"This Wrong Being Done to My People":
Street Gangs, Historical Agency, and Crime Politics in Postwar America

Megan Stubbendeck
New York, NY

B.A., Binghamton University, 2004
M.A., University of Virginia, 2005

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ABSTRACT

For over two hundred years, street gangs have existed in American cities, yet gang violence did not become a sustained national concern until after World War II. Beginning in 1945, the number of cities reporting gang violence expanded and the number of identified gang members grew exponentially. As a result, from the late 1950s through the early 1990s, gang violence became a sustained national crime issue.

This dissertation uncovers how ideas about gangs changed during this period and who was responsible for these changes. It analyzes how different groups shaped the federal government's response to gang violence and the political battles this process entailed. Generally, scholars focus on politicians and the news media as the primary architects of crime-related politics. This study, however, argues that although these actors helped make gangs a political issue, police officers, minority leaders, and gang members played a central role as well. Each of these groups developed their own understandings of street gangs, which included perceptions about the types of activities gangs partook in, what caused gang-related crime, and the racial composition of American gangs. In turn, each group proposed unique solutions specific to their understandings of the "gang issue." Through these proposals—and working in conjunction with journalists, sociologists, social workers, and federal officials—these actors determined the crime-fighting solutions available to lawmakers. In doing so, they helped make crime a political battleground at the federal level and took part in constructing national crime policy. These efforts gave rise to two divergent forms of crime control—one liberal and one conservative—in the 1960s and early 1970s, followed by increasingly punitive policies in

the 1980s and 1990s. By incorporating these oft-ignored actors, this study explains why

lawmakers made the policy decisions that ultimately resulted in the modern carceral state.

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I would like to thank my advisor, Grace Elizabeth Hale. Without her constant advice, insightful critiques, and trust in me, graduate school would have been much longer and much more difficult. As a reader, her discerning eye (and willingness to read multiple versions of each chapter) made this dissertation infinitely stronger. I am grateful for the time that my entire committee—Claudrena Harold, Brian Balogh, and Lawrie Balfour—devoted to this process. Their comments have inspired me to approach my topic in new ways and to look forward to the manuscript-writing phase. To have worked with each of them was an honor. Eric Schneider has also been an invaluable mentor at various stages in the drafting process. His thoughts on the state of the field and his feedback on chapters sharpened my own approach immensely. Much thanks is due to other scholars who have provided suggestions or have commented on papers that eventually grew into chapters: Kent Germany, Vesla Weaver, Heather Ann Thompson, Lily Geismer, Alice O'Connor, Daniel Amsterdam, Alexander von Hoffman, and Mary Ellen Curtin.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms
CBC	Congressional Black Caucus
CHC	Congressional Hispanic Caucus
CIN	Crisis Intervention Network
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
CPD	Chicago Police Department
CRASH	Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums
CUCOHC	Columbia University Center for Oral History Collection
CYGS	Community Youth Gang Services
DEA	Drug Enforcement Agency
DLC	Democratic Leadership Council
DOJ	Department of Justice
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FOP	Fraternal Order of Police
GIU	Gang Intelligence Unit of the Chicago Police Department
HEW	Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
IACP	International Association of Chiefs of Police
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Service
LADA	Los Angeles District Attorney
LAPD	Los Angeles Police Department
LULAC	League of United Latin American Citizens

MADD   Mothers Against Drunk Driving

MAD DADS   Men Against Destruction—Defending Against Drugs and Social Disorder

MALDEF   Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund

MFY   Mobilization for Youth

NAACP   National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

NOI   Nation of Islam

NYCYB   New York City Youth Board

NYPD   New York Police Department

OEO   Office of Economic Opportunity

PBA   Patrolmen's Benevolent Association

RGS   Real Great Society

RICO   Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act

RNC   Republican National Committee

SCLC   Southern Christian Leadership Conference

SNCC   Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

SO SAD   Save Our Sons and Daughters

STEP   Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Act

TWO   The Woodlawn Organization

UNO   United Neighborhoods Organization

WCMC   Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago

YMCA   Young Men's Christian Association

YOU   Youth Organizations United

Introduction

Gangs, Crime Politics, and the Carceral State

On August 19, 1957, the National Theater in Washington, DC was packed for the opening of Leonard Bernstein and Steven Sondheim's new musical, *West Side Story*. In attendance were members of President Eisenhower's staff, Senator Jacob Javits, Robert F. Kennedy's wife Ethel Kennedy, and Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter. As the curtain fell after the final number, spectators reported that there was silence in the house. At first no one moved, clapped, or even whispered. Then suddenly the crowd erupted into a long standing ovation.[1] Bernstein's musical had captured the dirty, sweltering streets of summertime in New York, but he had also deftly tapped into the new and disconcerting world of street gangs. Based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the story follows two teenage lovers, Italian Tony and Puerto Rican Maria, torn apart by their affiliations with the warring Sharks and Jets. But their attempts to overcome these divisions are fruitless in the face of the gang violence that one reviewer described as the "malevolence of underage gorillas impervious to reason."[2] *West Side Story* depicts the cruelty of the gangs' members through inventive dance scenes with the knives, chains, and fists that had become integral to gang "rumbles" (fights) in the 1950s. It is one of these fights that leads ultimately to Tony's death in the finale. Weeping over Tony's body, Maria castigates the other gang members—and by extension the American audience—for the

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[1] Humphrey Burton, *Leonard Bernstein* (New York: Random House, 1994), chap. 26.
[2] Brooks Atkinson, "'West Side Story': Moving Music Drama on Callous Theme," *New York Times*, October 6, 1957, 133.

hate and indifference that has caused the gang war. Hanging their heads in remorse, both the Sharks and Jets overcome their animosity and together carry Tony's body away.

When audience members at the National Theater celebrated the show, they did more than applaud groundbreaking choreography and an inventive score. They—and the audiences who first saw the movie version in 1961—believed that *West Side Story* accurately expressed the dangers of gang violence.[3] Snapping their fingers and singing about rumbles, knives, and street honor, the fictional gang members embodied real public fears about urban violence in the 1950s. Bernstein's music and Sondheim's witty lyrics also tapped into contemporary understandings of what caused youth gangs. The composers constructed a world of gang members that, although violent, were rational young men and women trying their best to overcome unloving parents, an uncaring society, inept social workers, and dull-witted police. When a local storeowner portrayed in the film gripes to one of the Jets, "You kids are making this a lousy world," the gang member quickly retorts, "But that's the way we found it." By portraying gang members as both perpetrators and victims, *West Side Story* suggested that many gangs were ultimately redeemable if only society would address the problem.[4]

Thirty years later, another gang film riveted national attention, but the message about gangs and their violence was starkly different. *Colors*, written and directed by Dennis Hopper, had none of the playful lyrics or redemptive gang members found in *West Side Story*. Set in Los Angeles in the mid 1980s, *Colors* followed the daily street

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[3] Brooks Atkinson, "Theatre: The Jungles of the City," *New York Times*, September 27, 1957, 14; Everett H. Brenner, "Therapeutic Playgoing," *New York Times*, September 20, 1959, X3; Albert Goldberg, "'West Side Story' Had High Emotional Impact," *Los Angeles Times*, July 15, 1959, B1.

[4] *West Side Story*, directed by Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise (1961; Beverly Hills, CA: MGM Video & DVD, 1998), DVD.

struggles of two white Los Angeles cops, Officers McGavin and Hodges, members of the

infamous Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums (CRASH) unit of the Los

Angeles Police Department (LAPD). Throughout the film, Officer Hodges, a veteran cop,

tries to teach newcomer McGavin how to work with the mostly black and Latino gang

members who appear to control the city. Hodges tries to explain to McGavin that the key

is to treat the gangs with respect while still commanding authority and enforcing the law.

Although his strategy works at times, success seems fleeting against gang members who

use drive-by shootings, grenades, and automatic weapons. In one of the opening scenes,

which features defiant gang members shouting obscenities and throwing gang signs from

their jail cells, the film samples a song from rapper Ice T that depicts gangs as unstable,

unstoppable armies:

> I am a nightmare walking, psychopath talking
> King of my jungle just a gangster stalking.
> Living life like a firecracker quick is my fuse
> Then dead as a death pact the colors I choose.
> Red or Blue, Cuz or Blood, it just don't matter
> Suckers dive for your life when my shotgun scatters.
> We gangs of L.A. will never die—just multiply.

Though *Colors* ends with a climactic death scene, it doesn't contain the same

transformative remorse as *West Side Story*. Caught in a gunfight, Officer Hodges is shot

to death by a teenage gang member high on PCP and armed with an assault rifle. Hodges,

the movie's symbolic last voice of reason, dies bleeding in a junk lot in an increasingly

dangerous gang landscape that appears to be spinning beyond control.[5]

For many Americans at the time, the hopelessness of *Colors'* final scene captured

the senselessness of a new era of gang violence. Police officers and prosecutors who saw

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[5] *Colors*, directed by Dennis Hopper (1988; Beverly Hills: MGM Video & DVD, 2001), DVD.

the film felt that it accurately portrayed the weapons they faced and the seemingly

unwinnable "war on gangs."[6] It became such an accessible symbol of gang violence that

even President George H.W. Bush alluded to *Colors* in speeches that warned about the

rise of heavily-armed, drug-dealing gangs and the need for more police and prisons.[7] The

gang members of *Colors* were no longer the young, redeemable gang members of the

1950s. By the 1980s, gang members had become "psychopaths" impervious to reason or

help. *West Side Story* and *Colors* are cultural bookends for the history of street gangs in

postwar America. *West Side Story* represents the earliest iteration of postwar gangs and

the panic they produced, while *Colors* evinces the maturation of this fear and changing

opinions about gang violence. In fact, pundits in the 1980s and 1990s often used the

images of *West Side Story* gangs to lament how far gangs had fallen. In three decades,

gangs seemed to have become more vicious, more lethal, and more of a danger to

America.[8]

     The evolving perception of gangs is the starting point for this study. This

dissertation uncovers how ideas about gangs changed from the late 1950s through the

early 1990s and who was responsible for these changes. It analyzes how different groups

shaped the federal government's response to gang violence and the political battles this

process entailed. Generally, scholars focus on politicians, academics, and the news media

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[6] Janet Maslin, "Police vs. Street Gangs in Hopper's 'Colors'," *New York Times*, April 15, 1988, C4; Deborah Caulfield, "'Colors' Director Hopper Defends His Movie on LA Gangs," *Los Angeles Times*, March 25, 1988, Y18; Patrick Goldsmith, "'Colors'—A Gang Film That's Caught in a Crossfire," *Los Angeles Times*, April 14, 1988, H1; Montgomery Bower, "Gang Violence: Color It Real," *People*, May 2, 1988, 42–47.

[7] George H. W. Bush, "Remarks to the National Peace Officers' Memorial Day Ceremony," 15 May 1989, George Bush Presidential Library and Museum—Digital Collection, College Station, TX, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=420&year=&month=.

[8] For examples, see George F. Will, "A 'West Coast Story,' " *Newsweek*, March 28, 1988, 76; J.P. Pinkerton, "East Side Story," *American Spectator*, August 1990, 24–25.

as the primary architects of crime-related politics. This study, however, argues that

although these actors helped make gangs a political issue, police officers, minority

leaders, and gang members played a central role.[9] These last three groups used the issue

of gang violence to articulate opinions about crime and to politically mobilize for specific

anti-crime initiatives. In doing so, they helped make crime an issue at the federal level

and took part in constructing national crime policy. These groups and their political

activism explain the federal government's shifting approach to crime control: from first

embracing social services in the 1960s, to increasing punishment in the 1970s, and finally

to constructing a tough-on-crime carceral state by the 1990s.

Defining Gangs and Their Early History

Although the term "gang" has been in constant use for centuries, defining what

constitutes a gang is a difficult task. Today the most commonly used definition is one

proposed in 1971 by criminologist Malcolm Klein who described a gang as "any

denotable adolescent group of youngsters who (a) are generally perceived as a distinct

aggregation by others in their neighborhoods, (b) recognize themselves as a denotable

group (almost invariably with a group name) and (c) have been involved in a sufficient

number of delinquent incidents to call forth a consistent negative response from

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[9] I use the phrases "people of color," "nonwhite," and "minority" in this dissertation to describe African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. "Latino" refers to individuals who identify or are identified by sources as being from Latin American countries (including Mexico and Puerto Rico) or descending from these groups. At times, I use the term "Chicano," which applies only to those of Mexican heritage. "Asian" refers to individuals of Eastern and Southeast Asian descent, such as Chinese, Japanese, Hmong, Lao, and Vietnamese Americans.

neighborhood residents and/or enforcement agencies."[10] Some sociologists have

challenged this definition citing a number of weaknesses. This definition does not include

the large number of adults who are now members of gangs. It puts too much emphasis on

the negative aspects of gangs and does not account for changing definitions over time. In

fact, the term "gang" was used to describe all types of youth groups, delinquent and non-

delinquent, in the early twentieth century. Moreover, different groups in society label

gangs based on different criteria.[11] It is exactly the evolution of this term and the

divergent definitions of "gang" that are part of this study's focus. This dissertation

examines groups that the police, urban youth, scholars, community residents, activists,

journalists, or politicians labeled with the term "gang." It focuses specifically on street

gangs—gangs that identified themselves with and were confined to urban

neighborhoods—in order to better understand the role of this specific group in policies

and perceptions about urban-based crime. Other types of gangs, such as motorcycle gangs

and prison gangs, fall beyond this study because their structures and purposes were

different from street gangs and because the actors in this study considered street gangs a

distinct phenomenon.

