangster Disciple Nation. This was a gang nation born out of the merger of the Black Disciples and the Gangster Disciples in the early 1970's, and falls within the Folk umbrella. The merger was brought about by an individual named David Barksdale, who is credited with the founding of the Black Gangster Disciples. This gang is active in the prisons and on the streets, with numerous subsets throughout the city and the Midwest. Certain members of the gang will sometimes represent themselves as with the initial name of "BOS," which stands for Brothers of the Struggle, a term signifying concern for their fellow gang members locked down in prison. Those using this gang alias will symbolize their membership with a winged heart in drawings and jewelry..

In the late 1980's internal feuding caused a split within the ranks of the Black Gangster Disciple Nation, with factions shifting back to their original configurations of Black Disciples (B.D.) and Gangster Disciples (G.D.). While both gangs now operate independently, and in fact, war upon each other, they still maintain their joint symbolism as Folk. There are many gangs that fall under the umbrella of the Folk Nation, with names such as the C-Notes, Imperial Gangsters, Latin Disciples, and Spanish Cobras, to name just a few. Many of these gangs represent various racial makeups, and levels of activity, but they are all avowed Folk gang members and will generally represent their gang in some method.

After David Barksdale was shot to death, the gang adopted the Jewish Star of David as their symbol, not for religious purposes, but as an icon for their deceased leader who had become known as King David. The six-pointed star of David, worn as a necklace or tattoo is a more prolific and obvious symbol than many others. Icons, symbols, and traditional behavior in representing their gangs are more important to Chicago gangsters than to the Los Angeles gangs. The gang also identifies with crossed pitchforks whose

tines point upward. Their hand signs, in many cases, are made by forming three fingers on the right hand in a pitchfork symbol.

The Folk gangs will "dress right," which means that they will wear their hats tilted toward the right side of their bodies, earrings will be worn in the right ear, belt buckles will be on the right side of the mid-line, and other items of clothing will all have a right side of the body if possible. The members will stand leaning to the right with arms crossed, but with the right arm on top. They will roll the right cuff up on their pants and will even color the inside pocket of the pants with their gang colors.

While California gangs usually mark or "X" out their rivals' graffiti the Mid-Western gangs will draw their rivals' symbols either upside down or broken. With the recent affiliations of Eastern and Western gangs it is not uncommon in the newly acquired gang areas to find both styles mixed to. The writings typically will show rivalries and allegiances of the various active sets. Most of this mixing of Chicago-and-Los Angeles-based gangs is occurring in the Mid-West or Southern states.

The gangs of the Midwest will many times identify themselves as belonging to a "Chicago Style" gang, which is more organized than the California-based Crip or Blood factions. They have an identifiable chain of command with a more centralized control of the gang's activities. These gangs primarily belong to one of two factions that refer to themselves as the Folk or People Nation.

The Nation acts as an umbrella organization under which various independent gangs align themselves much like the Crips and Bloods gangs, although the concept of gang nations is not one that the Crip or Blood gangs have consciously adopted. Yet, the California gangs, while not acknowledging themselves as gang nations, do recognize the division between the two distinct Crip and Blood gang styles, a division based upon traditional gang colors, blue representing the Crips, while red represents the Bloods, colors representing credos that they will fight and die for.

Crip and Blood gangs are loosely knit groups that practice no centralized command or control of the total gang. There are a few sophisticated criminal minds, or "High Rollers," in gang parlance, running illicit operations within the gang, operations that tend to be independent of the gang itself, but that employ homeboys from the gang to accomplish the mission. There is no centralized accounting of profits, nor is there a redistribution of the individual's profits with others in the gang. These gangs operate under the simple motto of "What's mine is mine, and what's yours is mine, if I can get away with it."

Recently, investigators in Chicago and Los Angeles are beginning to see some exchange between the gangs in their home turfs. Several years ago a Chicago gang whose roots were found in Blackstone Rangers began an off shoot Blood set in Los Angeles, which became known as the Black "P" Stones. Most present-day Los Angeles members of this gang do not realize this, or for that matter, care. Those members that move about the country dealing narcotics have learned and know to associate with gangs of the People Nation.

Even with the more formal and stylized system used by the Chicago gangs, many similarities between the Los Angeles and Chicago style of gangs existed. Each gang style based their domination of gang turfs on ruthless control, and each were profit motivated entities. The various gangs soon found themselves sharing their newly adopted neighborhoods with fellow transplanted gang members from other parts of the country. In the formative stages of the gang immigration, the various factions even found that they often shared the same symbolic gang colors. They found themselves forced into a cooperative venture with each other, as neither side had the strength to conduct a successful war of attrition against the other.

From these associations grew allegiances between the various factions for business and survival purpose that were initially facilitated by the similar gang colors. The Crip gangs usually align themselves with gangs of the Folk Nation, which are generally identified by using the word Disciple in the gang name such as Black Gangster Disciples, or Gangster Disciples. The Blood gangs tend to align themselves with gangs of the People Nation such as the Vice Lords, Latin Kings, Black P Stones, or the El Rukns. These gangs, in many areas, freely associate with one another, yet, in other areas, when one side or the other has become stronger than the other, warfare has resulted.

## **People**

The People Nation was also formed in prison, by an individual named Jeff Fort. The nation is comprised of street gangs that are fierce rivals to those gangs that make up the Folk Nation. While there are many gangs in the nation, some of the more infamous of these gangs are the Black P Stones, Latin Kings, and the Vice Lords.

The Blackstone Rangers, who were also known as the Black P Stones, evolved into the "El Rukns," a sophisticated criminal enterprise, with members operating from within the prison system as well as on the streets. The gang was a major narcotic distributorship, with a reputation for violence. This gang was shown to have direct connections with the nation of Lybia and Khadfi, a declared supporter of terrorism. The Chicago Police Department's Gang Crimes Unit, with assistance from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, has recently inflicted serious damage to this gang through federal organized crime prosecutions. Due to this success of this operation, along with others, the gang has ceased to exist as an entity, with former members reforming under their previous name of "Black P Stones."

The People Nation gangs dress left, a reversal of the Folk Nation's style of dressing right. Street gangs making up the People nation gangs, as with most gang sets, personalize their particular gang's logo. People gang symbols may include pyramids, the all-seeing eye, five-pointed stars, canes, cocktail glasses, three-or-five-pointed crowns.

## ***CHAPTER VI - FEMALE GANGS***

## **Female Gangs**

The following manual section concerning female gangs was authored by Officers Caren Lawrence and Mistie Bitner of the Inglewood Police Department, Inglewood, California, and is included with their permission.

Gangs have existed in Los Angeles County since the early 1900's, and since that time, females have been involved. Whenever one finds an active male gang, one will usually find the female counterpart. By 1991, over 102,000 gang members had been identified in Los Angeles County, and approximately 6,900 of those were females. The number of females involved in these gangs are ever-increasing. Interviews with gang investigators reveal that, due to the heavy volume of violent gang activity and the fact the male member is more apt to be violent, many female gang members are not worked or placed into departmental gang files. Gang investigators also feel that the female gang population is probably 10-15% of the active gang population.

Statistics indicate that girls are becoming involved in gang activity at a young age, which can range from 11 to 18 years old. At 11 years old, female criminal activity is minor when compared to that of their male counterparts. By the time the girls reach 14 to 15 years of age, many are willing to do the bidding of their male counterparts. This conduct usually does not involve heavy violence but is regulated to status offenses such as incorrigible behavior, truancy, or theft-related crimes.

"Gang banging," a term used to describe general gang activity, is still somewhat of a male chauvinistic endeavor. Young girls may start to gang bang as early as the boys, but they don't tend to remain active as long. They are not as tied to their particular gang as the men because they are forced into their adult responsibilities earlier. The girls tend to be more involved in school and employment opportunities than their male counterparts. Many of the girls become pregnant in their early teens and must assume the role of a mother and those responsibilities that come with motherhood.

Male gang members are responsible for most gang-related crime, particularly violent offenses, although there has been a slight increase of female involvement in recent years. In 1990, statistics show that 5% of the gang-related crimes investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department were perpetrated by females, and 4.2% of the violent gang-related crimes were committed by females.

In 1991, 13 of the 207 persons murdered in gang-related violence within the Sheriff's Department's jurisdiction were female. Six of these females were members or associates in a gang. None of them were from gangs made up exclusively of females.

## **Race/Ethnic Differences**

Gangs in Los Angeles County vary in their extent of organization, criminality, and operations, mostly due to the significant differences within their racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Black gang members tend to be more involved in monetary motivated criminal conduct such as drug trafficking, robbery, and sex crimes.

Hispanic gang members are more inclined to be turf-oriented, having a great respect and pride for their neighborhood gang. Asian gang members tend to involve themselves in property crimes such as residential and commercial robberies, extortion, and auto theft. White gang members are involved in organized property crimes, drug trafficking, racist crime, and vandalism.

Each ethnic group is recognized for its unique criminal activities, but even then, there could be significant differences. This is due to the individual gang's isolation from its original ethnic beginnings or the influence of other groups that border on the gang's boundaries. These other influences can cause the bastardization of gang traditions from area to area. Investigators must be aware that what is true in one area is not necessarily true in another.

Female "sets" or "cliques" are no different than those of male gangs. If anything, they can become even more confusing due to their own unique styles and personality traits. Investigators have found that a large number of female gang members seem to be homosexual or bisexual. Some girls get more involved in violent crimes, while others may only have a history of misdemeanor crimes (shoplifting, joy riding, and miscellaneous narcotics charges). The reason for this variance is not exactly known, but it has been theorized that it may be due to an individual girl's femininity, self-esteem, or upbringing.

### **Independent Female Gangs**

Female gangs traditionally have been thought of as auxiliaries to their male counterparts and, in that role, have served as girlfriends, providers of sex or other physical entertainment, lures for rival gangs, spies, carriers of drugs and weapons, scouts, and alibis.

Female gang members are more likely to belong to "cliques" or "off shoots" of male-dominated gangs and are answerable to the dominate male hierarchy. Few independent or "solo" female gangs were found during this study that were not associated with male gangs.

In most of the cases involving solo gangs, the girls are from Asian communities. The Asian gangs are different from the traditional Black or Hispanic gangs. Due to the relatively recent development of Asian gangs, knowledge of their activities is somewhat limited and regulated to those agencies with large Asian communities.

Law enforcement agencies in those communities, primarily in Orange County, have identified at least 27 female gangs. These gangs generally have between 10 and 20 members, ranging 13 to 20 years in age. They give themselves names such as "South Side Scissors," "Wally Girls," "Innocent Bitch Killers" or "Innocent But Killers" (IBK), "Lady Rascal Gangsters," "Ruthless Girls," and "Asian Sisterhood."

The Asian female gangs are few, but their number is rising both in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Of the known 3,500 Asian gang members in both counties, at least 10% are females.