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[10] Malcolm W. Klein, *Street Gangs and Street Workers* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971), 13.

[11] Ruth Horowitz, "Sociological Perspectives on Gangs: Conflicting Definitions and Concepts," in *Gangs in America*, ed. C. Ronald Huff (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990), 37–54; Robert J. Bursik Jr. and Harold G. Grasmick, "Defining and Researching Gangs," in *The Modern Gang Reader*, ed. Jody Miller, Cheryl L. Maxson, and Malcolm W. Klein, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Roxbury, 2001), 2–14; Perry Macon and John M. Hagedorn, *People and Folks: Gangs, Crime, and the Underclass in a Rustbelt City*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1998); Malcolm W. Klein and Cheryl L. Maxson, "Street Gang Violence," in *Violent Crime, Violent Criminals*, ed. Neil Alan Weiner and Marvin E. Wolfgang (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1989), 203–209; Irving A. Spergel, *The Youth Gang Problem: A Community Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 12–23.

Urban gangs have existed in American cities for over two centuries. The first gangs appeared in Northeastern cities as early as 1783, however, they received little attention until the 1830s when powerful gangs, such as the Bowery Boys and Dead Rabbits, formed in New York City's Five Points district. Made famous by Herbert Asbury's 1928 historical monograph *The Gangs of New York* and Martin Scorsese's 2002 movie of the same name, these early gang members were primarily white immigrants who took part in mass street violence and worked for corrupt political machines.[12] By the Civil War, white ethnic gangs had also emerged in Boston and Philadelphia. As American settlers moved west and cities began to appear on the frontier, so too did gangs. By the late 1890s, gangs surfaced on the West Coast in Los Angeles. Most of these gang members, however, were Mexican immigrants who rallied around cultural pride in the face of Anglo majorities in California.[13] By the turn of the century, Chicago had become a major gang city as well. In fact, Chicago was the focus of sociologist Frederic Thrasher's pioneering work on youth gangs and violence. In 1927 he published the first sociological study of gangs—documenting the existence of 1,313 mostly white youth gangs in Chicago—and established the field of gang studies.[14]

Despite this long history, gang violence did not become a sustained national concern until after World War II. After 1945, the number of cities reporting gang violence expanded and the number of identified gang members grew exponentially. In 1961, the first year that the federal government tabulated gang-related deaths, it identified

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[12] Herbert Asbury, *The Gangs of New York* (New York: Random House, 1928); *Gangs of New York,* directed by Martin Scorsese (2002; New York: Miramax Lionsgate, 2011), DVD.

[13] For a comprehensive overview of the early history of American gangs, see James C. Howell, *Gangs in America's Communities* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2011), 1–27.

[14] Frederic M. Thrasher, *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*, with a new foreword by James F. Short Jr., abridged ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

30 juveniles killed in gang violence, 1 percent of all homicides nationally.[15] By 1994, this

number reached a high of 1,157 homicides, nearly 6 percent of the national total.[16]

Statistics like these and news reports on the "horrors" of gang warfare sparked

nationwide moral panics about gangs throughout the postwar period.[17] During each of

these moments of panic, various actors—from law enforcement and ethnic minority

leaders to gang youth and national politicians—demanded that the federal government

find a solution to gang-related crime. Each group at different times and for different

reasons proposed their own solutions hoping to shape national policy. Through their

battles with one another, they constantly remade perceptions about gangs and gang

members, all while transforming crime into a vibrant political issue.[18]

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[15] Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Uniform Crime Reports for the United States—1961* (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, 1961), 12.

[16] Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States—1994* (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, 1995), 19–20.

[17] To enhance the applicability of this dissertation, I have chosen to focus on the debates and perceptions that rose to national prominence either by shaping politics at the federal level or by concurrently affecting multiple cities. At times, this study delves deeply into specific cities but does so because these locations set the standards for the nation or exemplified national trends. I recognize that gangs are generally local institutions and that gang structures and activities vary from city to city. But the gang phenomenon and panics about them were national. Focusing on the national level allows me to move beyond the traditional local focus of gang histories to clarify the most important trends that shaped a national crime conversation and the growth of a federally-supported carceral state. For more on geographic variation in gangs and gang trends, see Malcolm W. Klein, "Street Gang Cycles," in *Crime*, ed. James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia (San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies Press, 1995), 222–223; Walter B. Miller, *Crime by Youth Gangs and Groups in the United States* (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, 1982), 51.

[18] For a theoretical treatment of moral panics and their political implications, see Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (London: Routledge, 1972); David Garland, "On the Concept of Moral Panic," *Crime, Media, Culture* 4, no. 1 (2008): 9–30.

Historiography of Gangs, Crime, and the Carceral State

While on the surface this dissertation is a history of gangs, at its heart, it is a history of the carceral state and crime politics. For decades, historians have looked at what the nature of crimes can tell us about social relations in a given period and how responses to criminal acts reflected changing legal structures, cultural trends, and social mores. Over the last five years, however, historians have increasingly become interested in a very specific part of that history: the rise of the carceral state. Often referred to under a diversity of labels—"mass incarceration," "hyper-incarceration," "the punitive turn," and "the penal state"—the carceral state refers to the institutions, laws, customs, and politics that have created what political scientists Vesla Weaver and Amy Lerman call a "punishment-oriented system of governance" in modern America.[19] Under this new system, responses to crime and new modes of punishment have become central ways to expand the state's control of and interactions with its citizens. Scholars agree that the carceral state has had four fundamental effects. First, there has been explosive growth in the physical apparatus of the criminal justice system, such as new prisons, policing agencies, and surveillance technologies.[20] Second, there has been an unprecedented expansion of America's prison population. After decades of a relatively consistent and low number of prisoners, the population in federal and state prisons skyrocketed at the end of the twentieth century (Figure 1).

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[19] Vesla M. Weaver and Amy E. Lerman, "Political Consequences of the Carceral State," *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 4 (November 2010): 818.
[20] Marie Gottschalk, *The Prison and the Gallows: The Politics of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2, 22.
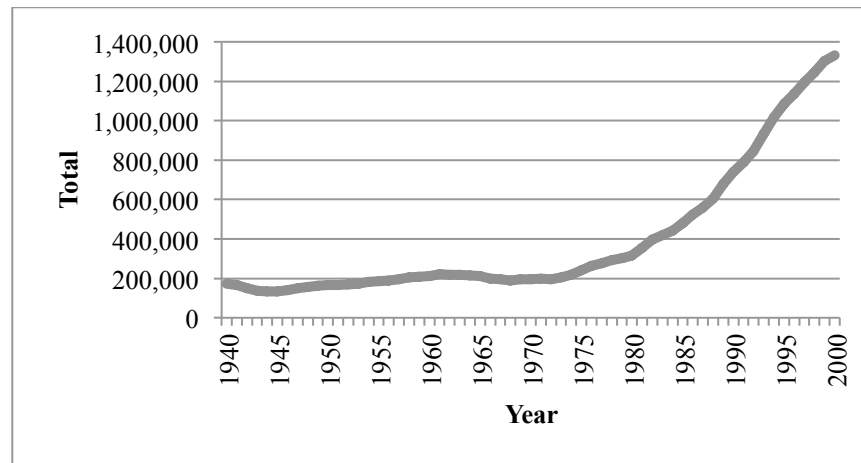
Figure 1. Number of sentenced prisoners in state and federal corrections institutions in the United States by year, 1940–2000. Source: *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics—2004*, Table 6.28.2004, http://www.albany.edu/sourcebook/pdf/t6282004.pdf.

This jump was not only historically unique but also geographically unparalleled. By the late 1980s, the United States incarcerated more prisoners and a higher percentage of its population than any nation in the world.[21] Third, the carceral state has resulted in a system that subjects an increasingly large number of spaces and people to police surveillance and suspicion. Physical spaces, such as schools, public housing complexes, and urban neighborhoods, face constant surveillance by law enforcement and oppressive legislation that specifically targets those who move within these spaces.[22] At the same time, the carceral state's effects have primary fallen on nonwhite—particularly black—

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[21] Marc Mauer, *Americans behind Bars: A Comparison of International Rates of Incarceration* (Washington, DC: Sentencing Project, 1991); Christopher Hartney, *US Rates of Incarceration: A Global Perspective* (Washington, DC: National Council on Crime and Delinquency, November 2006), https://www.nccdglobal.org/sites/default/files/publication_pdf/factsheet-us-incarceration.pdf.

[22] Heather Ann Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History," *Journal of American History* 97, no. 3 (December 2010): 703–734; Katherine Beckett and Steve Herbert, *Banished: The New Social Control in Urban America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

low-income Americans.[23] And fourth, the federal government has played an increasingly

powerful role in crime-related policymaking. Historically, responses to crime were

constitutionally delegated to local and state governments that devised their own criminal

codes, paid for their own prisons, and managed their own police forces and criminal

justice systems. Yet since the 1950s, the federal government's role in crime control has

expanded through new federal crime legislation, augmented federal funding for prisons

and police, and the use of crime issues in federal political campaigns. By intervening in

what was largely a disjointed local issue, federal officials helped centralize, strengthen,

and extend the institutions and politics that made the carceral state possible.[24] These four

effects have made the development of the carceral state one of the most important topics

in postwar historiography.

Studies of the carceral state actually began in the 1990s in the fields of sociology,

law, and political science. Scholars in these fields were the first to sketch out the

components of the carceral state and its effects on various economic and racial groups.

However, these studies often portray the carceral state as monolithic, predetermined, and

self-perpetuating. For example, Loïc Wacquant argues that prisons and punishment rose

because the state needed to warehouse marginalized groups who were unemployable in

the post-1970s economy and were no longer eligible for government support when the

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[23] Loïc Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, 2nd ed. (New York: New Press, 2012), 6; Gottschalk, *Prison and the Gallows*, 19.
[24] Nancy Marion, *A History of Federal Crime Control Initiatives, 1960–1993* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994); Samuel Walker, *Popular Justice: A History of American Criminal Justice*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 2–4; Ted Gest, *Crime and Politics: Big Government's Erratic Campaign for Law and Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

new "neoliberal state" slashed welfare programs.[25] While such interpretations insightfully analyze the ways that state power and economic changes have transformed the criminal justice system, they attribute agency to a faceless, omnipotent entity, "the state." By ignoring human actors, they imply that there was an inexorable march towards punishment and prisons and that citizens had neither the opportunity nor the desire to modify the carceral state.[26]

To correct this misconception, historically-minded scholars have attempted to add human agents to this narrative by investigating the individuals and groups who influenced public opinion and drafted crime policies. By analyzing the role of these groups over time, scholars have begun the early work of elucidating why individuals supported the punitive turn and how their intentions directly shaped the course of crime politics. Most of these studies have focused on the agency of political elites, such as Congress and the President. They have been particularly interested in how white conservative politicians in these branches used the crime issue to respond to the black civil rights movement. Scholars have argued that white political leaders in the late 1960s, especially Southern Democrats and conservative Republicans, were responsible for elevating the crime issue

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[25] Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor*. See also David Garland, *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[26] Frances Fox Piven, "A Response to Wacquant," *Theoretical Criminology* 14, no. 1 (February 2010): 114; Margit Mayer, "Punishing the Poor—A Debate: Some Questions on Wacquant's Theorizing the Neoliberal State," *Theoretical Criminology* 14, no. 1 (February 2010): 100. The same problem exists in many sociological studies on gang-related policymaking. For examples, see Noelle E. Fearn, Scott H. Decker, and G. David Curry, "Public Policy Responses to Gangs: Evaluating the Outcomes," in Miller, Maxson, and Klein, *Modern Gang Reader*, 330–344; George E. Tita and Andrew Papachristos, "The Evolution of Gang Policy," in *Youth Gangs and Community Intervention: Research, Practice, and Evidence*, ed. Robert J. Chaskin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 24–50.

to the national stage.[27] By advocating punishment and surveillance under the guise of

"crime fighting" and responding to "civil unrest," conservative white politicians were

able to construct an excessively punitive criminal justice system that targeted nonwhite

Americans and intentionally curtailed the rights minorities had won in the 1960s. Adding

to these early initiatives, white conservatives have used an excessively punitive War on

Drugs since the 1970s to limit the advances of blacks in the post-civil rights era.[28]

Simultaneously, conservative elites used the crime issue to unify white voters under the

Republican Party, thus making a conservative resurgence and the birth of the New Right

possible.[29] Though promising, these early works leave much of the carceral state

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[27] Alexander, *New Jim Crow*, 2; David Wilson, *Inventing Black-on-Black Violence: Discourse, Space, and Representation* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005); Samuel Walker, Cassia Spohn, and Miriam DeLone, *The Color of Justice: Race, Ethnicity, and Crime in America* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2000), 1–56; Nicholas A. Valentino, "Crime News and the Priming of Racial Attitudes during Evaluations of the President," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (Autumn 1999): 293–320.