During an interview with "Baby Girl," a Hispanic female gang member, she was asked, "Why don't girls start their own gangs?" She answered, "We have. We got about 10 cliques that are separate from the guys; the La Primas, Locas, Jokers, Tokers, La Pee Wees, you know. We are part of the guys, but we do our own thing." The Hispanic females may believe that their cliques are separate from the males, but they also understand that if the males need them, they are expected to back them up, and vice versa.

The Black female gang members are mixed in with the male gang members and basically work side by side, especially when conducting narcotics sales. The females are rarely searched by male police officers, for obvious reasons, thus making the female gang member role very important. Incorporating females in a gang can assist in making a larger profit margin and ease the risk of discovery.

"Breezy," a Black gang member, stated, "We are all one gang. We all grew up together. We all from the same neighborhood, so we all back each other up. We like one big family."

While the female gang members consider themselves equal to the males in respect to their loyalty to each other, they tend to be more discreet. Although their activity level is increasing, the females are less boisterous or outgoing as to their involvement. Their clothing is less likely to be as bold as that of the male gang member, and their actions towards law enforcement not as abrasive. They should, however, be considered as dangerous as the male.

### **Peer Pressure vs. Family Ties**

While most gang members come from dysfunctional families, gang members are not particularly rebellious or hostile to their parents or family. There is usually a strong sense of pride and regard for the family; however, at the same time, a lack of adult supervision or guidance allows them to seek excitement outside of the family. This allows the young adult to become "somebody" by belonging to a street gang.

Those girls that become gang members seldom have anyone to direct them into positive alternatives or activities. They are surrounded by pathetic and dismal role models, either from the neighborhood or their family. This causes the girls to seek other areas for recognition. Being a gang member fills their need for belonging and allows for relationships and a more exciting social life.

Researchers have documented the powerful influence that peer groups have on the adolescent. The need for peer approval and identity directs the social behavior of the adolescent, who will then look up to each other, rather than to the adult community, for guidance. At school or in the neighborhood, the girls tend to follow a popular group of gang girls that they have a strong desire to join. These young and impressionable girls are thriving for peer approval, meaning, support, and an identity, and feel that joining the gang will provide for these needs.

Becoming a gang member is how the younger girls get recognized. They obtain status in a gang. Based on their criminal activities, they can raise their status within the gang and among their peers. The more involved they are, the higher their status. The female gang members have the same basic need for status, or "rep," as the males. Her gang becomes her family and best friend. Her fellow members are the ones that will support her, no matter what. They get high together, hang around together, and laugh and cry together. Their real family thus becomes less and less needed.

Due to the lack of parental guidance and supervision, these girls learn their morals and ethics on the streets from their peers. They tend to mature at an earlier age, therefore engaging in sexual intercourse with the male members and becoming pregnant, many times at the age of 12 or 13. The ages may seem extreme, but in the world of gangs, these ages are far too common. This situation simply points out the problems these girls are confronted with when the inherent responsibilities of motherhood are not taught by their parents.

Now that the female gang member is an adolescent mother, her future is limited. She is dependent both physically and financially on her existing family members to help care for her and her child. This generally equates, realistically, to an existence dependent upon the county welfare system. Sadly, most of these children born to gang mothers are destined to follow in the mother's footsteps. The family support services needed to broaden the child's future options to escape this type of environment are nonexistent. Thus, the cycle is destined to run again, and more gang members will be produced, with few breaking out of the cycle.

### **Why Join?**



It seems that a common denominator with gang members, male or female, is a troubled childhood or dysfunctional family. Researchers say that the majority of females gravitating towards gangs have been exposed to, or been victims of, incest, drug addiction, physical/sexual abuse, and death. It appears that females join gangs for many of the same reasons as their male counterparts. We may attribute the shift in society's view of women and the more contemporary views of women's roles as reasons why young women may join a gang and maintain membership. This could also be the reason for more aggressive and violent behavior among female gang members. Other reasons for joining may include one or more of the following:

Jobs - Having to join the job market as a common laborer. The only jobs that may be available for those with a lack of education may be manual labor. They don't want to grow up taking care of others as their mothers did.

Independence - They don't want to be subordinate to the man of the house. Again, looking at the examples that their mothers and grandmothers have set, this may be more true for Latin and Asian culture than for others.

Responsibility - They may not want the responsibility of raising children.

Freedom - They do not want to experience the social isolation of being a housewife.

Identity - As females, they may feel that they are powerless representatives of the underclass.

Interviews with female gang members revealed a number of reasons as to why they felt the need to join a gang. Some of the more common responses from the 30 girls that were interviewed are included below.

Hispanics feel that since they were born and raised in the same neighborhoods as their male counterparts, they should be allowed to join the gangs. They feel the same need as the males to help defend their neighborhoods. Some of the girls come from generations of family members, both male and female, who belong to the same gang. This family tradition makes it seem impossible for them not to join.

"Black Widow," a Compton Crip, said it was "law" that she join, since she was born and raised in the neighborhood. Others say they joined for the easy access to money and drugs and that, overall, it isn't a bad way to make a living. "Breezy," a female Black, said she started gang banging when she was 18 years old, "for the money," and that she used the gang for protection and backup while selling drugs.

Others stated they joined gangs for protection from rival neighborhoods and violence in the schools, but the most popular answer was, "For the fun and excitement, all the parties, and all the people that you meet. It's a good way to meet good looking guys!"

The male members brag to the girls about how they shot up or fought with a rival neighborhood gang. These tales cause the girls to want to be part of the excitement and be included in the notoriety, but they have a hard time being accepted by the dominant males. The males dictate that everything is to be done their way, but the girls want to be considered as equals. They try to prove themselves so that they will be accepted, thus increasing their status with the male members. The males don't want females involved in the criminal activities for fear the females will falter under pressure and violate the code of silence. The males feel that the females will act emotionally, rather than rationally, and that females are not as loyal to the gang.

## **Initiation**

The process for initiating new female gang members has evolved over the years. There are different rules today than there were years ago. Many years ago, it wasn't unheard of for a female member to be "sexed in" to a gang. This means the prospective female member had to have sex with some of the male members of the gang. This then became their major role in the male dominated gang world.

Now that the role of the female gang member has changed, the most common method of initiating a new member is the same as for the men, getting "jumped in." This consists of a specific number of female gang members attacking the prospective member and beating her with their hands and feet. This process is timed anywhere from 60 seconds to five minutes. This ceremony is performed to test the new member's ability to give or take a beating and to see how much "heart" she has, thus theoretically testing her loyalty to the gang.

If a female is from a family that is well known and respected in the neighborhood, she can just "walk in," bypassing the beating. Bypassing may also occur when the gang members have known the initiate since she was a child, and she has already proven herself through her actions, and her courage and loyalty are not in question.

Another initiation is for the prospective member to be sent on a "job" or mission which consists of committing a criminal act. "Baby Girl" said, "We used to drop a girl off in a rival neighborhood, and she would have to cross through it and paint her gang's placa (logo or sign), and then she had to get out of there alive!"

"Special K," a Black female member of the "Bloodstone Villains," said, "We send them on missions that are pretty dangerous...211's...187's... whatever." Missions refer to sending the prospective member out to commit a robbery or murder. This type of statement also reveals the bravado attitude of the gang. In fact, murder is performed rarely as an initiation rite by the male or female gang member.

An important factor long ago was the quality of the gang member versus the quantity. The quality of a gang member was important and judged by the gang member's personality and toughness. This was due to the fact that there were more personal conflicts involving fistfights. The gang member needed the ability to handle himself in these situations versus the present-day method of just having to pull the trigger. Since the implementation of firearms in today's gang wars, hand-to-hand gang fights have become a thing of the past. Gangs are now more concerned with the quantity of members versus the quality. The bigger the gang, the better.

After the initiation process is completed, she is given her street name, or "moniker," by the existing members. A moniker usually represents a member's personality trait or appearance. For instance, if she has green eyes, her moniker simply could be "Green Eyes," but if she had a reputation for being a fighter, her moniker may well be "Boxer."

## **Leaving the Gang**

Leaving the gang is a more complicated procedure than entering. Once one has joined a gang, that gang becomes a surrogate family to the gang member; and when a member wants out, the consequences could be deadly. Depending on the reason for wanting out of the gang, her fellow gang members decide whether that reason is acceptable. If a girl wants out to further her education, get a job, or maybe even start a family, she may be allowed to leave with the blessings of her peers.

In these type of cases, the girl may be allowed to "walk out," or her home girls may decide to "jump" her out. If her departure is considered "honorable," she can, on occasion, return to party with the gang and associate with her former home girls. If being "jumped out" is decided upon, it is basically the same as getting "jumped in." The difference is the beating is usually more severe, and there may not be any time limitations. In extreme cases, the girl may receive substantial injuries. In rare cases, the beating could even be fatal.

### **Structure/Organization**

Gangs are formed in neighborhoods and are usually named after city streets, parks, geographic formations, or housing projects in which they live. Each gang has a number of "cliques" or "sets" that can be divided by age, sex, and geographic areas. On occasion, groups of friends will make up their own clique. There can be many different cliques within a particular gang, and we have seen as many as five of these cliques to be exclusively female.

There is no one person who is the leader or calls the shots. A common practice is for the more influential members of the gang or clique to call a meeting in order to make a decision. This meeting entitles everyone to participate in a vote or make suggestions concerning a particular decision. The younger girls will defer to the older girls (those with status), thus accounting for the little structure found in most gangs. Hispanic cliques or sets are usually divided by age, and even though they are from the same gang, the name of the clique will have a prefix denoting their difference. For example, the older girls would be called "Las Locas," and the younger girls would be called the "Tiny Locas." As the "Tiny Locas" become older and move up to "Las Locas," they must still be initiated or "jumped in" by the older girls.

In Black gangs, females are mixed with males and initiated by the older females. Black female gang members do not usually have their own "cliques" or "sets" and are considered family by the males.

Asian female gangs, on the other hand, tend to be structured similarly to the Hispanic female cliques. Each gang is allied with one or more male gangs. Recently, these female Asian gangs have started to fight among themselves, and there is a trend developing that indicates Asian females are forming individual gangs that are not associated with a male counterpart gang.

### **Roles in Criminal Activity**

#### **Black Gang Members**

Because Black gang members are more involved in money, sex and drug trafficking, female Blacks are used for more specific jobs within their street gang. For instance, depending on whether she is gay or straight, somewhat determines her role in gang activity. The gay girls tend to be more involved in the violent crimes. They look, dress, and act like the male gang member and will basically do anything the males will. The males look at these girls as men and expect them to handle themselves as such.

The female gang members that look and act like girls are called the "Ms. Clairol Girls" by the tough masculine females. These are the girls the males use to hold weapons and narcotics, as they usually don't look like gang members. Many times, girls are used to buy guns because of their clean arrest records; and if the guns are used and recovered by the police, they can report them stolen without suspicion. They can be convincing when creating an alibi for their male counterparts and can even testify to that alibi in court.

This is not to say that the straight girls are not violent. All gang members, male or female, are potentially violent, but they are less obvious than the gay girls. They can become violent if provoked and should always be treated with the same attention that any law enforcement officer would give to a hard-core gang member.

The most popular activities among female Black gang members are drug trafficking and robbery. Females are less likely to be pulled over by the police while transporting narcotics or possessing firearms. This poses a particular problem for the average two-man radio car team. For example, "Bubba," a female member of a Los Angeles based Blood gang, the "Fruit Town Brims," stated during an interview that she has been confronted by the police on over 100 occasions while possessing either narcotics, weapons, or money. While this statement may be somewhat inflated as to the amount of times she was stopped, if her presence had been taken more seriously by the local police, she would have not been able to brag about this particular achievement. The officer safety problems are obvious and need not be addressed. An important point to keep in mind is that "Bubba" went on to say that in almost every one of these confrontations, the police would detain and search her male companions and order her and all the other females present to get lost.

In August 1988, two 15-year-old girls from the "Hoover Crips" gang, shot and killed a nurse who refused to give up her purse during a robbery. Later, the two girls, along with other members of the same gang, were involved in the shooting death of a 17-year-old rival gang member after gang slogans and signs were exchanged. The females are showing an increasing amount of involvement in gang-related crimes, violent or otherwise.

This point was reinforced during an interview with "Black Widow," another female Black, who is a member of the Compton-based Crip gang. She said that the women of the 90's are "taking care of business" while their male counterparts are in jail.

## **Hispanic Gang Members**

Hispanic female gang members practice territorial domination much like their male counterparts. They are similar in almost every respect to the male gang members. They are active to varying degrees and will act on their own initiative. Like the Black females, they get involved in all aspects of gang crime from fistfights to various felonies. Today it is not uncommon to hear of females involved in drive-by shootings and other violent felonies. As an example, on January 27, 1992, a 13-year-old girl gang member was murdered. The suspect is one of her fellow gang members who was afraid she would tell the gang she was dating a member from a rival gang.

Gang investigators are concerned over the fact that female Hispanics are becoming more active participants in violent gang-related crimes. The concern is not so much over the fact the crime is being committed by a female, as it is that the basic knowledge and techniques for dealing with the female gang member by law enforcement are lacking. The girls are starting to work together with the male members as a team, removing them from the subservient roles of the past.

The girls continue to be used in setting up ambushes of rival gang members. They lure the victims into their territory so that their home boys can deal with them on their own turf. The girls will, on occasion, drive the cars in a drive-by, while their home boys, who have been hiding in the back seat, do the shooting. This is performed because the girls do not appear as suspicious and are not recognizable by the rivals or the police. It also leaves the males free to concentrate on the shooting.

In most cases, the Hispanic females are not as involved in narcotics trafficking to the extent of the Black females are, but it is a growing problem. They are typically abusers of narcotics, primarily marijuana, heroin, and cocaine, but alcohol, paint, and glue are still used in abundance.

## **Asian Gang Members**

Asian street gangs are involved in crimes such as commercial robberies and are the major perpetrators of gang-related extortion and home invasion robberies. The girls who initially began their own gangs did so out of frustration because they wanted to be more liberated and involved in the criminal activities of their male counterparts. The Filipino and Vietnamese girls have also begun to operate independently of their male counterparts. Korean females have been observed associating with the male gang members, but it is not known if the females are active gang members.

The girls, typically interest themselves in property crimes, like the males, such as auto theft and grand theft property, and they have even been arrested after committing assaults on rival gang members. Most of the girls are runaways and start at the ages of 12 to 13 years old. Since they are on their own, their strongest motivating factor is survival. They can and will commit any kind of crime in order to accomplish survival.

The male gang members will use the girls as bait, to lure rival gang members into their area, as lookouts, and as getaway drivers. The girls are commonly used as a ruse to gain entry into locations they intend to rob. Most people will open their door to a young, innocent-looking girl, rather than to a guy, and once the doors are opened, the males enter and rob the residents. The girls, in turn for their involvement, will get a percentage of the profits, thus attracting the girls to these types of activities. This makes the Asian gang girls a major concern in property-type crimes.

## **White Gang Members**

White street gangs include groups such as the Stoners, Skinheads, and some occult groups. The majority of the White gang population tends to be found in the motorcycle gangs, which are considered to be organized criminal entities, rather than street gangs. The White youth or street gang population is the lowest in proportion to other ethnic street gangs. White street gangs tend to be involved in criminal activity involving property crimes, drug trafficking, and hate crime.

The number of females involved in these groups is comparatively low. The girls are tied to these gangs usually because of boyfriends, money, or drugs. Unlike Black and Hispanic gangs, these girls are not considered to be "official" gang members, but more like tag-alongs, and are subservient to their male counterparts.

Females in the outlaw motorcycle gangs are considered to be property and wear patches on their clothing to identify them as such. These women are older than the average street gang member and stay with these groups out of fear, or they are dependent on the male members for survival. The females that associate with these gangs sometimes try to appear as average people in order to be employed by government agencies, particularly police department records bureaus, to gain intelligence for their gang.

### **Appearance**

Most female gang members can be easily recognized when first contacted. Hispanic female gang members sometimes wear the basic uniform or clothing that the men wear (pendelton shirts, khaki or Levi pants). The clothing is usually dark and varies in colors of black, blue, and brown. Female gang members prefer pants. Hispanic gang girls seldom wear dresses. The girls also wear bandanas around their heads, have them affixed to their attire, or use them as belts. Their hair is usually long and full, and they sometimes die it blonde or red. Facial makeup is usually thick and light in complexion. The makeup on their eyes and eyebrows is especially thick and dark.

They wear their own style of jewelry with the exception of a "chola band," which is a thick black rubber band that is tied around the middle finger of their left hand and pulled across the top of the hand and around the wrist. This band signifies that they are married to the "Varrío," or neighborhood, where their street gang is located. They may even have the chola band tattooed to the top part of their hand.

Most hard-core members will have tattoos, the most common being their gang affiliation, moniker and boyfriend's name. Three dots, shaped in a pyramid, which means "Mi Vida Loca" (My Crazy Life), will be found on the hand in the webbing between their fingers. They may have teardrops tattooed beneath the lower eyelid to signify they are crying for their barrio or a loved one in prison. Tattoos of crucifixes and rosaries on their chests or backs mean that they will die for their neighborhood.

The Black females have individual styles that differ from each other. It seems that Black gang traditions are still in the formative stages. Some of the girls dress similar to the males and wear T-shirts, baggy khaki or Levi pants, including boxer shorts, making it difficult to differentiate them from the males. However, this seems to be an extreme, and the majority of the girls will dress in ordinary clothing. It is important to observe the clothing accessories worn, as many times they will wear either red or blue to signify which street gang they belong to. The accessories could be hair ornaments (curlers or barrettes), belts, shoes, socks, or sweaters. They may even paint their fingernails in the appropriate color.

Black gang girls seldom use tattoos. If they are so inclined, the most common tattoos are the names of boyfriends, girlfriends, and their gang.

The Asian female gang members have adopted the characteristics of the female Hispanic gang members when it comes to their hair and makeup. They dress in a manner designed to differentiate them from their non-gang, or "square," counterparts in the community. They tend to favor short black leather skirts, tops, black stockings, and spiked high-heel shoes. Some female gangs have a "signature" such as the "Dirty Punks" gang, whose members always wear red spike high heels, and the "Silver Middle Girls," who paint the nail of the middle finger of each hand silver. The girls appear very young and innocent to the average person. This is done to disguise their gang affiliation so they are not confronted by their parents, police, and school officials.

Asian girls will tattoo themselves by burning or cutting the design onto their skin in inconspicuous places. These body designs are used in the same manner that other ethnic gang females use them and will usually consist of the gang logo, nicknames, or boyfriend's names.

### **Conclusion/Recommendation**

It is apparent, based on current information, that female involvement in gang activity is increasing. The severity of the offenses are becoming more violent compared to years past.

We can see that delinquency results in the female gang member for a myriad of sociological reasons. Important among these causation factors is her inability or desire not to fulfill her perceived social role within her specific race or culture. The gangs are able to provide the girls with certain activities in their lives that they are missing and/or striving for, such as status, recognition, and a sense of belonging. The girls are able to identify with the gang and they begin to live by its values.

We find that belonging to a gang is a very important part of their life; it is not something that is taken lightly. The fact that they are willing to get "beat up" at an initiation, fight for their gang, and allow the gang influence to separate them from their families and responsibilities, exemplifies the magnitude of the problem.

Due to the lack of literature, knowledge, intelligence, and training in the field of females and their involvement with gangs, it is apparent that most people don't believe that females are actively involved in gang-related crimes. This includes their parents, schools officials, and law enforcement. For example, two teenaged girls, the first female gang members ever convicted in Orange County for a gang-related shooting, were both sentenced to more than 20 years in prison. A 16-year-old boy was killed in the drive-by shooting. The judge hearing the case, Richard J. Weatherspoon, said, "To view this young woman and to conceive that she could participate...to picture her in your mind holding a sawed-off shotgun...is difficult."

Society has accepted women in the working field in upper management positions, but they are not ready to see women on the front lines of war or battles in the streets.

Law enforcement personnel need to take a closer look at the female gang members and the role they play in today's society. As law enforcement comes in contact with them in the field, a strong effort must be made to document the female's involvement in the street gang environment. The fact that crime statistics concerning female gang members are low doesn't mean they are not committing crimes. In fact, all of the female gang members interviewed said they have had contact with law enforcement officers while in possession of either a gun or drugs or both. The girls interviewed said that they wouldn't leave their home without a gun, and that if caught without one, it could "cost you your life."

When asked how many times she was confronted by law enforcement while holding illegal narcotics or a weapon, "Bubba" said over 100 times. She also recalled that, on one occasion, she had six ounces of cocaine on her person when she was confronted by the police. Think of the statement by "Black Widow" who said, "We are the women of the 90's. We are taking care of the business now, while our homies are in prison."

It is this type of reasoning that reinforces the need for law enforcement to handle the female gang members with the same tenacity used on the male gang member. Female gang members are an entity that must be taken seriously. They not only commit criminal acts, but instigate much of the action committed by the males.

In an effort to identify and address the emerging female gang problem, law enforcement personnel must make an assertive effort to gather more intelligence concerning the female gang member. This effort may be accomplished by recognizing that the females are becoming more actively involved in gang-related crimes. Monitoring their criminal activities in the form of field interview cards and the compilation of detailed statistical data on the activities of the females will justify the need for more regular contacts with the female gang member on the street.

Most female gang veterans over the age of 20 that were contacted stated they regretted their involvement in gangs, but were influenced and pressured by older girls to get involved. Sometimes this pressure came from their own families to participate in the family tradition of belonging to the neighborhood gang. Their alternatives were almost nonexistent. Any form of prevention techniques applied to stop this problem must include a concerted effort involving these girls.