[28] Dennis Loo and Ruth-Ellen Grimes argue that polling data from the 1960s shows that Americans did not conflate crime and black civil rights agitation, but Loo and Grimes are a lone voice in this debate. Dennis D. Loo and Ruth-Ellen M. Grimes, "Polls, Politics, and Crime: The Law and Order Issue of the 1960s," *Western Criminology Review* 5 (2004): 58. For examples of studies that credit anti-civil-rights-movement sentiment, see Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters," 731; Alexander, *New Jim Crow*, 4; Vesla M. Weaver, "Frontlash: Race and the Development of Punitive Crime Policy," *Studies in American Political Development* 21, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 230–265; Naomi Murakawa, "Electing to Punish: Congress, Race, and the American Criminal Justice State" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2005), 4; Katherine Beckett, *Making Crime Pay: Law and Order in Contemporary American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 29–32; Christian Parenti, *Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis* (London: Verso, 1999); Bruce Western, *Punishment and Inequality in America* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2007); Robert Perkinson, *Texas Tough: The Rise of America's Prison Empire* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010); Thomas E. Cronin, Tania Z. Cronin, and Michael E. Milkavoich, *US v. Crime in the Streets* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), chap. 2.

[29] For examples, see Michael W. Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Charles A. Murray, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950–1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 122; Beckett, *Making Crime Pay*, 7–8; Alexander, *New Jim Crow*, 43; Weaver, "Frontlash," 230; Stuart A. Scheingold, *The Politics of Street Crime: Criminal Process and Cultural Obsession* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991); Murakawa, "Electing to Punish"; Marion, *History of Federal Crime Control*; James D. Calder, "Presidents and Crime Control: Kennedy, Johnson

unexamined. Historians' focus on white conservatives' agency tends to privilege the

black civil rights era as the most important period in crime politics and African

Americans as the central victims. While the civil rights movement was a major

component in the development of the carceral state, the crime politics of the 1960s were

merely one pivotal decade in a longer trajectory that spanned the entire postwar period.

Furthermore, by focusing solely on the black civil rights movement, historians have

missed the ways in which the carceral state has targeted and affected other groups, such

as Latino Americans and Asian Americans.

Adding nuance to this top-down interpretation, some historians have begun to

look at how liberal politicians also took part in this process. Many of these scholars argue

that in the 1960s liberal politicians, most of whom were white, crafted their own

programs to reduce crime. The programs were primarily rehabilitative in nature and

included social services, counseling, and community building in high-crime

neighborhoods. However, these attempts to deal with crime were ineffectual and

politically unpopular. Recognizing the power conservatives gained from the crime issue,

liberals in the Democratic Party abandoned their approaches to crime and embraced pro-

punishment rhetoric, making the carceral state a bipartisan effort.[30] Although historians'

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and Nixon and the Influences of Ideology," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (Fall 1982):
574–589; Julilly Kohler-Hausmann, "'The Attila the Hun Law': New York's Rockefeller Drug
Laws and the Making of a Punitive State," *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 1 (Fall 2010): 73;
Gest, *Crime and Politics*; Parenti, *Lockdown America*; Mona Lynch, *Sunbelt Justice: Arizona and
the Transformation of American Punishment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009);
Norwood Henry Andrews III, "Sunbelt Justice: Politics, the Professions, and the History of
Sentencing and Corrections in Texas Since 1968" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin,
2007); Cronin, Cronin, and Milkavoich, *US v. Crime*.
[30] For examples, see Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters," 729–734; Jessica Helen
Neptune, "The Making of the Carceral State: Street Crime, the War on Drugs, and Punitive

inclusion of liberals has been a welcome addition to the traditional narrative, this new work often portrays liberal efforts as conservative mimicry or political bungling. A fuller history of postwar crime politics needs to investigate what motivated liberal elites to make the changes they did, the strategic thinking behind these decision, and why—despite relying on minority voters as part of its base—the Democratic Party eventually was able to successfully embrace a punitive system that has disproportionately hurt nonwhite Americans.

Finally, historians of the carceral state have also explored the media's role in helping to disseminate elite-generated messages. In these narratives, politicians created the message that crime was a rising problem and that the only solution was a punitive response. Journalists, editors, and reporters then publicized politicians' proposals and adopted the language that legislators used to discuss crime and "criminal" groups. Through this process, scholars argue, news media outlets became the instruments for lawmakers to shape public opinion and garner support for the carceral state.[31] While politicians and the news agencies are certainly fundamental parts of the carceral state and the politics surrounding its inception, Marie Gottschalk and Jonathan Simon have argued that scholars must begin to take into account other actors in this process.[32] By privileging the voices of political elites and the media, scholars run the risk of taking at face value the argument that the carceral state is merely a draconian power play by elites to

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Politics in New York, 1951–1973" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2012); Kohler-Hausmann, "'The Attila the Hun Law'"; Wilson, *Inventing Black-on-Black Violence*.

[31] For examples, see Loo and Grimes, "Polls, Politics, and Crime"; Beckett, *Making Crime Pay*; Michael Tonry, *Thinking about Crime: Sense and Sensibility in American Penal Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 37.

[32] Gottschalk, *Prison and the Gallows*, 6–8, 33–34; Jonathan Simon, *Governing through Crime: How the War on Crime Transformed American Democracy and Created a Culture of Fear* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 18.

manipulate a blind public. Such a focus obscures those individuals that resisted and modified punitive politics. It fails to take seriously public opinion and power. It also ignores the agency of those groups targeted by the carceral state for imprisonment and surveillance. In doing so, these narratives often imply that the carceral state was a foregone conclusion once political elites had set the course. Such a narrative narrows the level of contingency at play in the past and inherently limits the options for change in the future.

The goal of this dissertation is to explore how other actors shaped the development of the carceral state and crime politics. It first investigates the political activism of police officers, prosecutors, and other law enforcement personnel as they fought for their interpretations of gang violence and for more punitive policies. Generally, scholars treat law enforcement simply as the policing tools of political elites, enforcing the laws that politicians pass.[33] This dissertation, however, argues that police and prosecutors chose specific narratives about crime, crafted crime policies, and lobbied for their passage. In doing so, they became one of the most powerful groups in postwar politics. Second, this dissertation incorporates the ways in which gang members directly took part in constructing ideas about the gang world and shaped policymaking. Through this process, gang members themselves evolved, adopting the language of federal officials and the political outlook of community activists. And third, the following chapters challenge the traditional narrative that focuses on white agency by uncovering the activism and straining voices of racial minorities in the historical dialog about crime

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[33] The rare exception to this trend has been the work of Robert Perkinson who discusses the formative role of prison guards and staff in Texas's prison boom. Perkinson, *Texas Tough*.

and policy.[34] Following in the footsteps of work done by Michael Fortner, Kahlil

Muhammad, and Lisa Miller, this study argues that African Americans were important in

shaping crime politics.[35] African American leaders, organizations, and everyday citizens

talked about crime in a number of different ways depending on their experiences with

crime, their pursuit of various goals, and their individual perspectives. In response to

gang violence they sometimes contested punitive politics, advocating solutions of their

own. But at other times, they supported punitive approaches and, as Michelle Alexander

maintains, "helped provide political cover" for both liberal and conservative politicians

who embraced the carceral state.[36] By taking African Americans seriously as actors, this

study moves beyond portraying them as mere targets and instead reveals both the

potential and the limits of their ability to shape crime politics. However, this dissertation

does not stop with a singular focus on African Americans. Latino and Asian American

actors are also central to this analysis.[37] Although punitive politics have imprisoned

African Americans at the highest rates, other minority groups have also been

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[34] Edward J. Escobar, *Race, Police, and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 6.

[35] Although I agree with these scholars' focus on black voices in crime politics, Fortner's work often overstates the power of African Americans while Miller tends to underestimate it. Michael Javen Fortner, "The Carceral State and the Crucible of Black Politics: An Urban History of the Rockefeller Drug Laws," *Studies in American Political Development* 27, no. 1 (April 2013): 14–35; Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 179; Lisa L. Miller, "The Invisible Black Victim: How American Federalism Perpetuates Racial Inequality in Criminal Justice," *Law and Society Review* 44, no. 4 (December 2010): 805–837.

[36] Alexander, *New Jim Crow*, 42, 208–217.

[37] Incorporating racial minorities beyond African Americans has become a vibrant and necessary corrective to postwar urban and political history at large. Robert O. Self and Thomas J. Sugrue, "The Power of Place: Race, Political Economy, and Identity in the Postwar Metropolis," in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, ed. Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 20–43; Daniel Q. Gillion, *The Political Power of Protest: Minority Activism and Shifts in Public Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

disproportionately affected as victims both of crime and of punishment. Any explanation

of the carceral state that does not include their activism would be incomplete.[38]

This dissertation uses the issue of gang-related violence as a lens because gangs

were a concern for most of the postwar period, thus allowing for a broad chronology and

an inclusive discussion of multiple actors. Focusing on gangs also permits an exploration

of crime policy beyond the War on Drugs, which has preoccupied most crime historians.

The War on Drugs has been a fertile field for early studies of the postwar carceral state,

especially since drug convictions have grown at a faster rate than convictions for other

offenses.[39] But drugs, even at their highest point, account for less than half of convictions

nationally.[40] Breaking new ground and investigating other types of crime are essential to

understanding the full extent of crime politics and the actors involved. Ultimately this

dissertation combines all of these elements to explore how law enforcement, criminal

justice experts, gangs, and minority activists together shaped perceptions about gangs and

how federal politicians were forced to, and chose to, respond throughout the final half of

the twentieth century.

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[38] Joan W. Moore, "Isolation and Stigmatization in the Development of an Underclass: The Case of Chicano Gangs in East Los Angeles," *Social Problems* 33, no. 1 (October 1985): 1–12.

[39] For examples, see Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters"; Kohler-Hausmann, "'The Attila the Hun Law'"; Alexander, *New Jim Crow*; Beckett, *Making Crime Pay*; Parenti, *Lockdown America*; Gest, *Crime and Politics*; Eric C. Schneider, *Smack: Heroin and the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Neptune, "Making of the Carceral State"; Craig Reinarman and Harry G. Levine, eds., *Crack in America: Demon Drugs and Social Justice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

[40] The Sentencing Project, *Trends in US Corrections*, December 2012, p. 2, http://sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/inc_Trends_in_Corrections_Fact_sheet.pdf.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 begins in the late 1950s when Americans panicked about gangs for the first time. The chapter discusses how news outlets covered this panic, refining longstanding concerns about general juvenile delinquency to focus specifically on fears about urban youth violence. Through their accounts of street gangs, they blended postwar fears of urban landscapes, class divisions, and gender roles in a way that added urgency to the issue. Discussions of gang violence in this early period also played upon anxieties about racial migration and interracial animosity; however, the gang problem was not seen as a distinct problem of one racial group. According to these journalists, whites, blacks, and Latinos all contributed equally to the problem. These fears spurred the police and social workers to propose the first organized solutions to gang violence. These two groups worked with and against each other on city streets to construct a mixed approach of punishment and social services that ultimately sought to break street gangs apart. When federal officials first took on gang issues in 1958, they borrowed directly from these same police officers and social workers. As a result, the first attempt to address the gang issue nationally was a consensus approach supported by both liberal and conservative politicians.