The prevention effort must address conditions at their school and home environments while they are young, in order to provide them with positive role models during this impressionable age. Programs that deal with the girls on a one-on-one basis tend to lead them to more positive activities. This has shown to be a strong preventative measure in keeping the youngsters focused on positive activities and keeping them from giving into peer pressure.



***CHAPTER VII - LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSES  
TO STREET GANG ACTIVITY***

## **Gang Unit Management**

With many communities beginning to experience an increase in violent street gang activity, local law enforcement agencies are finding it necessary to consider the establishment of specialized gang units. In some communities the creation of such units presents several unique problems to the political establishment and to the law enforcement agency.

If a law enforcement agency has determined that a gang problem exists and that resources must be made available to confront the problem, operational guidelines must be established. Gang units must be established, and operational definitions of gang activity and gang membership must be put into place. There are many established law enforcement anti-gang programs throughout the country. The following is offered as a guideline for such a program.

Methods of dealing with the burgeoning gang problem must be developed and implemented by local government officials to meet the demands of a concerned public. Any response must involve a multi-faceted approach involving both the community and law enforcement. The response must be designed in such a manner that encompasses not only punitive police actions, but prevention and intervention techniques as well.

Once the presence of a gang problem is acknowledged, resources must be put into motion to deal with it before the onset of a media-induced hysteria is created within the community that will hamper a thoughtful and coordinated response. The effectiveness of the law enforcement response will depend upon the prior preparedness of the agency. To adequately address the gang problem, it may be necessary to establish a gang unit staffed by officers specializing in street gang enforcement. The response will be enhanced if the agency has within its ranks officers with a knowledge of the gang lifestyle and who are specialists in street gang customs. If these officers have developed and maintained gang intelligence files, the tactical response to the crisis can be accelerated.

While the agency may need to respond as quickly as possible to the gang threat, the establishment of a gang unit must be handled carefully, with as much forethought and planning as possible. Thought must be given to the purpose of the unit, its mission, and goals. The unit's procedural policies and methods of operation should be decided upon prior to implementation of the team.

The gang unit can only perform its designated mission by being given organizational support; therefore, it is vital that the department head make it very clear that the unit's mission is a priority to the department. As with any other unit, executive support is fundamental to the unit's success and its assigned mission. This executive support must be done with conviction expressed down through the ranks. The team's ability to gain the willing cooperation and acceptance from its law enforcement peer group will determine the team's viability and effectiveness.

The prime factor in creating a successful gang team is personnel selection. Due to the nature of the gang unit and its general mission of intervening in the violent gang process, it is critical that particular attention be paid to the personnel selection process. Preference must be given to officers who have established themselves as being self-motivated, with good communication skills. Other desirable traits that should influence the selection process would be knowledge of the community and the local gangs. Ethnic balance of the gang team is also a consideration that should be given some thought. Gang members tend to develop rapport with those officers that they believe treat them fairly and with respect. While the ethnicity of the officer is of less importance to the gang member than his attitude toward the

individuals, attempts must be made to provide for some balance because of the cultural diversity of our communities.

The officers must possess those personal traits that allow them to deal with gang members in such a manner that builds rapport and fosters communications. Street gang members come from subcultures that view kindness as weakness; therefore, the officers must be able to establish this rapport without compromising their positions or appearing weak-willed. The officers must also have the ability to adjust from their street role with the gang members to tactfully deal with citizen's groups, schools, and other agencies in a professional manner.

If one could use only one word to describe a gang member, that word would be *attitude*. Gang unit officers must also develop an attitude that gang members can read as readily as the gang officer reads theirs. The gang officer's attitude must be one of professionalism. The officers should not attempt to establish themselves as the gangster's friend, but their attitude must be one of approachability and fairness. The officers should be prepared to assist those gang members that request assistance in changing their lifestyles. Decisions as to whether the unit should be uniformed, plainclothes, or a combination of both need to be considered prior to selection of the team. One option would be to make the team investigative in nature and responsible for investigating those cases involving gangs. A second option would be to make the unit primarily an intelligence-gathering detail that gathers information from contacts on the street and other sources. The gang intelligence unit would then be responsible for assisting the investigators with their cases, using information from street contacts and gang files. Another option would be to make the unit a uniformed patrol detail assigned to a highly visible mode of selective enforcement in the gang neighborhoods.

Of the three major available options, intelligence gathering is the most important. Before law enforcement can move effectively against the gangs, detailed information as to membership and gang activity must be available. This information must be obtained by officers using traditional intelligence-gathering methods involving informants, observation, community contacts, and analysis. The gang unit need not operate covertly within the neighborhood, but rather, it should be openly visible. The team members should make themselves not only visible, but approachable, to all members of the community, including the gang members. The name of the game, so to speak, is *information*. Information on the criminal conduct of the street gangs is obtained through communication by the officer with members of the community. These contacts should include common citizens, community activists, and the criminal street gang element.

The officers' purpose is to use information gathered to assist investigators in the solution of criminal cases and to diffuse gang crisis as they occur. Intelligence must be shared with those units that require it, as well as with those within the command staff that direct-operations. Gang intelligence units must not operate in the traditional intelligence mode that seldom shares information. Street gangs are street criminals, and information flow must be consistently shared among patrol operations, custody, investigation, and intelligence units.

Some departments have opted to staff the gang unit with investigators and have the unit handle the investigation of gang crimes. While this is a viable concept, departments need to consider certain disadvantages to this arrangement. If the area has a high rate of gang activity, the manpower required to handle a large caseload could be very high, depending on the size of the department. If the investigators are busy handling excessive caseloads, the intelligence-gathering function will suffer. Without fresh intelligence, the information needed to solve cases evaporates, and the unit simply becomes another overworked detective unit. If the unit is to handle cases, the department must

adequately staff the unit to perform all the needed functions. Ideally, in such units certain investigators handle cases while others perform the intelligence functions, and the information is shared.

Experience has shown that if the gang unit handles cases, it is advantageous to handle most categories of the crimes committed by the gangs, including adult and juvenile crimes. In this manner the gang unit stays current on who's who in the gang world and is aware of the younger gang members as they rise in the gang's hierarchy. It is a mistake to give the gang unit the responsibility for homicide case assignments. These types of cases are extremely labor and time intensive. After a few homicides the gang unit would do nothing more than homicide investigations. They would then have little or no time to devote to alleviating the overall gang problem, which was the original mission. The gang unit is of more use assisting the homicide investigators with their cases by making available their intelligence information and using their community contacts to gather information on the case.

Another option available to departments is to field the gang unit out of the uniformed patrol force in a directed patrol mode. This is a viable option only if the gang problem is limited and the possibility for growth is controllable. Uniformed personnel are not unusually accepted openly in those neighborhoods that produce gangs. Therefore, to be effective, a uniformed unit must be free from answering normal calls for service in order to devote time establishing its presence in those neighborhoods. The officers can be trained in gang awareness concepts and be directed to pay particular attention to the gangs.

Each option has its strengths and weaknesses; ideally, a combination of all three offers the best results in curtailing gang violence. To add even more effectiveness to this unit, the department should persuade the District Attorney's Office to assign a prosecutor to assist the gang unit in its operations and prosecutions. The Probation Department should be consulted and a probation officer added to the team to enforce conditions of probation on gang members contacted.

The gang unit must also be responsible for maintaining a liaison with surrounding agencies and exchanging information on a regular basis. Gang members must be aware that their activities are now being observed and must be made to feel uncomfortable in their role as street hoodlums. Regular meetings of officers and agencies involved in curtailing gang activity should be conducted establishing an informal communication network.

Command staff must decide where within the department to assign the gang unit. Political infighting among divisions is not uncommon and can prove detrimental to the early support needed by the fledgling gang unit. According to the departmental size, decisions must be made as to whether the unit will have centralized or de-centralized command and control and under which command such a unit belongs, once established.

Once the Department makes the decision to form the gang unit, a mission statement must be designed to guide the unit and its actions. As an example, the following mission statement was developed by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department for use by the gang details assigned to the Safe Streets Bureau.

"The mission of the Safe Streets Bureau is to reduce gang violence by the vigorous application of contemporary law enforcement techniques. This concept is based upon the professional application of legal and ethical anti-gang practices within the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's stated mission and its core values. These practices are designed to insure the safety and welfare of all residents while maintaining community order. Safe Streets Bureau's anti-gang efforts are designed to incorporate a collaborative

effort with the community to insure that a partnership is achieved that will determine the most prudent course.

Street gangs threaten the safety and well being of residents within our communities which we, as members of the Department, have a sworn duty to protect. With this valued trust in mind, the Safe Streets Bureau is dedicated to the equal administration of justice to all factions of the communities we serve in a humanitarian and responsible manner. Safe Streets is not simply the title of our Bureau, but a goal that the dedicated men and women of the Bureau strive for in the daily performance of their duty."

Much of today's tactical street law enforcement is based on the concept of community policing. Community policing is perceived by many of today's law enforcement executives as an enlightened approach to police deployment and practices. The basis of community policing is theoretically to bring the police officer back into the community as a recognizable personality rather than as some faceless enforcer gliding by in a police cruiser. The theory is that such a bonding between law enforcement and the community will lower crime rates and increase public confidence in law enforcement agencies.

The idealism espoused in community policing can have a tremendous effect in reducing the threat of street gangs. The implementation of partnership programs involving the community and police to control street gang activity is the epitome of sound community policing. Successful gang units tend to be those whose work includes close personal contact with the community. This contact is accomplished through daily interaction with community groups, schools, individual citizens, and the gang members themselves.

Those charged with investigating the street gangs must have a clear picture of what they are to investigate. Therefore, it is imperative that the department establish guidelines defining what constitutes a street gang, gang activity, and a gang member. These definitions must have validity and meet current legal standards. The following passage discusses various definitions that have been used successfully to meet legal challenges and that are currently in use by agencies experiencing serious gang problems.

Gang files are one of the most important and necessary tools that a gang investigator has at his disposal, but they can also be the most controversial component of the gang unit. If the files are not properly maintained and safeguarded, they can bring about the undoing of the gang unit and be the subject of expensive litigation. Civil libertarians have often argued against the maintenance of gang files contending that they are unconstitutional and a violation of the civil rights of the gangster. Gang files built on solid definitions, along with creditable standards, are legally and morally defensible, and will withstand court challenges.

One must not dismiss the arguments of the civil libertarians out of hand. Law enforcement must always be concerned that their actions are legal, professional, and necessary to maintain the public peace. One of the most basic elements of street gang activity is the consistent criminal behavior of the majority of gang members. Any group which has, as a primary activity, the commission of crime unquestionably presents a clear and present danger to the community. Confronted with such malevolent forces, those charged with the community's public safety have a duty to protect its citizens from those criminal societies. The tracking of criminal organizations is an integral part of combating their illegal ventures, as long as that tracking is done in legal and moral matter.