This common political ground, however, did not last long. As Chapter 2 explains, black and Latino activists proposed a new understanding of gangs and how to address them in the early 1960s. As part of the civil rights movement, activists reached out to gang members and used them in protests and mobilization drives. Gang members responded by creating their own politicized organizations, drawing on the rhetoric of the Black and Latino Power movements to articulate their own goals and identities. Minority

activists' efforts and gang members' enthusiastic response had two important effects. First, these changes created a new way of thinking about gangs and how to intervene in violence. Instead of breaking gangs apart, communities and government officials could work with street gangs and turn them into forces for community betterment. And second, activists' alliances with black and Latino gangs created an implicit link between gangs and nonwhite youth. This link was further solidified by news reports of street gang involvement, both as instigators and as peacekeepers, in the urban uprisings of the mid 1960s. As a result, many voters and federal officials came to see the gang issue as a black and Latino problem by the end of the 1960s.

In Chapter 3, the federal government adopts the new vision of gang intervention used by minority activists. Encouraged by social scientist who theorized that gangs could be brought into the system and by activists who had shown the practical applications of working with gangs, liberal officials in the Johnson Administration hired and cooperated with gangs as part of the War on Poverty. By drawing on the strategies of civil rights workers and minority gang members, the federal government broke away from earlier bipartisan policies and embraced a new form of liberal crime control. Federal officials principally funded social service programs to address gang violence and encouraged agencies to focus on small-scale community programs that would work with (not against) gangs. In the meantime, gang members responded to federal outreach by organizing further into advocacy groups and refashioning themselves to fit federal demands.

These programs, particularly those in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, were successful in some ways and demonstrated the promise of liberal plans for crime control. Yet there were also problems. As Chapter 4 shows, law enforcement was angry

about the leftward shift in federal gang policy. Facing judicial restrictions on police procedures and mounting public protests against law enforcement, the police saw the federal shift as a further attack on police power. In response, law enforcement officials fought to regain control of the definition of gang violence and the government's response to it. The police used a variety of tactics in their fight. They trumpeted their professional expertise on crime generally and gang violence specifically. The police mobilized politically, advocating new legislation and programs to address the gang problem, and sought alliances with voters mobilized by Richard Nixon's Silent Majority strategy. Even black police officers played a large role in this transition, fighting against the War on Poverty's crime programs and favoring punitive solutions to the gang problem. Their advocacy hinted at possible changes ahead in minority communities' fight against gangs. In particular, local police officers mounted a dramatic campaign against one of the most celebrated gang programs of the War on Poverty in Chicago. Using their own statistics and a growing alliance with conservative politicians, the Chicago Police Department (CPD) convinced Congress to abandon gang funding and end federal outreach to gang members. Through all of these tactics, police officers would provide conservative politicians with the raw material for a new "law and order" movement that favored punishment and increased police powers.

Beginning in the early 1970s, the gang issue largely disappeared from federal politics. Chapter 5 explains this lull and explores how this political silence hid pivotal changes that occurred in the communities where gangs lived and remained active. In the 1970s and 1980s, minority activists and gang members noted that gangs were rapidly evolving due to economic and social pressures in urban communities. Some gangs

became involved in growing drug markets as economic opportunities for urban minorities narrowed in the postindustrial economy. Gang members also acquired firearms in large numbers, thus increasing the severity of gang warfare. While journalists and lawmakers seemed to ignore these changes, community members in minority neighborhoods mobilized to address them. But much had changed from the minority activism of the 1960s. Minority groups, especially African and Asian Americans, eschewed the old strategy of working with the gangs and instead increasingly called for stronger law enforcement to rid the streets of hardcore gang members and to keep their neighborhoods safe. The evolution of minority leaders' perceptions and solutions provided opportunities for a new federal response in the late 1980s.

Finally, Chapter 6 investigates how law enforcement agencies and journalists in the late 1980s and early 1990s became politically active again on the issue of gang violence, and how they motivated federal action. Police officers—joined during this later period by prosecutors—used innovative punitive approaches, such as gang sweeps, civil abatement, and heightened surveillance, to control street gangs. They continued to claim professional expertise in managing gangs, but began to argue that they were "outmanned, outgunned, and outspent" by a new generation of vicious drug gangs. Reporters publicized law enforcement's new opinion of the situation and helped spread the idea that gangs, with the help of the crack market, were spreading across the country. From this new platform, police officers and federal law enforcement lobbied local and national politicians to embrace increasingly punitive gang programs. After 1988, the agitation of minority communities and law enforcement coalesced to reshape the federal government's intensifying response. In particular, Chapter 6 explores how each of these

actors shaped the provisions of the Crime Control Act of 1994, which entrenched an excessively punitive federal approach to the gang issue. Largely the product of Democratic politicians, the Crime Bill signaled the re-convergence of liberals and conservatives on the gang issue, a move made possible by support from minority groups, police officers, and prosecutors.

Sources

To reconstruct how each of these groups thought about gangs, this dissertation uses the writings, quotes, interviews, and surveys of police officers, gang members, community members, minority activists, journalists, and federal politicians. Each of these actors had an agenda that is reflected in the sources. These agendas shaped the narratives they told about gangs and affected their assessments of gang-related policymaking. As such, these sources cannot be taken as depictions of the *reality* of the gang situation. Instead, they exemplify *perceptions* about street gangs and how these perceptions shaped policymaking.

The issue of perceptions raises another limitation in any study of crime history: crime statistics. Police departments and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had exclusive control over tracking crime in the United States for most of the twentieth century. Although the Census Bureau began tracking crime victimization rates independently in 1973, law enforcement agencies are still the primary source of crime statistics in America. Scholars argue that police-generated statistics must be approached with a critical eye because police departments have their own beliefs and agendas that may affect the numbers that they report. For example, crime data is often used to justify

police programs and to measure the effectiveness of police work. Thus, officers have a

vested interest in the data they publish and may feel the need to distort it. Police statistics

also reflect officers' individual and collective perceptions about what defines a crime and

who is a legitimate victim. For instance, throughout much of American history, law

enforcement underreported crime in minority neighborhoods because white police

officers did not take seriously minority victimization.[41] The effect of police definitions

has been especially important in measuring the prevalence of gang-related crimes. Police

departments have defined "gangs" and "gang-related" crime differently in different cities

and in different periods because of the subjective and constantly-evolving nature of these

terms. As such, gang experts consider statistics of gang-related violence and national

estimates of gang membership to be only one interpretation of the gang situation.[42]

In addition to the challenges that come from police-generated data, victims and

technology can also undermine the reliability of crime statistics. Studies have shown that

victims tend to underreport certain crimes to the police while overreporting others. At the

same time, certain racial and socioeconomic groups tend to underreport crimes depending

on their trust in and relationship with law enforcement. Such decisions dramatically

affect crime data. The apparatus available for tracking crimes also shapes crime statistics.

From the mid 1960s through the early 1970s, crime statistics showed a dramatic boom in

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[41] William B. Chambliss, "Marketing Crime: The Politics of Crime Statistics," in *Power, Politics, and Crime* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 32–59.

[42] Sociologist Albert Meehan found in a study in the 1970s that police departments and individual officers had a wide degree of independence in determining what constituted a gang-related incident. He found that police responded to the politics of the period by reporting more or fewer gang incidents depending on the political needs of elected officials and of the police department. Albert J. Meehan, "The Organizational Career of Gang Statistics: The Politics of Policing Gangs," *Sociological Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 337–370; Bursik and Grasmick, "Defining and Researching Gangs," 2–14; Horowitz, "Sociological Perspectives," 43.

crime rates nationwide. Historians currently debate how much of the postwar crime boom

was due to increased tracking technology and how much was due to a real increase in

crime. Some argue that it was a real effect of declining economic options for the working

class and a rising number of baby boomers entering adolescence and early adulthood, the

ages at which crime commission rates are highest.[43] Others contend that beginning in the

1960s, the federal government provided local law enforcement with more funds to track

crime and created giant computer databases to centralize this process. The upswing in

crime rates was thus an effect of the carceral state's growth and may have been

substantially inflated.[44] Because of all of these challenges, it is nearly impossible to

determine the exact rise and fall of crime in various historical periods.[45]

Despite these problems, crime statistics are important because they shaped

perceptions about crime. Various groups used this data to construct their understandings

of urban gangs: what constituted the "gang problem," its pervasiveness, and which

solutions worked. As this study shows, actors can and did manipulate gang statistics to fit

their agendas. While this does mean that statistics are unreliable for determining the exact

extent of gang-related crime, it does not mean that they are useless to historians. In fact,

statistics were central to how historical actors perceived "reality" and these perceptions

had very real effects on political rhetoric about crime and the policies that grew out of

these debates. As such, this dissertation highlights the same statistics that historical actors

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[43] For examples, see Lawrence Friedman, *Crime and Punishment in American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 305; Flamm, *Law and Order*, 8–9.
[44] Tonry, *Thinking about Crime,* 15; Beckett, *Making Crime Pay*, 15; Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters," 726–731; Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor*.
[45] Schneider, *Smack,* 117.

used in order to recover their perceptions about gangs and explain why they chose to respond in specific ways.

By combining statistics with the statements and documents of various actors, this study argues that the key agents in political debates over street gangs have been the police officers, prosecutors, urban youth, and minority activists normally ignored in carceral studies. Each of these groups developed their own understandings of street gangs, which included perceptions about the types of activities gangs partook in, what caused gang-related crime, and the racial composition of American gangs. As a result, each group proposed unique solutions to their specific version of the "gang issue." Through these proposals, and working in conjunction with journalists, federal officials and social scientists, these actors determined the crime-fighting solutions available to lawmakers. In these battles, each group established their own claims as authorities on crime, claims that often competed with each other. And most importantly, these groups dictated the course of national crime politics in postwar America. These groups helped define crime and proposed solutions that gave rise to two distinctive forms of crime control—one liberal and one conservative—in the 1960s and early 1970s followed by increasingly punitive policies in the 1980s and 1990s. By incorporating these oft-ignored actors, this study explains why lawmakers made the policy decisions that ultimately resulted in the modern carceral state.

Chapter 1

Bops, Cops, and Sob Sisters: Understanding and Solving Gang Violence, 1955–1961

"In several of the nation's cities, and particularly in New York and Chicago, juvenile delinquency is actually becoming organized gangsterism. The old Prohibition mobs are gone. Yet some of the cities remain jungles. Where the Prohibition mobsters prowled, teen-age hoodlums, organized like armies, have taken over….And they don't hesitate to kill." – Newsweek[1]

There had been two straight days of muggy eighty-degree heat in New York City. Windows were open and fans cranked at high speed. Not even the fall of darkness cooled the stifling humidity. In Washington Heights, the problem of heat was compounded by overcrowding in tight tenements. The only real relief was a public swimming pool in nearby Highbridge Park. At the height of the heat on July 30, 1957, teenagers Michael Farmer and Roger McShane snuck through the park for a quick swim after dark. Their attempt to cool off represented more than trespassing on city property. McShane, a member of the Jesters gang, was encroaching on disputed gang territory. For the last few weeks a feud had boiled between the Jesters and the Egyptian Dragons over which gang would control the pool.[2] When the Dragons spotted McShane and Farmer entering the park, the Dragons considered it a challenge to their control of the territory and attacked the two boys.[3] As the *New York Times* later described the scene, the Dragons, armed with "the machete, the dog chain, the fishing weight, the garrison belts and the gravity knives" that had become common in city gang fights, stabbed McShane four times in the back

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[1] "The Problem Grows Worse: What to Do When Kids Shoot Down Kids?," *Newsweek*, May 16, 1955, 32.

[2] Jack Roth, "Witness Says 2 Youths Boasted of Assaulting Boy Slain in Park," *New York Times*, February 22, 1958, 18.