The legal challenges and debates that were made of the early systems that pioneered the development of modern day gang files served to establish their legitimacy. These challenges caused common criteria to

be cooperatively developed by criminal justice agencies for use as a standard in maintaining gang files. Development of such standardized criteria added to the credibility and integrity of the system.

Before the definition of a gang member can be devised, the gang itself must be defined. There have been numerous definitions put forward by various sources from many disciplines. The following definitions are those currently used by most California law enforcement agencies.

### **Definition of a Street Gang:**

The operational definition of a street gang for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department is as follows, and is the same as the definition of a street gang for the Cal/Gang statewide gang information system.

A gang is a group of three or more persons who have a common identifying sign, symbol or name, or whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal activity creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation within the community.

### **Gang Member Defined:**

The Office of Criminal Justice Planning's State Anti-Gang Coordinating Committee defines gang member as follows:

A gang member is defined as anyone who (1) actively participates in a criminal street gang; (2) has knowledge that its members engage in, or have engaged in, a pattern of criminal gang activity, and willfully promotes, furthers, or assists in any criminal conduct by members of the gang.

### **Gang Membership Criteria:**

The following criteria is used by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to identify gang members and requires that a minimum of two of the following criteria be met to enter gang members into gang file. These criteria are found in Field Operations Directive 86-39 and reads as follows:

1. When an individual admits membership to a gang. (When an individual admits gang membership at time of a custodial classification interview that admission may stand alone for purposes of entry into the gang file.)
2. When a reliable informant identifies an individual as a gang member.
3. When an informant of previously untested reliability identifies an individual as a gang member, and it is corroborated by independent information.
4. When an individual resides in or frequents a particular gang's area and affects their style of dress, use of hand signs, symbols, or tattoos, and associates with known gang members.
5. When an individual has been arrested several times in the company of identified gang members for offenses which are consistent with usual gang activity.
6. When there are strong indications that an individual has a close relationship with a gang but does not fit the above criteria, he shall be identified as a "gang associate."
7. When an individual is ordered by the court to register as a gang member pursuant to Section 186.30 of the Penal Code..

## **Gang Crime Defined:**

Once the gang and the gang member have been defined, the definition of a gang incident is needed. This definition is very important to the entire anti-gang operation. What the department decides to count as a gang incident will have not only political effects within the community, but may affect the success or failure of the gang program. Gang crime goes beyond what has become commonly referred to as "*gang-motivated*" crime.

"*Gang motivated*" is a style of reporting that accounts for only those crimes that are basically gang versus gang assaults, or those crimes that the gang as an entity profits from. This type of reporting assumes that *gang-motivated crimes* are the only crimes gangs are capable of committing, and that street gang members operate as a controlled para-military led by a formal leadership. It further implies that the gang members would necessarily obey such a leadership and contribute a portion of their ill-gotten gain into a central bank for the benefit of the gang in its totality. One also must assume that this leadership has the power to dictate the actions of subordinate members.

While this discipline may be true to some extent with the older established gangs in the "Mid-Western gang style," it is not true of "Californian gang style." Most street gangs are loose-knit social groups that are made up primarily of social misfits and products of dysfunctional families. Due to their early socialization and gangster lifestyle, Gang members are not the type of individuals that take orders or handle responsibility well. Gang members are not amenable to a formal organization that relies on obedience to chain of command.

The gang's activity must be measured by the all of crime committed by its members. Reliance on the "*gang motivated*" style of statistical collection distorts the public perception of how serious the gang problem actually is. This manipulation dilutes the actual impact that gang members have on the total crime problem in a community. An apropos analogy is that gang activity, in total, kills the community, just as surely as a bullet fired from a gang member's gun kills its victim.

The gang, as an entity, does not commit crime; its members do. Following that reasoning, most law enforcement agencies have opted to use the style of reporting referred to as "*Gang Related.*" This style reports on most crimes committed by gang members as gang related. Within this count, gang versus gang crime, which is generally assaultive type of crime, is tabulated as a specific category, yet, the total criminal conduct of the group is also available for analysis. In general, any incident involving a gang member as suspect or victim, particularly if the subject is a victim due to his gang affiliation, is counted using this style of reporting. This provides for a consistent and complete report on gang member involved crime, and it minimizes the subjective decision-making requirements of reporters of the incidents.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, utilizing Field Operations Directive 86-39, which mandates procedures for gang activity reporting, established the following criteria for identifying incidents as gang-related.

1. When an incident occurs wherein participants, suspects, or victims are identified gang members or associates.
2. When a reliable informant identifies an incident as gang activity.

3. When an informant of previously untested reliability identifies an incident as gang related, and it is corroborated by other attendant circumstances or independent information.
4. When there are strong indications that an incident is gang related but it does not fit the above criteria, it shall be considered as gang activity.

The Office of Criminal Justice Planning's State Anti-Gang Coordinating Committee defines gang-related crime as follows:

A crime is considered to be gang related if the suspect or the victim of the incident is a known member of a gang, or there is reliable information indicating that the offense was committed by a gang member.

The criteria discussed in the preceding passages have evolved into the accepted standards for definition of gang membership and activity for the State of California. With minor modifications, they have also served as the basis for other state and federal systems gang files. The California Department of Justice and the California Office of Criminal Justice Planning have adopted the criteria as the minimum standard for use within the statewide Cal/Gang System, an automated gang file.

Gang statistical reports are used to graphically demonstrate the extent of the gang problem. Departmental management requires accurate and timely information for tactical deployment, and allocation of resources to prevention strategies. The community must be made aware of the extent of the problem, as well as departmental management, in order to achieve the necessary support for anti-gang programs.

The **absolute** rule in gathering and reporting gang-related statistics is adherence to established guidelines, along with consistency in reporting, but most importantly, is the necessity of maintaining integrity in the process. Acquiescence to external or internal departmental political influence to distort the reporting, in some manner, to favor a particular political agenda, or to produce a desired outcome provides a biased view of the problem. Such reporting will also hinder finding a realistic solution to the problem.

Political pressure to deny the existence of gangs is common in some localities and has unintentionally aided in the growth of the gangs. Some law enforcement agencies have been pressured into altering the manner in which gang crime is counted, in order to show results of particular favorite programs that are in fact showing little or negative results. This type of falsification of reporting must be avoided at all costs. Once the credibility of the reporting process comes into question, and those questions cannot be legitimately answered, support for the department's gang suppression efforts is doomed.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department has established definite criteria as to what criteria is required to consider an incident as gang related. This criteria is also found in "Field Operations Directive 86-39 - GANG ACTIVITY REPORTING," which reads as follows:

It is the responsibility of the Safe Streets Bureau, Operation Safe Streets (OSS), to monitor street gang members involved in criminal conduct. This directive establishes criteria for identifying incidents as street gang-related. The following criteria shall determine if an incident is gang related:

1. When an incident occurs wherein participants, suspects, or victims are identified gang members or associates.
2. When a reliable informant identifies an incident as gang activity.



3. When an informant of previously untested reliability identifies an incident as gang related, and it is corroborated by other attendant circumstances or independent information.
4. When there are strong indications that an incident is gang related, but it does not fit the above criteria, it shall be considered as gang activity.

This criteria is supported by agreement of the majority of the Los Angeles County Police Chiefs Association and the Sheriff of Los Angeles County. This group, working together, agreed upon the above definition in an agreement that states the above criteria shall be used, but clarifying the first criteria to read: "Those crimes wherein the suspects (s) are identified as gang members or in those events where a subject becomes a victim due to his gang affiliation.

### **Photographing of Gang Members:**

Identification photographs of street gang members are addressed in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's Manual of Policy and Procedures, Section 5-09/440.00. This section states as follows: Photographs shall not be taken by members of this Department, in non-custodial situations, of known or suspected street gang members to be used for photographic show-ups and suspect identifications, except in the following cases:

- Personnel shall be assigned to investigative units actively involved in conducting criminal investigations of reported crimes.
- Personnel shall be assigned to units specifically assigned the responsibility of preventing and suppressing gang violence.

In the above exceptions, personnel shall be prepared to justify, in detail, the purpose and necessity for such non-custodial photographs, e.g., photographs needed to eliminate a person as a possible suspect in a reported crime. In any investigation involving the taking of non-custodial identification photographs, the person to be photographed must willingly consent to the procedure. In no event shall Department personnel physically force or coerce anyone to be photographed in non-custodial situations.

### **Step Act - 186.22 P.C.**

The State of California enacted the Street Terrorism Enforcement Protection Act, Penal Code Section 186.22, in 1988. This act was an attempt to deal with the excessive violence committed by street gangs by creating specific and enhanced penalties for gang-related crimes. The STEP Act provides certain limiting definitions of street gangs and gang activity. Adherence to these definitions is applicable only to charge street gang members with a violation of this particular statute. These definitions do not effect the Department's guidelines or definitions of what a street gang is or what gang activity is. They are used solely for the specific purpose of prosecuting gang members for the specific violation of the STEP Act.

The popularly held belief of this act was that it made membership in a street gang illegal is not true. There is no law that makes simply belonging to a street gang illegal. This act makes it a crime for a person to participate in a "criminal street gang" and to then willfully promote or assist in any felonious criminal conduct of the gang. Section (a) of this act makes the participation by a gang member in any felony, or the aiding or abetting of any felony committed by gang members, a separate offense. Section (b) of this act sets forth that punishment for a convicted offender of the act may be felony or misdemeanor.

Criminal Street Gang Defined:

- I. An ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal
  - A. Having as one of its primary activities the commission of one or more of the following:
    - 1. ADW (245 P.C.)
    - 2. Robbery (211 P.C.)
    - 3. Homicide or Manslaughter (187 P.C.)
    - 4. Sale or Possession for Sale of Narcotics (11054-11058 H&S)
    - 5. Shooting Inhabited Dwelling or Occupied Motor Vehicle (246 P.C.)
    - 6. Arson (450 P.C.)
    - 7. Witness or Victim Intimidation (136.1 P.C.)
    - 8. Grand Theft of any Vehicle (487H P.C.)
  - B. Which has a common name or common identifying sign or symbol
  - C. Whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal gang activity.

Pattern of Criminal Gang Activity Defined:

- II. "Pattern of criminal gang activity" defined:
  - A. The commission, attempted commission, or solicitation of two or more of the eight crimes enumerated in paragraph A above.
  - B. With one or more of the offenses occurring after October 1, 1988, and
  - C. The last of those offenses occurred within three years after a prior offense, and
  - D. The offenses were committed on separate occasions or by two or more persons.

The elements of the STEP Act (Penal Code Section 186.22) are as follows:

Penal Code Section 186.22(a):

- III. "Any person"
- II. "Who actively participates"
- III. "In a criminal street gang"
- IV. "With knowledge that the gang members engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal gang activity"

- V. "Who willfully promotes, furthers, or assists in any felonious criminal conduct by members of that gang" shall be punished by imprisonment in the county jail for a period not to exceed one year or by imprisonment in state prison for one, two, or three years.