[3] Jack Roth, "6 Boys Identified at Murder Trial," *New York Times*, February 8, 1958, 8.

and twice in the stomach.[4] Bloody and battered, McShane fought off the group and

escaped to the street. He frantically waved down a taxi and told the driver that his friend

was still in the park. Summoned by the driver, the police arrived to find Farmer bleeding

in the bushes. Farmer, crippled from a childhood bought with polio, wasn't able to outrun

the gang and had been stabbed twice in the chest. The police rushed the boy out of the

park, but fourteen-year-old Michael Farmer died before making it to the hospital.[5]

    The next day a short four-paragraph article on a back page of the *New York Times*

reported Farmer's death.[6] The article's brevity belied the central significance the case

would have in national politics. Eventually, seven members of the Dragons were

prosecuted for the murder in a trial that made headlines across the country and became

one of the longest and largest trials in American history. Nearly sixty-five witnesses,

twenty-seven lawyers, and three months of testimony were needed to sort out which of

the seven defendants was responsible and what to do about the gang's violence.[7] But

more importantly, the trial became a showcase for "the new gang menace." During

proceedings, police testimony described gangs' dangerous new weapons, especially

switchblades, zip guns, and Molotov cockatils. Gang members called to the witness stand

detailed how youth street gangs operated. They explained how gangs "bopped" (fought)

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[4] Garrison belts and gravity knives were common gang weapons. Garrison belts were leather belts with metal studs and heavy belt buckles that could be filed to create a sharp point. When fighting, gang members often wrapped garrison belts around their fists with the sharpened belt buckle facing out. Gravity knives were small knives with a blade hidden in the handle. The blade would spring from the handle with a flick of the wrist.
[5] George Barrett, "West Side Report: 'No Incidents'," *New York Times*, February 8, 1959, SM10.
[6] "Youth, 15, Killed in Park Stabbing," *New York Times*, July 31, 1957, 46.
[7] Jack Roth, "Trial of 7 Youths Goes to the Jury," *New York Times*, April 15, 1958, 36; "Slain Boy's Mother Assails Trial of 7," *New York Times*, April 17, 1958, 26.

for "rep" (masculine reputation on the street), and they outlined gang hierarchies, such as

the roles of gang "president" (leader) and "warlord" (war and weapons strategist).[8]

Outside the courtroom, newspapers and magazines used the Farmer case to focus

attention on gang violence across the country. *Newsweek* called the murder "a festival of

juvenile crime."[9] The *Chicago Tribune* reprinted a letter from Farmer's girlfriend in

which she detailed the stabbing and lamented, "My neighborhood is going to the dogs

with gang wars."[10] The press also portrayed the Dragons as vicious killers. In a

photographic essay in *Life*, one Dragon sits in the back of a police car smiling slyly at the

camera as his fellow gang members cheer in the background.[11] *Time* quoted a fourteen-

year-old member who bragged that he had "plunged the knife deep into Farmer's back 'to

get the feeling of a knife going through bone.' As he withdrew the blade, he told the

dying boy: 'Thanks a lot.'"[12] Other accounts focused on the victim. Famed television

anchor Edward R. Murrow described Farmer's blond hair, blue eyes, and distinctive limp

in an hour-long radio special.[13] A writer for the *Washington Post* called Farmer the "teen-

aged polio victim too lame to run," and others focused on his father's job as a

firefighter.[14] These news stories cast the victim as the good boy from good parents who

couldn't defend himself from the gang. They warned that he could have been any

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[8] Jack Roth, "'War Lord' Tells of Duties in Gang," *New York Times*, February 19, 1958, 15; Jack Roth, "Youth Tells Jury of Gang for 'Tots'," *New York Times*, February 21, 1958, 16.

[9] "The Killers Were Boys," *Newsweek*, August 12, 1957, 27.

[10] Quoted in "NY Teen-Age Gang Story Stirs London," *Chicago Tribune*, September 24, 1957, 11.

[11] "Teen-Age Burst of Brutality," *Life*, August 12, 1957, 34.

[12] "The Scavengers," *Time*, August 12, 1957, 20.

[13] Edward R. Murrow, "Who Killed Michael Farmer?" New York: Columbia Broadcasting System, April 21, 1958, radio broadcast.

[14] "4 Youths Sentenced in Slaying," *Washington Post*, May 29, 1958, A3; "Alert 23,000 Police in NY Gang Violence," *Chicago Tribune*, August 5, 1957, 17; "New York Has Fourth Teen-Age Gang Killing," *Los Angeles Times*, August 4, 1957, 25.

American boy. Because of the media attention, Farmer's death became America's

touchstone for understanding the gang problem. Although gang violence had been on the

upswing since World War II, it was the Farmer case that piqued national interest among

voters who had never encountered street gangs personally.[15] Farmer's murder gave a

concrete name and visible face to a vague fear.

To fully understand the 1950s gang panic, this chapter first looks at how

journalists constructed gang images that played off of fears about postwar social changes.

Immediately after World War II, many Americans—especially white, middle-class

residents of the suburbs—expressed grave concerns about juvenile delinquency, which

created a fertile field for fears about youth street gangs later in the decade. But alarm over

gang violence quickly moved beyond a general concern about delinquency. Reporters

recast gang members as "criminals" and gang-related incidents as "crime," thus making

gangs appear more dangerous than the traditional juvenile delinquent. Adding to this

heightened concern, media outlets stressed that gang violence was deeply rooted in larger

social problems, such as growing poverty, poor parenting, and evolving gender norms. In

particular, these accounts expressed worries about urban change, including white flight

and the growing percentage of minority groups in city centers. By identifying gang

violence as a result of these systemic postwar problems, journalists magnified the gang

panic.

While newspapers and magazines carried increasingly alarming reports, first

responders—police officers and social workers—were busy in urban communities

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[15] Robert W. Snyder, "A Useless and Terrible Death: The Michael Farmer Case, 'Hidden Violence,' and New York City in the Fifties," *Journal of Urban History* 36, no. 2 (2010): 226–250.

constructing initial programs to address gang violence. Early police work tended to favor

punitive responses, while social workers championed a new approach that worked with

the gang through "detached worker" programs. These divergent approaches often came

into conflict on the street. Law enforcement and social service professionals repeatedly

contested one another's strategies in a daily battle over who would define the problem

and shape the solution. Ultimately, the two groups devised a tentative consensus that was

neither entirely pro-punishment nor completely social service oriented. This local

consensus became the bedrock of federal crime politics when Washington lawmakers

picked up the matter at the end of the decade. Although the issue of gang violence had

become politically viable due to journalists' treatment, the actors who originally shaped

the political rhetoric and policymaking were law enforcement and social service experts.

"Not Just 'Bad Kids'": Journalists and the Construction of Gang Fears

Panic about youth street gangs emerged during a period rich with anxiety about

children and adolescents. During World War II, as men went off to fight and women left

for factory jobs, the national press and many of their readers worried that unsupervised

"latch-key" children might become delinquents.[16] Historian James Gilbert has shown that

fears about juvenile delinquency were a defining element of America in the 1950s and

did not subside until the final years of the decade. Most striking about this panic was its

general nature; American voters, politicians, and experts feared *all* adolescents and *every*

facet of youth culture. Gilbert claims that it wasn't until businesses and mass media

began to celebrate adolescent consumption and behavior that the juvenile delinquency

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[16] *Gallup Poll*, March 1946, iPOLL Databank (USGALLUP.46-368.QKT17).

panic ended.[17] But Gilbert's singular focus on the eventual acceptance of youth mores

misses a deeper transformation in perceptions. As legal historian Lawrence Friedman has

noted, by the beginning of the 1960s, commenters spoke less of "juvenile delinquency"

which "conjure[d] up joyriding, stealing apples, and truancy" and spoke more often of

"youth crime" committed by "young criminals."[18] The delinquency panic evaporated not

because adults embraced teenage culture, but because they began to fear a more sinister

threat. Such a change required the mobilization of new anxieties and the creation of new

villains. At the end of the 1950s, that new villain was the urban gang.

Early in the twentieth century, the term "gang" did not carry a negative

connotation. In 1927, sociologist Frederic Thrasher published the first scholarly work on

gang activity after studying urban youth in Chicago. Thrasher's book portrayed gangs—

primarily composed of boys from the ages of ten to eighteen—as "spirited, venturesome,

and fun loving" groups. He stressed the "nonaggressive character" of youth gangs and the

great variety in gang structures and activities. Thrasher's study and those that followed

over the next thirty years called any self-organized youth group "a gang," whether the

group primarily took part in sports, community activities, illegal acts, or violence.[19] The

trend continued until the mid 1950s when suddenly scholars and journalists applied the

term more carefully. Many began to separate the small number of violent gangs, known

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[17] James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 65, 196–211.

[18] Lawrence Friedman, *Crime and Punishment in American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 449–450.

[19] Irving A. Spergel, "Youth Gangs: Continuity and Change," *Crime and Justice* 12 (1990): 173; Frederic M. Thrasher, *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*, with a new foreword by James F. Short Jr., abridged ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963); William Foote Whyte, *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943).

as "fighting," "bopping," or "conflict" gangs, from the much more common "good

gangs" that focused on sports and socializing. Eventually, the latter dropped entirely from

common usage and the term exclusively became the purview of violent groups.[20]

This shift was in part due to media coverage of street gangs. Newspaper and

magazine accounts were the primary way in which American voters—most of whom

never had direct contact with gangs—came to see gang violence as a major issue.[21] In

many of these accounts, journalists decoded gang slang for readers ostensibly in an

attempt to explain gang youth. But these gang dictionaries also emphasized the alien-ness

of this urban subculture.[22] As one gang expert in New York reported, "[Newspapermen]

had to learn a whole new language in order to print their stories, to make it all exciting to

the public, so the public would feel, 'My God, we are outsiders! Is this happening in

America?'"[23] Or, in the words of one journalist, the gangs became a "culture foreign to

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[20] Edward Martin, "From Frying Pan into the Fire: Father of 4 Guides Boys Club," *New York Times*, March 23, 1958, 92; "Youth Crime Laid to Neighborhood," *New York Times*, August 6, 1957, 18; Charles Grutzner, "Teen Gangs Spawned by Longing for Friends," *New York Times*, May 13, 1955, 27; New York City Youth Board (NYCYB), *Reaching the Fighting Gang* (New York: NYCYB, 1960), 4–6, 15–17.

[21] The only exception was the small number of urban residents who interacted with gangs on a daily basis. Eric Schneider's work on New York gangs in the early postwar period persuasively argues that the gang panic began among urban residents in the late 1940s and later filtered up to politicians and the press. In this chapter, I am focusing on a broader group of non-urban residents who rarely had contact with gangs but were the primary audience for national crime debates. In subsequent chapters, I will address urban residents' reactions to gangs. Eric C. Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings: Youth Gangs in Postwar New York* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 51–77. On the news media's power to shape ideas about remote groups and events, see William A. Gamson and Andre Modigliani, "Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Model," *American Journal of Sociology* 95 (1989): 1–37.

[22] For one example, see "Teen-Age Gangs Speak Strange Tongue; Here's Glossary of Common Expressions," *New York Times*, March 24, 1958, 17.

[23] Reminiscences of Vincent Riccio, 1961, p. 246, Columbia University Center for Oral History Collection (hereafter cited as CUCOHC).

middle-class Americans as any in Africa or Asia."[24] Intellectually separating gang members from "regular" American children facilitated the growing belief that there was something distinctly bad about street gang members.

At the same time, news coverage increasingly linked gangs to growing crime rates after 1955. In New York, reporters blamed gangs for 30 percent of all juvenile delinquency and called gangs the "murky nursery and training ground of American crime."[25] The *Los Angeles Times* reported extensively on West Coast gangs, highlighting FBI director J. Edgar Hoover's warning that "the swift growth of these gangs holds a deadly portent for the future."[26] Hoover in particular became a regular voice in popular news articles on the gang menace. He often argued that delinquency was no longer a major concern. Instead, the real problem was the rise of truly serious criminal acts, such as rape, assault, robbery, and homicide by criminal youths. Stressing what he saw as the fundamental difference between gang violence and juvenile delinquency, Hoover later pressed, "Such teenager gangsterism should be labeled for exactly what it is—youthful criminality."[27] Hoover's pronouncements did not go ignored. A 1962 survey of New York adults found that 92 percent believed that gang fighting was no longer a part of growing up but rather a serious problem that led to crime and violence.[28] "They are not just 'bad kids.'" A writer for *Newsweek* succinctly explained, "They are criminals."[29]

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[24] Margaret Parton, "Wrong Side Story," *Saturday Review*, October 27, 1962, 34.

[25] "Youth Crime Laid to Neighborhood," 18; Murray Schumach, "The Teen-Age Gang—Who and Why," *New York Times*, September 2, 1956, SM4.

[26] J. Edgar Hoover, "Counterattack on Juvenile Delinquency," *Los Angeles Times*, October 26, 1958, TW36.

[27] Quoted in Victor S. Navasky, *Kennedy Justice* (New York: Antheneum, 1971), 17.

[28] Mobilization for Youth Inc. (MFY), *A Proposal for the Prevention and Control of Delinquency by Expanding Opportunities*, 1962, 5.

[29] "Problem Grows Worse," 32.

One of the most widely read journalistic accounts was Pulitzer Prize winner Harrison Salisbury's series on what he called "The Shook-up Generation." Salisbury had gained the trust of a few gang leaders in Brooklyn who gave him an inside look at the "pitiful, tragic, and dangerous" gang wars. In the series, Salisbury retold harrowing stories of boys forced to join gangs at knifepoint, of bloody street fights, and of wasted hours of drunken debauchery. He also described the rise of lethality as gangs moved from bats and fists to the use of a new weapon: the zip gun. This homemade gun, constructed from scrap wood, metal, rubber bands, and car parts, could fire .22 caliber bullets or polished rocks. Although zip guns often failed to fire accurately and were believed by gang members and police officials to be relatively rare, in Salisbury's words, this invention by "some perverted adolescent genius" signaled the dangerous, criminal element of contemporary street gangs.[30] Originally printed in the *New York Times* during the Farmer trial, Salisbury's series received wide national exposure and many readers claimed that it helped them "understand" the new gang problem. The articles were so popular that Salisbury had them combined into a bestselling book, Senators entered them into the Congressional record, and other writers used them as the foundation for numerous novels and films, such as *The Cool World*, *A Matter of Conviction,* and *The Young Savages,* all of which portrayed a senselessly violent gang world.[31] Hundreds of

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[30] For more on zip guns and gang weapons in the 1950s, see Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*, 71.

[31] Harrison Evans Salisbury, "Gangs That Plague the City Take Toll in Talents," *New York Times*, March 24, 1958, 1; Harrison Evans Salisbury, *The Shook-up Generation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958); 85 Cong. Rec., A2895, A2969, A3014–A3015, A3063–A3064 (1958). For examples of wider distribution of Salisbury's work, see "Why They Spilled It," *Newsweek*, April 7, 1958, 56; "The Shook-Up Generation," *Time*, April 7, 1958, 23-26; Ivan Veit to Mr. Sulzberger, 16 April 1958, box 568, file 12, Harrison E. Salisbury Collection [MS 1509], Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library (hereafter cited as Salisbury Collection); Lyle Stuart to

readers wrote Salisbury calling his articles "an act of sublime national service in dealing

so boldly and honestly with what is tending to become a national calamity."[32]

Another major characteristic of Salisbury's series and other media reports was the

way in which they played upon midcentury fears of urban life, interracial animosity,

poverty, and changing gender roles. In doing so, they heightened concern about street

gangs and their potential for violence. Stressing the urban roots of the problem,

journalists who wrote about gang crime—particularly in the wake of the Farmer case—

focused on New York City, the traditional center of American urban life and urban

danger. Most news outlets across the country and around the world carried stories of the

"extraordinary" gang problem there.[33] Many attributed New York's issue to the unique

challenges of that city. A reporter for *Time* warned that the city's slums and

overcrowding had created a community where "youngsters are thrown daily into seething

currents that begin beyond their ken and frequently sweep beyond their depth." In

response, boys formed gangs for stability and protection.[34] Quoting a probation officer,

the *Los Angeles Times* explained, "You can't pour people into [New York] and have

them live under those degrading conditions and not expect what you have been getting."[35]

Even writers of popular literature seemed to agree. In *The Cool World*, a fictional

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Harrison Salisbury, 28 March 1958, box 566, file 3, Salisbury Collection; Warren Miller, *The Cool World* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1959); Evan Hunter, *A Matter of Conviction* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959); *The Young Savages,* directed by John Frankenheimer (1961; Beverly Hills, CA: MGM/UA Home Entertainment 2008), DVD.
[32] Adolph Plender to Harrison Salisbury, 1958, box 566, file 3, Salisbury Collection; Harrison E. Salisbury to Mr. Adams, 10 April 1958, box 568, file 12, Salisbury Collection.
[33] 86 Cong. Rec., 17666 (1959); Raymond Moley, "No Part of New York Is Safe in Mounting Juvenile Terrorism," *Los Angeles Times*, September 8, 1959, B5.
[34] "Scavengers," 20.
[35] Quoted in Gertrude Samuels, "Visit to a California Work Camp," *New York Times*, October 4, 1959, SM16.

portrayal of a Harlem gang leader, the grandmother of the main character grieves, "It the city. It this city this hore of Babylon. This hore city is whut happenin to you makin you go bad that was so sweet and good [sic]."[36]

Although gangs had a particularly New York flavor in this coverage, news outlets reported that law enforcement and public officials believed that a spike in gang violence in other cities could soon follow. Los Angeles officials feared that if they didn't address the pressures of urban life, their city might be next.[37] In 1959, editors at the *Chicago Tribune* warned that the Windy City was "sit[ing] on a powder keg of some 200 juvenile gangs" that threatened to turn Chicago into the next New York.[38] And that same year, newspapers in Milwaukee and Washington DC reported that the police had identified gang fights in their cities.[39] Many of these media reports reflected conventional fears about urbanity and criminality.[40] Commenters worried about the unnatural setting of the city and the corrupting influence of urban vice on street youth. They also worried about the lack of community in cities, which meant that young boys and girls often lacked the close supervision common in small-town America. These laments largely ignored the vibrant neighborhood communities that actually existed in city centers, instead trumpeting suburban or rural living as the solution. As one expert explained to the *Los*

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[36] Miller, *Cool World*, 26.

[37] Gladwin Hill, "California Eyes Preventive Plan," *New York Times*, May 4, 1958, 36.

[38] Robert Wiedrich, "Teen-Age Gang Violence Could Explode in Chicago, Too," *Chicago Tribune*, December 6, 1959, 2.

[39] "Milwaukee Police Break Up 'Ramble' [sic] of 70 Teen-Agers," *Chicago Tribune*, July 26, 1959, 41; 86 Cong. Rec., 15997 (1959).

[40] For more on the history of anti-urbanism in America, see Thomas Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); James L. Machor, *Pastoral Cities: Urban Ideals and the Symbolic Landscape of America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); Robert Zecker, *Metropolis: The American City in Popular Culture* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008).

Angeles Times, "Every kid is on speaking terms with grocer, butcher, baker, policeman and teacher in a small town. Big town living is different."[41] It was from this difference, many of these commenters implied, that gang violence and crime spread, a problem that only threatened to get worse as the population of American cities continued to grow.

In the postwar period, these anxieties took on new urgency as white flight and minority influx transformed urban America. Although these demographic shifts had been underway for decades, the transition was most rapid in the late 1950s and early 1960s, producing intense anxieties about urban populations. White suburban Americans, policymakers, and officials all expressed concern about this racial transformation in discussions of how ethnic tensions incited gang warfare. Historians debate the extent to which race tensions actually fueled gang violence in this period, but it is clear that contemporaries perceived racial animosity as a bedrock of gang violence.[42] In the national press, New York officials claimed that most gang conflicts occurred on the borders where ethnic neighborhoods butted against each other and that these conflicts increased as new ethnic groups moved into older, racially homogeneous areas.[43] Movies like *West Side Story* and *The Young Savages* portrayed a gang world divided by race

[41] Quoted in Vivian Brown, "'Take Kid Out of the Gang,' Boys Club Director Urges," *Los Angeles Times*, March 14, 1955, B2.

[42] Andrew Diamond argues that in Chicago racial boundary maintenance in ethnically evolving neighborhoods was the primary purpose of street gangs. Conversely in New York, Eric Schneider contends that although race played a role in gang violence and membership, class boundary maintenance was more important. I believe that each historian's focus on a single metropolitan area might explain their disagreement; Chicago and New York had different histories of demographic change, different patterns of ethnic settlement, and different political elites who responded to issues of racial violence in different ways. For an introduction to this debate see: Timothy J. Gilfoyle, Eric C. Schneider, and Andrew Diamond, "Gangs in the Post-World War II North American City: A Forum," *Journal of Urban History* 28, no. 5 (July 2002): 658–663; Snyder, "Useless and Terrible Death."

[43] Ira Henry Freeman, "Few Gang Battles Laid to Race Bias," *New York Times*, August 19, 1956, 80; NYCYB, *Reaching the Fighting Gang*, 30.

where Italians beat up blacks, and Latinos stabbed the Irish. And as Billy Graham told *US News and World Report,* cities like New York were "a racial tinderbox" where gangs provided both the spark and the kindling.[44]

Surprisingly, no single ethnic group was seen as the primary problem in the 1950s. Instead, journalists and the local officials they quoted worried about whites, blacks, and Latinos in the same breath. According to gang experts at the time, much of the violence started with white gangs' resistance to the encroachment of nonwhites on their neighborhood turf.[45] Social workers, settlement house employees, and other observers warned that Italian and Irish gangs increasingly started the cycle of violence by attacking new minority residents, thus forcing blacks and Latinos to form gangs for their own protection.[46] "White boys feel they have to keep their area free of Negroes," Chicago's Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) director admitted to the *Chicago Tribune*. "[It's] a common fight they can rally around."[47] In one particularly inflammatory case in New York, an Italian gang known as the Red Wings attacked a Cuban immigrant in a neighborhood park. In response, the Latino gangs of Harlem declared in a letter to the *New York Times,* "The Spanish have united forces to smash the guinea wops….This means a war in this city. We are not giving up until the last Italian is

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[44] "Terror Comes to City Streets," *US News and World Report*, September 14, 1959, 65; NYCYB, *Reaching the Fighting Gang*, 30; MFY, *Proposal*, 6–8.

[45] For an excellent history of white resistance to residential integration and the role of gangs in this process in Chicago, see Andrew Diamond, *Mean Streets: Chicago Youths and the Everyday Struggle for Empowerment in the Multiracial City, 1908–1969* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

[46] MFY, *Proposal*, 8.

[47] Ronald Kotulak, "Probe Gangs to See What Ticks," *Chicago Tribune*, November 15, 1959, S1.

dead." Both the police department and gang experts mobilized to stop the war, but they

primarily focused on the role of Italian boys in starting the violence.[48]

Fifties popular culture in particular underscored the animosity between Latino and

white gangs. Most notable was *West Side Story*, which dramatized the violence between

Puerto Ricans and Italians. Original drafts of the musical actually featured a war between

Jewish and Italian gangs. But the writers replaced the Jewish gang with Puerto Ricans by

the musical's opening in 1957 because of the growing attention that journalists and social

commenters had begun to direct at Latino gang members.[49] Journalists' focus on Puerto

Rican gangs stemmed from predictions by social science experts that the number of

Puerto Rican youth was dramatically rising on the East Coast. Statisticians in the late

1950s warned that in the next decade high immigration rates from Puerto Rico and

prolific birthrates among immigrants would create a boom of young Latino boys.[50] In

addition, news reporters wrote frequently about how Puerto Rican culture, which

celebrated masculinity and honor, would enhance the attractiveness of gangs for this

growing cohort of Puerto Rican youth. One article in the *New Yorker* argued Puerto

Ricans were known to show large amounts of "passion" in their crimes, the same sort of

passion inherent in gang rumbles.[51] Such racist stereotypes did not focus only on Puerto

Rican Americans. In the Southwest, Mexican street gangs engendered additional

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[48] "2 Letters Predict 'War' in Harlem," *New York Times*, June 10, 1958, 34; "Four Youths Held in Harlem Killing," *New York Times*, June 2, 1958, 45; "Two Detectives Head Off a Gang Battle Traced to Anger over Death of Cuban," *New York Times*, June 14, 1958, 23.
[49] Lorrin Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen: History and Political Identity in Twentieth Century New York City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 163–165; *West Side Story*, directed by Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise (1961; Beverly Hills, CA: MGM Video & DVD, 1998), DVD.
[50] Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen*, 133–197; "Youth Increase in City Forecast," *New York Times*, May 16, 1955, 28.
[51] William A. McIntyre, "Chinatown Offers Us a Lesson," *New York Times*, October 6, 1957, 247; Christopher Rand, "The Puerto Ricans," *New Yorker*, December 14, 1957, 125.

concern.[52] A decade earlier, white residents of Texas and southern California had

panicked about the growth of *pachuco* culture, a manner of language, walking, and dress

adopted by Mexican American youth and made famous through the zoot suit

phenomenon.[53] While only a small percentage of *pachuco* youth became involved in

gangs, the white mainstream press in California in the 1940s heavily identified *pachucos*

with gang warfare, spurring such reactionary events as the Sleepy Lagoon trial in 1942

and the zoot suit riots of 1943.[54] Officials' and white residents' furor over Mexican gangs

died down in the mid 1940s only to reappear at the end of the 1950s as gang anxieties

grew nationwide. These later sentiments harkened back to the *pachuco* panic and

involved racialized ideas about the inherent danger of Mexican Americans. In particular,

journalists at midcentury highlighted the *machismo* of Mexican immigrants, which they

argued fueled gang fights over personal honor.[55]

While they fretted about Latino immigration, many white elites and middle-class

Americans worried that the influx of African Americans from the South exacerbated gang

violence in the North. During the Farmer trial, newspapers reported the story of one black

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[52] Ray Zeman, "Conference Set on Rising Problem of Jobless Youth," *Los Angeles Times*, September 5, 1961, B1.

[53] Kathy Peiss, *Zoot Suit: The Enigmatic Career of an Extreme Style* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Gerardo Licon, "Pachucas, Pachucos, and Their Culture: Mexican American Youth Culture of the Southwest, 1910–1955" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2009).