Penal Code Section 186.22(b)

- I. Any person
- II. Who is convicted of a felony or misdemeanor
- III. Committed for the
- A. Benefit of
- B. At the direction of
- C. Or in association with any criminal street gang
- IV. Who acts with the specific intent to promote, further, or assist in any criminal conduct by gang members shall be punished by imprisonment in the county jail for not more than one year, but not less than 180 days, or by imprisonment in the state prison for one, two, or three years shall receive as additional punishment one, two, or three years if the underlying offense is a felony shall remain in prison for a minimum of 15 years if the crime is punishable by life in prison.

**Developing Legal Expertise in Street Gangs**

One's upbringing and pre-law enforcement life experiences may build or enhance one's gang expertise. The following are examples of skills and qualifications a law enforcement officer comes about naturally or acquires through perseverance in his on or off-duty studies.

1. What type of training have you received and from whom?
  - A. Academy classes.
  - B. Seminars attended.
  - C. Roll-call training received.
  - D. College classes.
2. How long have you been in law enforcement?
3. What current or past assignments relate to the field?
4. Which books and articles have you read on the subject?
5. Are you a member of any organization or association specializing in the field?
6. Do you instruct any classes on the subject, and if so to whom?
7. Have you provided training to any law enforcement agencies on the subject? If so, list them.
8. Have you ever qualified in court on the subject? (Attempt to keep a record of "Expert Witness" appearances.)
9. Do you lecture civic groups on the subject? If so, list them.
10. How many gang members have you come in contact with?
11. How many gang members have you arrested?
12. Pertinent life experiences prior to your law enforcement career.

This is only a partial list of the abilities and points of expertise one can develop and put into practice in the field of gang investigations. The investigator should list his qualifications in resume form for

presentation to the courts to assist in his presentation of evidence during trials of gang members. This resume should be kept current at all times to support the knowledge the investigator is presenting.

## **Gang Investigations**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to provide some “basic” investigative strategies that bring about successful conclusions to gang related investigations. Many times investigators or patrol officers are intimidated by the thought of entering into the “secrecy” that surrounds the gang environment. Although there are many incidents that are solved only because the investigator is “seasoned” or very experienced, many can be brought to successful conclusion by consistent investigatory practices of the law enforcement investigator.

### **The Gang Unit**

The “specialized” gang unit is usually born of necessity rather than luxury. Many times there is a single incident that rallies the agency or municipality to create a “team” of officers with local knowledge to solve a particular problem. These can be “gang” teams, special projects units or “ninja” teams that can be very diverse in their roles. Once the problem has been resolved, the team either moves on to a new mission in gangs, disbands or finds a new mission (I.E. narcotics enforcement, street crimes, traffic enforcement ETC.)

Several themes must be discussed before forming a specialized unit:

1. Want vs. Need

Does the area/agency have the legitimate need for a designated gang unit, or would it be a promotional “tool.” In forming a designated “gang” unit, you are publicly announcing that there is a need for the unit, or a gang problem. This may not sit well with members of the community or city officials.

2. Investigation vs. Suppression

What is the role of the unit? Is their job the actual suppression of a problem that exists, intelligence gathering for the investigation, or the actual investigation and prosecution of the incidents themselves. All of these can be accomplished but must be stated at the onset, due to the future selection of personnel. Is the problem that exists of the magnitude that it requires specialized training and resources, or could it be resolved by regular duty forces using directed patrol tactics.

3. Pro-Active tactics or prevention and diversion

The mission and goals of the team must be clearly defined. While gang prevention and diversion of at risk youth should be of the utmost concern, public safety should be foremost. Depending on the nature and depth of the problem, pro-active tactics, many times unorthodox compared to regular agency standards, are going to also accomplish the same results. All members of the team, unit, and Department must be aware of the mission of the unit.

Due to the nature of the environment, the personnel must be selected by strict criteria. The officer must have street experience and be tactically correct. Officer safety is a primary concern. Gang experience is obviously helpful however; “good” personnel can learn new things. The team member must be liked by peers and supervisors. He/she must be tenacious, flexible, thorough, and approachable. He/she must

have excellent written and oral skills, both with peers as well as the public. They must be an excellent listener and pay attention to detail. Above all, they must have a consistent work ethic and strive to do complete investigations no matter how small the incident. Supervisors assigned must also be highly motivated and consistent. There can be no question as to the identity of the team leader or the clarity of his/her orders and directions. The team must believe in the supervisor, or it will fail. You are selecting personnel for their specific strengths and their ability to adapt to new environments. The team leader must be a special person in that he/she is an integral part of the team as well as a supervisor/disciplinarian.

### **Team Configurations**

Individual team size can be tailored in many ways. Are they a dedicated gang team or a special problems unit? Are they working separate investigations, or are they assisting investigators already in place? The size of the team can and should change depending on the needs of the agency/community. The team may depend on the needs of the agency/community. The team may need a dedicated supervisor depending on the workload or the tactics to be used. If the team is regional, there may be a rotation of personnel or supervisors to maintain local knowledge however, consistency of command is the utmost concern. Supervision should be relative to the age of the team. Once the team is selected and in place, let them do their job. They were selected for having all the things necessary to accomplish the mission; consequently, they should be allowed to operate without a tight leash. Personnel conflicts should be dealt with immediately so as not to detract from the team or its mission.

### **Investigations**

Gang investigations can go in many directions and encompass many different unit or agency assignments. Many times a gang investigator will work a simple vandalism at the same time he is investigating a murder. Assaults and robberies are commonplace. Yet, many times, the incident will be perpetrated by juveniles, which may be handled differently depending on the unit or agency. There must be specific responsibility in the assignment of cases (i.e., gang unit vs. Detective bureau or even individual teams inside of the gang unit - black, Hispanic, Asian, etc). Crime specific investigative teams may also "share" responsibility for the case. Consistency will make the difference in the outcome of the case. The utilization of directed patrols, bike teams, surveillance or undercover operations, special weapons teams, etc., must all be decided. Ultimately, the investigator must determine what will work best to accomplish the appropriate outcome to the investigation.

### **Targeting**

In order to initiate a gang investigation, you must identify the problem. Either through patrol, detectives, community-based organizations or the community, the information is received. The team or unit must verify the information for validity. The unit must determine the extent of the gang problem. By switching to an intelligence "gathering" mode, you can determine the extent of the gangs depth in the area. The below listed information should be sought by each investigator, each time a suspected gang member is contacted. Only when sufficient intelligence is known by the unit can it effectively deal with the gang. There are several areas which should be addressed:

## (A) THE GANG

Identify the gang and its activity. Identify its history in the area.

Identify the area or “turf” (Are they local or transient?).

Identify the hangouts (parks, arcades, malls, restaurants, etc.).

Are they violent? What type of weapons do they use? What type of drugs do they use/sell? Do they commit personal or property crimes? Do they commit crimes out of their area or in the local area? Who are their rivals?

## (B) THE REMEDY

Target a specific gang. Many gangs in the area may be ruled out due to the type of crimes being committed by other more “active” gangs in the area. Target the most active, the most violent, most controversial, etc.

Liaison with other units effected by or involved in those crimes.

Decide on a solution and the impact required/desired, as well as an appropriate time line for both the mission and the goal.

Identify the scope and capability of the team. Target the gang or gangs that can be dealt with by the team effectively.

Identify and target the inner structure of the gang; O/G or veterano, hardcore gangster, associates, etc.

Target the dominant or prominent “personality” to remove the drive or “coaching” from within.

Target the gangster for activity. Target the associates for future activity and intelligence for “at risk” follow-up.

Continue to identify all gangsters in the area for local or regional database purposes.

### **Investigative Tools/tactics**

There are very few “tricks” that solve crimes. Most investigations are solved by consistent, persistent police work. The unit must have and keep current, up-to-date information as it relates to the gang and its membership. The unit must be current in the trends of all gangs in the area as well as the surrounding agency areas. The unit must be aware of weapons used by the local gangs; along with similar lines, the investigators must be current in their “street” tactics and training. You must know what you and/or your unit are capable of. Be aware and rely on specialized units, if they are available to you. Keep current on and have a strong working knowledge of all areas of law that affect the goal or mission of the unit. (i.e. Federal, State or local municipal codes).

The use of a database greatly enhances the abilities of the team. It can either be local or regional, but all information must be in two categories in order to accomplish the mission current and shared. There are very few secrets in dealing with gangs. The lack of current information will slow or even stop an investigation. Further, it could prove embarrassing in a court room or civil litigation setting. Any information that can be released to other local organizations should be at the appropriate time. Many trends or advances made by the gangs go unnoticed by surrounding agencies because no one took the time to tell them. Considering the mobility of gangs today, this could present serious concerns for other law enforcement officers.

The use of state and federal computer systems are also important to the successful outcome of an event. Warrant checks, personal history, or raps-type information can show tendencies toward crimes or violence. Local crime analysis units can show crime trends and time frames. The collective use of

probation and parole officer information, as well as that of local school officials, can speed up the conclusion of a case or an entire program goal. The use of random probation and parole searches of gang member residences can and does keep the gangs on edge and off balance.

### **Task Force And Joint Operations**

Task forcing can be extremely beneficial to a jurisdiction that cannot devote a lot of manpower to a problem or when the scope of the investigation is so large and complex that it would be too labor intensive for an individual unit. There must be specific rules in place however, before any investigations are begun.

- 4) Identify the size of the problem.
- 5) Identify a specific goal of the operation. This goal must be attainable. The goal must be flexible. If, after an evaluation period it appears unattainable, changes need to be made.
- 6) Select an appropriate time line. The goal must be reached in a specific length of time in order to have the operation function properly. A check system should be in place so as to evaluate the time line to see if it is realistic. (if the operation is of two years duration, possibly evaluate the program at six-month intervals). Maybe you would actually need two and a half or three years to reach an appropriate solution.
- 7) Select the proper personnel to attain the goal.
- 8) Utilize Federal law enforcement as needed. They have access to specialized manpower, logistical, and budgetary support that can supersede most agencies.
- 9) Utilize local law enforcement for specific knowledge of the gang or problem and the area.
- 10) Utilize a City or District Attorney as well as a U.S. Attorney for prosecutions. Any and all laws that are applicable should be discussed in working towards the goal.
- 11) Utilize one supervisor. By all members answering to the same person and playing by the same rules, individual members of different agencies are less likely to be confused by “political” decisions which may arise.

Many times different agencies will want to engage in an operation together but will not want to relinquish control of their “idea” or personnel. This weighs heavy on all line personnel involved because they have or are no longer in control of themselves.

When the latter occurs, a “joint operation” can work. Joint ops are born out of common need or necessity. If all organizations meet with a common goal and individual missions to accomplish the task, no one loses control of any resources, and all, hopefully, benefit from the rewards. The same rules for task forces would also apply (in moderation) to joint ops.