[54] William S. Bush, *Who Gets a Childhood? Race and Juvenile Justice in Twentieth-Century Texas* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 48–51; Perry Macon and John M. Hagedorn, *People and Folks: Gangs, Crime, and the Underclass in a Rustbelt City*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1998), 9–11; Joan W. Moore, *Going Down to the Barrio: Homeboys and Homegirls in Change* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 16; Edward J. Escobar, *Race, Police, and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 215; Eduardo Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime Los Angeles* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

[55] For a general discussion of *machismo* and gangs, see Howard S. Erlanger, "Estrangement, Machismo and Gang Violence," *Social Science Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (September 1979): 235–248.

defendant, Charles Horton, who testified about the hardships of migration. Growing up

picking cotton in Alabama and moving to New York with his mother, Horton had to fight

off attacks by Italian boys in the neighborhood and ultimately fell in with a gang for

protection.[56] Harrison Salisbury explained in his series that black migrants like Horton

joined gangs because they had grown up in the South, a region commonly associated with

the valorization of honor, violence, and gun use. Although Salisbury failed to recognize

that Southern violence was normally direct *at* not *by* African Americans, his argument

convinced his white readers.[57] Some took this idea to the extreme, blaming gang warfare

on African Americans' supposed animosity toward whites. After reading the series, one

New Yorker wrote Salisbury, "the cause of the 'shookup' generation's mischief is racial

antagonism—the hate of Negroes for Whites. [A] horrible trait [that] finds support in

gangsterism."[58] Some journalists in other cities took a less extreme view, arguing that the

rising number of black residents simply increased the pool of potential gang members

while the difficulties of adjusting to life in a new city enticed black teens to join a gang

where they felt they belonged.[59] The relatively even attention that reporters gave to all

ethnic groups was a distinctly unique characteristic of the 1950s gang panic. By the late

1960s, their portrayals of gang members increasingly would focus on blacks and Latinos.

But during these early years, media reports argued that young, minority men were not

[56] Jack Roth, "Gang Trial Told of Torn Boyhood," *New York Times*, March 13, 1958, 30.
[57] Salisbury and other writers who discussed Southern migration's effect on gang violence focused only on black migrants; whites migrants from the South were rarely ever mentioned. Harrison Evans Salisbury, "Youth Outbreaks Traced to Turbulence in Family," *New York Times*, March 27, 1958, 28.
[58] Alden Ward to Harrison Salisbury, 27 March 1958, box 566, file 3, Salisbury Collection.
[59] Wiedrich, "Teen-Age Gang Violence," 2; Tom Bradshaw, "Philadelphia Short on Brotherly Love," *Washington Post*, October 27, 1957, E3.

particularly unique in the gang world, only that their increasing presence in cities

exacerbated the interethnic violence that had come to define gang warfare.[60]

While white officials and voters worried about the shifting ethnicity of American

cities, they feared the increasing concentration of poverty even more. These concerns

about rising poverty became so integral to discussions about youth gangs that a

sociologist in 1960 noted, "it is rather striking that the gang as a descriptive concept has

become rather peculiarly reserved for adolescent groups of low socioeconomic status."[61]

Some experts feared that gang crime was caused by the lack of community in poor boys'

neighborhoods, a hypothesis that reporters featured in their coverage of gang violence.

For decades, sociologists had argued that working-class neighborhoods were

"disorganized" areas characterized by few community organization, which led to a

breakdown of social control over youth and a rise in delinquency.[62] Experts were also

concerned that urban, working-class parents did not provide the loving home life that

could keep children safe from the temptations of gang membership. Although, middle-

class and elite Americans had always been anxious about the parenting of the poor, these

worries grew stronger in an era dominated by an idealized vision of the middle-class

nuclear family: a father who worked to provide for his family, a mother who stayed at

home to care for the children, and a loving, supportive bond between parents and

[60] Walter B. Miller, "Violent Crimes in City Gangs," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 364 (March 1966): 103, 108–110.

[61] Herbert Aaron Bloch and Arthur Niederhoffer, *The Gang: A Study in Adolescent Behavior* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958), 7; Freeman, "Few Gang Battles," 80; NYCYB, *Reaching the Fighting Gang*, 30.

[62] Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay, *Report on the Causes of Crime, Volume II: Social Factors in Juvenile Delinquency—A Study of the Community, the Family and the Gang in Relation to Delinquent Behavior* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1931).

children.[63] In many cases, working-class families did not or could not conform to this

ideal, a fact that fueled increasingly frantic media discussions of gang violence and its

causes. *Life* argued that for gang members "home is the last place you want to go" since

most of the boys had only known beatings, neglect, and drunkenness there.[64] Reporting

on a gang in Manhattan, a *New York Times* writer described one gang member's family as

made up of "a mother [who] was dying of cancer, the father never stopped drinking, the

sister—her husband in prison—kept house, sold herself on the side."[65] A female gang

member interviewed for the story expressed her belief that "If the parents are happily

married and love their children, the children will behave themselves….If there is no love

at home, the kids will seek companionship in a gang." In fact, she claimed she had only

been saved by a kind, middle-class caseworker who "took the place my mother should

have filled."[66] Gang members, news outlets often argued, joined the gang for the sense of

belonging that defunct, poor families failed to provide. In essence, gangs became the only

families these young men and women had ever known.[67]

Depictions like these were particularly popular among middle-class readers whom

the newspapers and magazines targeted. In a period when romantic images of family

harmony pervaded American culture, these reports reaffirmed middle-class ideals.

Highlighting gang violence's roots in "dysfunctional" families strengthened the belief

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[63] This image was primarily an idealized version of family life. Even middle-class families struggled to make it a reality. Jessica Weiss, *To Have and to Hold: Marriage, the Baby Boom, and Social Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).
[64] Quoted in "Peacemaking Priest in Gangland," *Life*, August 26, 1957, 89.
[65] Barrett, "West Side Report," SM68.
[66] Quoted in Ira Henry Freeman, "Public Is Indicted for Delinquency," *New York Times*, July 4, 1956, 38.
[67] Vincent Riccio and Bill Slocum, "My Life with Juvenile Gangs," *Saturday Evening Post*, September 15, 1962, 13–19; "Youth Crime Laid to Neighborhood," 18.

that loving, involved parents were necessary to raise good children. But these stories also served as a warning to middle-class parents that their children might be next if their families did not conform to the dictates of family togetherness. Reporter Harrison Salisbury noted that suburban gangs were on the rise primarily because of the "many broken middle class homes—homes where the father is gone all day...occupied with business or other pursuits. The mother is preoccupied with social doings. The children actually are as neglected…as those of the slum."[68] If suburban families weren't careful, the problems of poor, city families might spread outward.

Concerns about working-class families were intimately connected to postwar shifts in gender roles that social commenters believed threatened American society. Numerous working-class women had remained in the workforce after the World War II because of the economic pressures of the period and the opportunities presented by the rise of the service sector economy.[69] Journalists reporting on gang violence predicted, however, that such a decision forced young boys to join a gang. According to one *New York Times* reporter, a mother's employment emasculated her sons, causing a rise in gang warfare as young men sought male role models in the streets and tried to define their own masculinity through violence.[70] Gang experts and these journalists also blamed

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[68] Harrison E. Salisbury, "Untitled," n.d., p. 4, box 568, file 12, Salisbury Collection.

[69] As Elaine Tyler May has argued, the postwar preoccupation with working mothers and the supposed harm they caused their children was a fundamental component of attempts to contain women to the home in response to the political and social uncertainly of the early Cold War; May, *Homeward Bound*.

[70] Emma Harrison, "Parents Are Seen in Peril from Son," *New York Times*, February 22, 1959, 77; "Family Life Cited to Catholic Men," *New York Times*, April 5, 1959, 75; Albert K. Cohen, *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1955), 168–169. Eric Schneider also argues masculinity was the primary reason boys joined gangs in the 1950s but that this search for masculinity was more about creating a masculine identity in the face of

neighborhood girls, especially female gang members. Although no girls were known to

join the ranks of male gangs, it was a common practice for girls to form separate gangs

that served as auxiliaries or "debs" to the males. Police and social workers believed that

debs often carried weapons to protect themselves in fights with other female gangs[71] or

carried the weapons of male gang members because the police only frisked the boys.[72]

Most of these experts argued that the presence of female gangs enflamed gang violence

because male gangs often fought over sexual access to the girls in a neighborhood.[73] As

one male gang member told the *Washington Post*, "If you want girls you've got to get a

reputation, man. Like when the [gang] had a fight and you ain't in the fight—what

chance have you got with women?"[74] Following experts' theories, journalists often

portrayed female gang members as actively starting fights by maliciously carrying

rumors of affronts and challenges from one male gang to another. One story on female

gangs in Los Angeles claimed that girls started nearly 80 percent of gang incidents and

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disappearing urban jobs that had previously served as a source of working-class masculine identity. Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings,* 119.

[71] Although the media emphasized these violent encounters between girls, such altercations were a minority of reported gang incidents. For examples of such coverage, see Kitty Hanson, *Rebels in the Streets: The Story of New York's Girl Gangs* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1964), 2–3; "Teen-Age Girl Gang Attacks Five Girls," *New York Times*, April 24, 1956, 34; "Problem Grows Worse," 33; Gene Sherman, "Girl Gangs Create New LA Problem," *Los Angeles Times*, April 23, 1963, A1; "Act to Avert Girls' Revenge in Gang Death," *Chicago Tribune*, October 20, 1956, 6; "Tip to Police Foils Girl Gangs' Battle," *New York Times*, May 1955, 68; Anne Campbell, "Self-Definition by Rejection: The Case of Gang Girls," in *Female Gangs in America: Essays on Girls, Gangs and Gender*, ed. Meda Chesney-Lind and John M. Hagedorn (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1999), 100.

[72] Robert S. Bird, "Kill or Be Killed: Credo of Teen Mobs," *Washington Post*, April 6, 1958, E3; John C. Quicker, "The Chicana Gang: A Preliminary Description," in Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn, *Female Gangs in America*, 49; Walter B. Miller, "The Molls," *Society* 2, no. 11 (1973): 32–35. Only female police officers could frisk girls. Since female officers were rare on the streets, most girls carrying weapons could not be searched.

[73] For examples, see "Gang-Slaying Trial Starts," *New York Times*, May 24, 1955, 24; "Stabbing of Youth Seen by Girl Gang," *New York Times*, March 6, 1956, 62.

[74] Robert S. Bird, "'Club' to Stay, Youths Say," *Washington Post*, April 7, 1958, A16.

that gang fights involving females were 5 times more likely to result in deaths.[75] The

female gang member, one writer explained, "is like the picador in a bull fight who

eventually retires to relish the finale."[76] While girls were involved in male gang disputes,

reports about their role must be read with a critical eye. In almost all cases, the authors

based their claims on the testimony of male social workers who received their

information from male gang members.[77] Today, social scientists persuasively argue that

this double-male lens probably distorted the image of girl gangs, often placing more

blame on females than was warranted.[78] But at the time, the image of a conniving female

instigator proved too attractive for journalists to ignore.

Although the violence surrounding these girls was an important concern, social

commenters and journalists argued that the biggest danger lay in female gang members'

sexuality. The most widely read account of gang girls was the provocative 1964 book

Rebels in the Street by journalist Kitty Hanson, which followed a social worker's year

with the Dagger Debs of Harlem. In the book, Hanson directly attacked female gang

members' sexual activity, opening with a succinct description of the girls as "profane and

promiscuous, often diseased, and often pregnant." Hanson argued that female gang

members "behave like prostitutes" and that "the tragic difference between a delinquent

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[75] Sherman, "Girl Gangs," A1.

[76] Mary Ann Callan, "The Unreachables: Lives Smashed in Girl Gangs," *Los Angeles Times*, August 11, 1963, H1.

[77] Laura T. Fishman, "Black Female Gang Behavior: An Historical and Ethnographic Perspective," in Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn, *Female Gangs in America*, 70; "Peacemaking Priest in Gangland," 90.

[78] An extremely small number of social workers were assigned to work with female gangs, thus much of what was know about the gang world at the time came from male gang members and those assigned to work with them. For more on this issue, see Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn, *Female Gangs in America*.

[gang] girl and a delinquent boy is *sex....*almost all of her offenses are sex-oriented."[79]

Other reporters seconded Hanson's descriptions of female gangs. "Promiscuity," one

writer for the *New Yorker* wrote, "was a built-in trait" of female gang members, a trait

best exemplified by the constant sexual favors that debs provided their male

counterparts.[80] At its worst, this promiscuity could lead to sexually transmitted diseases,

prostitution, and teenage pregnancy. Raising the alarm, one expert warned "these girls are

not only infecting one another with the virus of antisocial behavior, but as mothers of the

next generation they are perpetuating these patterns."[81] Thus gang girls not only enflamed

current gang violence; they threatened to make it an intractable problem for the future.