### **Interviews Victim/witness**

“Seasoned” gang investigators will tell you that most victims and witnesses to gang incidents will talk to you if they think you care about them. This is a perception that must be flagged. By being involved in their life, you can make great headway. Most victims want help, but due to the nature of the event, will be afraid. You must convince the “good” victim that there are random crimes, and barring any causal factor that the victim may be in control of, this will not likely happen again. They must know that they can call on you when they have questions or if they “think” of something else. You must use cognitive interviewing techniques. While interviewing the victim or witness, put them into a “box” watching the event unfold. Have them see the event much like a fly on a wall, moving from wall to wall. What did you see; what did you hear; what did you smell? The investigator must tell the victim/witness what to expect in the future. Local intimidation, vandalism, or even “hard” looks can occur. Arraignments, line-ups, preliminary hearings, trials will all work to dissuade a person from testifying.



Many times an investigator will be called on to contact, transport, and sometimes babysit his witnesses. This will however ensure that they do show up to court and don't become hostile toward the system.

Dealing with gang member victim/witnesses is challenging at best. They may or may not "see" anything. It is very possible that a gang member lying in an emergency room being treated for a gunshot wound will deny being shot. His or her "code of silence" toward law enforcement may be greater than his/her need to help you solve the case. Most often, however, they will tell you "most" of what they know. They may plan on "handling" the case to their own satisfaction, but by giving you information, they can gain in a couple of areas. If they don't know who the suspects are, you may identify them for the victim gang. If they already know, the suspect gang will suffer from prosecution plus retaliation. Many gang members will tell you who the suspect is out of anger toward the other gang or gang member. Some crimes, especially violent ones against parents or children, are not tolerated.

Gang members feel remorse for their "homie" or family member, when they are injured or killed. Hoping that no one else from his/her set gets hurt, they may tell you suspect information. Since most gang incidents involve gang members, many victims and witnesses will not want intervention by law enforcement. "Good" victims will be uneasy about further follow-up fearing retaliation by the gang, opting for a "let's forget the whole thing" kind of attitude.

Each victim and witness must be given personal attention. Whenever possible, always deal face to face. A phone call doesn't convey the "kind, caring" attitude that you want to exude. Faces are easier to read in person than on the telephone. It is usually easy to tell by expression or body language if you are being told the truth. It is easier to see the rival tattoos or colors if you see the person in question. All victims and witnesses should have their own statements. Don't allow a report to show multiple victims and/or witnesses that have an interview with victim #1, and then the others "stated substantially the same thing." All people see things differently. All perspectives will vary and you need to know what all of those perspectives will vary and you need to know what all of those perspectives are. In any investigations and especially in "officer-involved" investigations, all "non-witnesses" need to be interviewed as well. Many times persons unknown to the investigator will appear at court as defense or hostile witnesses. These witnesses didn't know anything at the time of the incident, but may have learned it later. Due to their "lack of knowledge" at the time, their personal information wasn't considered needed; consequently it was deleted or overlooked. By acknowledging in the report that this person stated that he didn't see or hear anything, or was at the scene at which he didn't see or hear anything, or wasn't at the scene during the incident, his testimony can be refuted at the time of the trial. Many times a gang member will tell you something in confidence at the scene of the incident, but will deny it later. This may be the only chance you get to progress in the case. Capitalize on it. Most gang members have "good" information.

### **Interrogations**

Interrogations or suspect interviews can be very fruitful. Most new investigators or non gang investigators think that the suspect "cop-out" is a myth and that the interview with a "hardcore" gang member is a waste of time. This can't be farther from the truth. Although most gang members will be somewhat shy in their willingness to give up information, most will usually come around, with persistence. There are several areas of the interview that can be addressed by the interviewer.

Get in the habit of addressing personal information or gang information first; such as name, age, and number of family members who live with the suspect. This will make the interview more personal for the suspect, and you will have it for future search warrant preparations. It might be helpful to know that there are at least ten people living in the house when you force that door next month. It can prove

beneficial to other investigators to know that there are three generations of gang members living in the house and that two of them are twins. How long have they been a gang member? Did they jump in, or did they walk in? Who jumped then in? Whom do you kick it with? Where? All of these questions show interest in him/her or your part. All of these questions will tell you of his status in the gang. If he is from the neighborhood, maybe he didn't have to jump in. Whom he hangs out with tells you the type of gangster he may be. Is he a tiny, a pee wee, a "G" or what? Where he "kicks it" will tell the interviewer what class of gangster he is: parks, arcades, pool halls, etc. Divide the gang by age group and ultimately by personality.

The gang admission in your interviews and reports should be written in the same place in all of your reports for consistency. By documenting the admissions, this information is recorded for future use. In court proceeding a year or two from now the defense attorney will try to convince the jury that his client was never a gang member. Either you or another investigator will be able to show your documentation to refute that allegation.

- 1) Be low key, yet aggressive. Be tenacious with your questioning and don't readily accept "I don't know" for an answer.
- 2) Look at all of the evidence, and if at all possible, the crime scene, before you conduct an interview, and certainly afterward. You can better relate to what the suspect is telling you if you understand where they were or where the victim was. Your personal knowledge of the scene will help you dispute self-serving statements by the suspect. Further, if a long court process does develop, be sure to take the prosecuting attorney to the scene at the same time that the crime occurred. This will give them a time frame perspective for lighting, pedestrian traffic, etc.
- 3) During the course of the interview, you are looking to find out all the facts, not just some. Consequently, by starting the suspect at the beginning of his day and not just at the time of the incident, you will be able to develop his concept of time. By bringing him along slowly, the suspect loses the edge of having his "story" straight. He must think about other things and will usually tell the truth. You will learn his body language when he does versus when he begins to lie. By narrowing down the time it takes to go from place to place or to hang out, you may be able to prove to the suspect that by his own words, he is lying.
- 4) Work towards self-serving statements by playing up the suspect's ego and the gang notoriety; the suspect may very well begin to boast, by talking down the gravity of the incident and the fact that "you didn't really mean to hurt anyone did you"? you allow the suspect an out. Once he places himself at the scene or in the area, you have common ground to build on.
- 5) Once you have received a confession or even the suspects version of the event, if time allows, you must investigate this also, by disproving the suspect's statements or story; by interviewing his/her witnesses with his/her version of the events, you will present a better case in court.

Understanding the basic areas to address will help your investigations progress with more success. Unfortunately, court or geographic time frames will always be working against you. The above five fields are offered as food for thought. You may be unable to view the crime scene or evidence.

## **Informants**

Informants are an integral part of gang investigations. Due to the violent nature of gang retaliation, informants on gang type cases don't readily volunteer. Many times you have to cultivate them over a period of weeks or even months. Often times however, you will be facing a suspect in custody that wants "to deal." Informants can be anyone with information. Some are concerned neighbors, fellow gang members, or their families, or professional "paid" informants. The latter are extremely useful in purchasing either drugs or guns. They can be introduced into an area, do a deal, then leave, not having to return again.

Local citizens with no ties to the gang are the best "court" informants, yet the hardest to cultivate. Many times they will be extremely reluctant to talk to you or have you come to their home. They may be willing to call you at a moment's notice when they see something, yet they won't talk to you face to face, nor would they ever go to court.

Gang members and their families are very dependable when they want or need something. You as investigators must always question the motive for the exchange. Anger, retaliation, and money all will surface as motive for information. Each informant must be scrutinized carefully before the case moves forward in order to preserve a "quality" investigation. Investigators should hand out business cards to all members of the gang that you contact. If your informant is found to have a business card in his possession, he can counter questions from others with the fact that "everyone got one." In subsequent searches or arrests, your informant may also be included to protect his identity as well as keep them under control.

## **Search Warrants**

Search warrants are an excellent tool in a gang investigation. As with any investigation where you are looking for evidence, certain rules must be followed to promote fruitful and lawful searches. These will obviously vary from county to county or state to state.

The location is never just another house. From a gang investigation standpoint, these entries can be very informative, but also very dangerous. Anytime that the opportunity presents itself, search warrants should be considered. The ability to get into a gang member's home can help tremendously in locating suspects, evidence, and membership paraphernalia. The point of the warrant is to be thorough and have the best possible case to present in court. In addition to that, the intelligence gathered can solve many cases that you were or were not aware of before an entry was made. Several details must be covered in order to afford the maximum amount of safety to the entry team.

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- 1) Attempt to identify all occupants of the location. This may require surveillance, research of old contacts or reports, etc. Check each person individually for criminal history, warrants, weapons registrations, etc. Attempt to locate photographs of your suspect(s) and include them. Run vehicles parked at the location for registration information, and run those persons as well if they are different. If your system is capable, run the location

by address for warrants or previous calls for service. Patrol might have been there on “a man with a gun” call or something similar that might be of interest to the entry team.

- 2) If you have the time, utilize informants for familial information. Also, when you conduct your interviews, ask about relatives, family, and close friends that live nearby. It could be handy to know that the residents in the apartments on either side of your suspect are also family or fellow gang members.
- 3) Sometimes a single location is not enough to complete the investigation. At times, several, if not many, locations may need to be searched. Multi-location warrants take on a life of their own. The operation gets bigger and bigger. The amount of locations can only be determined by the amount of personnel to effectively search them. You must maintain control of the warrant at all costs. A problem may arise in that warrant entries may be choreographed by a unit different than the investigating unit. The investigator must remain in constant contact with any changes. Only the investigator knows what is evidence to his case. A multi-location warrant has the most devastating impact on a gang. When the majority of the houses in a “set” get hit simultaneously, it creates chaos in the organization. The neighborhood sees that something is finally being done about their problem.

You cannot rush a multi-location warrant; however, three or more should be considered a “multi” for writing purposes. Many times the term “association” warrant will be used. “Association” warrants are designed to go after all of the members of a gang who associate with each other during a specific period of time. The association warrant is extremely useful when two different gangs are embroiled in an ongoing series of incidents that can span weeks, months, or even years.

Each location in the warrant must qualify on its own merits, then be added to the next. When the warrant is completed, you can add probation or parole locations that have search conditions. Another strategy is to hit multis in waves. This is an excellent way to protect your informants. If you hit several locations, wait a day or two, then hit several more, the suspects won’t know who is talking to you and who is not. If their house was not hit in the first wave, they may feel safe to move evidence or guns to that location. Then you strike again. You must remember that manageability is the key. You may resort to specialized details or other agencies to assist you in the service. To remain in control of the operation when it is this big, however, you must give up control of smaller tasks. Designate someone or a specific team scout and photo all houses. Have someone else run all suspects and residences. Someone else scouts routes to and from hospitals or landing sites for medical evacuations, staging sites or command post locations etc.

Report writing and evidence verification are also critical in a large operation. Here again you may want to place specific personnel in the position of report writing and documentation. Evidence held and recorded might be more consistent if completed by a pre-selected member(s) of the team. With one person in charge of evidence, the documentation is again consistent with what the investigator wants or needs. All evidence should be photographed in place whenever possible.

Upon leaving the location, the team should video tape the entire structure, all occupants, and the entry team approach. This will be useful later on, if litigation arises or future entries are dictated. Also, a hard copy of the floor plan should be generated to stay in file for future entries as well. Many agencies put these directly into their database files with the suspect information.

Any time that you commit to an operation that is “out of the ordinary,” you will generally benefit from notifying the local press. At the time of your invitation to them, you are able to “control” the information that they initially receive. The press can show “your” side of the problem. They will almost always want to go along for “action” or “photo opportunities” with an entry or a search, but this is obviously an individual decision.

### **Prosecutions**

Any time that you are able to pre-plan an operation, you will be much more prepared to deal with problems that arise. This also holds true for the prosecutor’s office. If you are undertaking a program to combat a specific problem, the prosecution and even some judges should know about it. If this will be a long term event with many prosecutions or a possible abatement procedure, the ability to have the prosecutor’s office on line at the beginning of the project will help enormously. Prosecutors who are specifically “briefed” on the problem or who have expertise in your problem area will be most beneficial. Further, probation or parole agencies should also be forewarned about the intent of the program and the possible increase in their respective case loads. When dealing with specific prosecutors or enforcement officers, ride-along opportunities may help you to enhance their perspective of the problem and your solution.

If arrests are a part of the plan to reach your goal, obviously, all applicable charges should be used. No charge is too small to be concerned with. Most neighborhoods are affected by an abundance of different felony crimes, sometimes causing misdemeanors that are occurring to be overlooked. Curfew, truancy, municipal code, health code, and penal code laws should all be considered when conducting a “zero tolerance” position. Later, if a deal is to be made by prosecutors, two or more charges can give them more bargaining power than just one. Additionally, special state or federal violations can also be helpful when applicable. This is also a viable option when seeking probation or parole violations coupled with the utilization of a dedicated prosecutor, the case filing, arraignment, preliminary and/or subsequent trials or plea bargains will stay much more consistent with the unit goals or mission.

### **Departmental Approach to Street Gangs**

Safe Streets Bureau of Field Operations Region II of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department is assigned the responsibility for management of the gang problem within the Department’s jurisdiction. Safe Streets Bureau has Operation Safe Streets, which are teams of gang investigators and Gang Enforcement Teams assigned to those station areas most affected by the gangs. That office may be reached at telephone number (310) 603-3100 or by writing:

Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department  
Safe Streets Bureau  
3010 E. Victoria St.  
Rancho Dominguez, CA 90221

### **Operation Safe Streets (OSS)**

OSS is a program of selective enforcement aimed at combating the criminal activities of targeted hard-core gangs and, at the same time, moving to discourage followers from continuing in gang activities. Initially funded through a grant from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration in January 1979, federal funding has since ceased, and the program has been adopted as a Departmental function. Originally implemented in four selected areas in Los Angeles County (East Los Angeles, Lennox,

Lynwood, and Pico Rivera Stations), it has since expanded to several other station areas that are suffering violent gang activity.

The unit has more than 70 Sheriff's personnel assigned on a permanent basis, experienced in all phases of street gang activities, working in a non-uniformed capacity. The unit is responsible for investigation of crimes committed by streets in the "targeted" areas. The unit works in conjunction with other law enforcement agencies, probation, parole, and district attorneys in their endeavor to prosecute gang members for their criminal activity.

OSS has developed and maintains a Gang Reporting, Evaluation And Tracking (GREAT) computer system in conjunction with other local agencies with grant funds from the Office of Criminal Justice Planning. This automated system is designed to be an investigative tool to assist gang investigators in identifying gang members and their criminal activities.

### **Philosophy**

The philosophy of OSS is to vigorously prosecute and incarcerate the hard-core violent gang members of selected target gangs. Target gang's are chosen by the number of members, the amount of violence, and their geographical area, in relation to other gangs in the station area. By patrolling these areas and through the investigation of each gangs' criminal acts, it is hoped that eventually the particular gang will no longer be considered a major problem.

The OSS program directly attacks the total gang problem by dealing firmly with hard-core target gangs and giving them the highest enforcement priority. OSS has proven to be an effective pro-active method of preventing gang violence as well as apprehending, and convicting serious gang offenders.

### **Training**

OSS, in conjunction with the Advanced Officer Training staff, has developed and organized an informative Street Gang and Sub-Culture School that is offered to all law enforcement agencies across the nation. The school encompasses the wide range of street gang investigations from the sociology of gangs to prosecution of the offender.

OSS is consistently involved in providing training to other agencies or community groups, along with a Ride-Along Program for agencies wishing to participate.

## **Gang Enforcement Teams (GET)**

Due to recent escalations in gang violence across the nation, and particularly in Los Angeles, the Department identified five station areas in special need of additional gang violence suppressive efforts. This need was met by establishment of the GET teams.

This unit consists of 51 uniformed Sheriff's personnel divided into five teams, assigned to the most heavily gang-impacted station areas. Relieved of handling routine calls, the teams respond to those calls suspected of being gang involved. Their patrol endeavors are concentrated in those areas frequented by gang members and where reported violent gang activity is commonplace. Through this unit's specialized patrol efforts, it is hoped that gang activity will decrease.

## **Success Through Awareness and Resistance**

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's STAR is a law enforcement/school partnership that offers instructional and curriculum flexibility, as well as community and parental involvement with the problems of substance abuse. Targeting grades four, five and six, STAR deputies and school site educators co-facilitate lessons that focus on developing the self-esteem, decision-making, and coping skills necessary to resist peer pressure. It gives the children a solid platform from which to make sound decisions about the way they live their lives. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's STAR Program works with children in the 4th, 5th and 6th grades in over 415 elementary schools, in 54 separate school districts.

No single program is going to solve the problems of drug abuse or the gang violence facing our nation; but STAR, in concert with continuing strong enforcement efforts and support from the state and federal level, will be a significant factor in solving these serious social problems over the course of time.

## **Community / Law Enforcement Partnership Program**

The Community/Law Enforcement Partnership Program (CLEPP) was developed in 1991 by Sheriff Sherman Block to provide stations with additional expertise in mobilizing and organizing their communities against gangs, drugs, and violence. A key element to this successful approach is the coordination of the activities of law enforcement, schools, community-based organizations, churches, businesses, local government, and residents for the mobilization of the entire community.

Communities experiencing emerging, middle, and chronic symptoms need help in recognizing, not denying the problems; knowing what is available in their community as resources and how to access them; holding neighborhood meetings and encouraging involvement. The CLEPP complements traditional law enforcement units as a resource for all stations and residents, acting as troubleshooters, action planners, and meeting facilitators. CLEPP staff organize the follow-through and provide the technical assistance that is necessary for communities to continue on their quest for gang-drug and violence-free neighborhoods.

## **Crime Prevention and Community Oriented Policing:**

CLEPP maintains a clearing house and oversight responsibility of the Department's Crime Prevention and Community Relations programs by providing monthly meetings, newsletters, resource directories, and training for all staff.

## **City/Town Council Academy:**

CLEPP works closely with the Departments's Contract Law Enforcement Bureau in facilitating the City/Town Council Academy, held twice a year to increase the communication, awareness and education of contract city and unincorporated town council members. This program also gives participants the opportunity to role play in an interactive "Shoot, Don't Shoot" exercise, which gives them a greater understanding and appreciation on the day-to-day activities the deputies encounter.

### **Summary:**

The Community/Law Enforcement Partnership Program is designed to provide:

- A. Interact with departmental executives, agency heads, and community leaders in establishing goals and formalizing strategies to meet the needs of the department and the community.
- B. Provide community mobilization expertise to station commanders and aid in the organizing of the strategies to be used.
- C. Assist the station commanders in developing and coordinating the anti-gang efforts at the local station level.
- D. Provide program continuity for station command personnel as they transfer in and out.
- E. Review and evaluate community-based organizations/programs that seek the support of the department.

### **Parental Early Warning And Intervention of Gang Involvement (Alert):**

This program is designed to limit gang recruitment of juveniles below the age of 18. The focus by Gang Enforcement Team deputies is on at-risk-juveniles who are not hardcore gang members and have had minimum law enforcement contacts. Once a gang unit deputy has identified a youth of being at risk of gang involvement, he generates a letter of warning to the parents, alerting them of their child's proclivity toward gang life. The gang unit deputies will then visit the home and meet with the parents in an effort to educate them on the warning signs of gang involvement. They will also provide a list of community resources available to assist the parents in deterring the juvenile's activity. Follow-up by the officers ensures that appropriate corrective avenues for the juvenile are being followed. .

Programs such as this provide several things to the gang investigator, the primary one being that the parents, having been warned, hopefully will take advantage of the warning and modify the behavior of the youth. They facilitate by steering him/her away from the gang lifestyle, providing a productive citizen to the community, and thus reducing the case load of the investigator. If this approach fails to dissuade the gang active individual, it provides the investigator with an intelligence source of probable up-and-coming gang members. It will also deflect the parental excuses that are common among gang-involved families that they had no idea that the youth was involved or that the authorities never offered any form of assistance.

### **Gang Abatement in Neighborhoods (GAIN):**

This program has proved to be successful in suppressing gang violence on a short-term basis. Prior to implementation it is necessary that the night of the week that has the highest volume and/or most violent gang activity is identified. The program then targets that area for gang suppression efforts. The local OSS gang team prepares an operations plan and directs the efforts of the responding deputies. All GET teams and representatives from all OSS teams (11 teams) converge on the targeted area and provide directed patrol saturation. The high visibility of both uniformed and plain clothes gang officers has



shown that in those selected areas gang activity is dramatically reduced during the hours of the operation. This type of saturation patrol is not a cure-all for gang activity; it is strictly suppression of the activity for a given time period.

### **Gang Enforcement Bike Team:**

The Gang Enforcement Bike Team is an approach to deal with gangs in parks, housing projects, apartment complexes, and business districts. A team of gang trained deputies, drawn from the gang unit, is trained to utilize the bicycles to cover areas that are inaccessible, or at best, difficult to access in cars. In the bike team configuration they can make their presence known in these difficult areas, and meet gang members in an atmosphere different from those of the standard uniformed patrol confrontations. This contact can lead to establishment of a rapport that can be more casual or, if need be, make the gang members feel less comfortable in conducting criminal activity in these areas, due to sudden appearance of the bike teams.

## **Special Acknowledgments**

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    - Gang Enforcement Teams
    - Southern California Neighborhoods Alliance Against Graffiti (SCNAAG)
  - Special Investigations Bureau
    - Prison Gang Detail
    - Asian Gang Detail
  - Homicide Bureau
  - Community/Law Enforcement Partnership Programs
- California Gang Investigator's Association
- Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office (Hardcore Division)
- Los Angeles Police Department
- Huntington Beach Police Department (Sgt. R.K. Miller)
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