These prurient fears about gang girls reflected anxieties about female delinquency

that had persisted for decades. Since the mid-nineteenth century reformers had worried

about working-class girls' freedom on city streets,[82] while stories of promiscuous,

delinquent girls had been both shocking and titillating middle-class society for

generations.[83] Despite this historical continuity, the alarmism intensified during the 1950s

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[79] Hanson, *Rebels in the Streets*, 3, 70–71.

[80] Robert Rice, "The Persian Queens," *New Yorker*, October 19, 1963, 185; Gertrude Samuels, "Tangled Problem of the Gang Girl," *New York Times*, July 10, 1960, SM13; Frederic M. Thrasher, "Sex in the Gang," in Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn, *Female Gangs in America*, 10–26; Waln K. Brown, "Black Female Gangs in Philadelphia," in Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn, *Female Gangs in America,* 61–63.

[81] Samuels, "Tangled Problem," SM13.

[82] Mary E. Odem, *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Regina G. Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Benevolence, 1890–1945* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); Rickie Solinger, *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Roe v. Wade* (New York: New Routledge, 1992); Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

[83] In researching his article on gangs, Salisbury noted that sex delinquency among girls seemed to excite most of the experts he interviewed. As he described his interview with William Jensen,

and early 1960s as a burgeoning youth culture encouraged teenage girls to spend time

with peers and challenged parents' authority to regulate girls' behavior. At the same time,

society celebrated women's "containment" in the home and chastity in public. These

conflicting trends created extreme ambivalence, especially among middle-class

Americans, about the growing independence of female teenagers.[84] Stories of gang girls

free to roam the streets, cavort with gang boys, and manipulate violence tapped into these

fears and demonstrated how dangerous this ambivalence could be.[85]

Over the course of the 1950s, journalists played an important role in publicizing

new ideas about street gangs and crafting a picture of gangs that stressed the urgency of

the problem. These young boys and girls were no longer the juvenile delinquents of the

past. Gang members were "vandals and killers who stalked the streets"; they were

criminals who needed to be dealt with.[86] Journalists' accounts criminalized urban youth

and their peer groups in novel ways that would have serious ramifications for crime

politics and policies in the coming decades. By linking gang violence to some of the most

disturbing and pervasive social trends of the period—from racial violence to poverty,

changing cities to evolving gender norms—these accounts and the panic over gangs that

followed both implied that youth street gangs were becoming integral to the fabric of

modern America. If the threads that connected gangs to postwar social trends could not

New York's Superintendent of Schools, "[Jensen's] frame lights up and his interest is clearly sparked" by the topic. Harrison E. Salisbury, "Notes," 17 February 1958, box 572, file 24, Salisbury Collection.

[84] Rachel Devlin, "Female Juvenile Delinquency and the Problem of Sexual Authority in America," *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities* 9, no. 1 (January 1997): 147–182.

[85] For more on the use of Cold War containment to constrain women's roles and for women's reaction to this trend, see May, *Homeward Bound*; Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945–1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 191.

[86] Julius Wolff to Harrison E. Salisbury, 30 March 1958, box 567, file 8, Salisbury Collection.

be cut, the gang problem threatened to grow worse across the country and far into the future.

"The Strong Arm Needs a Big Heart": Police, Social Workers, and Gangs

Faced with this new crime problem, Americans had to search for a new solution. For decades, the primary response to juvenile delinquency had been recreation programs, such as sports leagues, summer camps, and parks, which kept children off the streets and under close supervision. But some experts and the press feared that recreational activities weren't enough to curtail the new menace of street gangs.[87] They pointed out that recreation facilities could become the sites of gang turf battles, as they had in the Michael Farmer case.[88] They also warned that few gang members wanted to participate in recreation programs because facility rules required subservience that was antithetical to independence and masculinity of the gang. But most importantly, gang violence was now a crime problem; while juvenile delinquency might be good boys whose playful antics got out of hand, gang violence was a serious crime committed by criminals. It was naïve to think that a few games of baseball and a new playground might fix the problem.[89]

Police officers and social workers ultimately assumed responsibility for devising a new solution in the 1950s. Law enforcement inherited its responsibility almost by default. Police departments had a long history of dealing with crime in urban communities. Given that gangs were now considered a crime issue, government officials and voters generally

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[87] "The Street Club Score," *Newsweek*, December 4, 1950, 19.
[88] Harrison Salisbury to Robert Moses, 10 April 1958, box 567, file 6, Salisbury Collection.
[89] "Youth Workers Urged in Jersey," *New York Times*, February 18, 1960, 30; Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Project, "Dealing with the Conflict Gang in New York City," May 1960, p. 12, box 573, Salisbury Collection.

supported and expected a police response.[90] Stepping up to this expectation, the police

used a number of approaches to address gang violence in the late 1950s and early 1960s,

but most prominent were punitive control responses. As police officials in Washington,

DC described their plan, "these teen-age monsters…are going to be arrested and brought

in, and…if they get violent they are going to be subdued."[91] The first such tactic was to

remove gang leaders from city streets. Descriptively called "the artichoke approach" by

the LAPD, this solution involved peeling away the leadership and hardcore members of a

gang in hopes of weakening the gang's hold on other boys.[92] In many cases, the police

argued, this strategy was very successfully. Reports of gang violence dropped

precipitously when police sent known leaders to juvenile detention facilities. But

criminologist argued that the artichoke approach could also destabilize a gang. They

noted a few cases in which violence increased because contending factions within a gang

fought for control after established leaders were arrested.[93] When taking away the

leadership wasn't enough and gang wars continued, law enforcement blanketed

communities with police presence and used widespread arrests of any suspected gang

youth.[94]

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[90] Eric H. Monkkonen, "History of Urban Police," *Crime and Justice* 15 (January 1992): 547–580; Robert C. Wadman and William Thomas Allison, *To Protect and to Serve: A History of Police in America* (New York: Prentice Hall, 2003); Harlan Hahn, *Urban America and Its Police: From the Postcolonial Era through the Turbulent 1960s* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2003).

[91] Quoted in 85 Cong. Rec., A2699 (1957).

[92] Mary Ann Callan, "The Unreachables: Gang Youths Live in Another World," *Los Angeles Times*, August 13, 1963, A1.

[93] Stacy V. Jones, "The Cougars: Life with a Brooklyn Gang," *Harper's*, November 1954, 40.

[94] "Police Seize Machine Gun from Youths," *Washington Post*, October 3, 1957, A3; "Recession Crime Feared by Mayor," *New York Times*, May 19, 1958, 27; Peter Kihss, "1,400 City Police Shifted to Fight on Youth Crimes," *New York Times*, September 1, 1959, 1; 84 Cong. Rec., A5551 (1955); Ira Henry Freeman, "Youth Crime Data of Police Queried," *New York Times*,

Law enforcement's preventative measures went beyond arrests and detention. In some places, the police enforced curfew laws enacted by a handful of city governments to keep youths inside after dark. By 1959 Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, Cleveland, and San Francisco all had instituted curfews to target gang members. Philadelphia's police force credited the curfew with lowering juvenile delinquency nearly 9 percent according to their own statistics and told reporters that the curfew "permit[ed] us to nip gang fights in the bud by clearing the kids off the streets."[95] Although curfews went a long way in controlling gang members' activities, they were also problematic because they criminalized the presence of all youth in urban spaces. In addition to curfews, police officers advocated weapons control as another preventative measure against gang violence. Cops often stopped and searched suspected gang members for knives, zip guns, and other homemade weapons. Law enforcement used state regulations to justify these stops and subsequent arrests. This approach was most successful in New York where the state's Sullivan Law—the first gun control law in the country—made it a felony to carry an unlicensed, concealed firearm.[96] However, police officers expressed concern that confiscation only removed a trickle of weapons from the streets, not nearly enough to stem the tide of guns and knives that gang members could buy through the mail from other states.

September 1, 1956, 17; Harrison E. Salisbury, "McIver Police Report," 1958, box 572, file 25, Salisbury Collection.

[95] Quoted in Seymour Topping, "Curfews on Teen-Agers Applauded by Police in 6 US Cities," *New York Times*, September 2, 1959, 17; "5 Youths Get Year as Auto Loiterers," *New York Times*, October 4, 1957, 13.

[96] "Police Seize Machine Gun," A3; William J. Vizzard, "The Impact of Agenda Conflict on Policy Formulation and Implementation: The Case of Gun Control," in *Guns in America: A Reader*, ed. Jan E. Dizard, Robert Merrill Muth, and Stephen P. Andrews (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 131–132.

When these punitively preventive efforts weren't enough and crimes did occur, police officers believed that arresting accused members and sending them to juvenile detention for extended periods would both keep hardcore members off the streets and deter others who feared punishment. In cities like Detroit, New York, and Gary, Indiana, police departments committed more officers to gang-related cases and worked with the courts to maximize sentences. Juvenile court judges publically supported law enforcement, promising to "do all we can to put [gang members] behind bars if it is the only way to stop them."[97] No matter which punitive avenue a department favored, the police approach in the late 1950s was based on a belief that gangs must be quickly crushed and removed from the community.

The only challenge to law enforcement's punishment-oriented response was a novel program developed by social workers in the mid 1950s. As concerns about gang violence grew, social workers experimented with a specialized program for gang boys that brought case workers out to the gang. Traditionally, workers had offered counseling and other services to youth only at specific sites, such as churches, schools, and community centers. But some of these workers believed that gang members avoided these sites, a problem that posed great concern as gang warfare rose. As a solution, social workers proposed a new approach that used "street workers" or "detached workers" who met gangs on the gang's physical and ideological turf.[98] Street workers went into the

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[97] "Intent to Kill Charges Filed in Gang Fight," *Chicago Tribune*, May 29, 1957, 5; "Strong Arm of the Law," *Time*, July 7, 1958, 16–22; "Wayne County's New 'Tough with Teens' Policy Is Paying Off," *Michigan Police Journal* 27, no. 4–5 (May 1958): 10.

[98] Saul Bernstein, *Youth on the Streets: Work with Alienated Youth Groups* (New York: Association Press, 1964), 26–28; NYCYB, *Reaching the Fighting Gang*, 3; Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago (WCMC), "Breaking through Barriers: A Report on the Hard-to-Reach

streets to meet with gangs on the corners and in the soda shops where gangs congregated.

Once accepted by the gang, the workers advised gang members on school, parents, and

girls.[99] They loaned money for food.[100] They discussed social values with gang members

and tried to deter illegal activity.[101] They also helped gang members find jobs and quickly

became known as "the job man."[102] This last role was one of the most important since

sociologists believed that gang members in the 1950s and early 1960s usually "aged out"

of the gang when they secured regular work or married.[103] "There is general acceptance

[among the gang] that this is what a man should do," wrote one researcher in Chicago. "If

he doesn't by the time he reaches 28 years, gang members consider him a 'queer.'"[104]

Social workers hoped that helping male gang members secure a job would hasten the

natural breakdown of the gang.[105]

Although, these roles made the street worker look much like traditional social

service agencies, street workers tried to set themselves apart by approaching the gangs

with respect for the gang code, an understanding of youth culture, and acknowledgement

of gang members' autonomy. "Show [a gang member] a healthy way out in terms of his

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Youth Project of Chicago," 1960, p. 61, box 1, file 2, Irving A. Spergel Papers, Special
Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library (hereafter cited as Spergel Papers).
[99] WCMC, "Breaking through Barriers," 76.
[100] "Departmental Correspondence," 1957, p. 2, box 227, file 2, Welfare Council of Metropolitan
Chicago Records, Chicago Historical Society (hereafter cited as WCMC Records).
[101] WCMC, "Breaking through Barriers," ii.
[102] Jones, "Cougars," 37; Grutzner, "Teen Gangs Spawned," 27.
[103] Diamond, *Mean Streets*, 190; "Youth Crime Laid to Neighborhood," 18.
[104] WCMC, "Breaking through Barriers," 20.
[105] Lila Rosenblum, "Jobs for Youngsters," *Crime and Delinquency* 6, no. 2 (April 1960): 192–
193; "Job Drive Mapped to Cut Teen Crime," *New York Times*, September 16, 1957, 33; Emma
Harrison, "Job Needs Linked to Delinquency," *New York Times*, October 30, 1957, 88; Richard
J.H. Johnston, "Jobs Said to Aid Problem Pupils," *New York Times*, May 22, 1958, 30.

social set up, not yours," one street worker claimed, "and he'll grab it in a minute."[106] For

example, detached workers tried to dissuade gang members from violence or illegal

activity only by highlighting the pros and cons; they ultimately let gang members decide

what to do. As one street worker in New York explained to *Harper's,* "We never try to be

the self-righteous lecturing kind."[107] Most importantly, these workers did not try to crush

the gang from the outset. Street workers often favored the use of truce meetings during

which rival gang leaders met in a neutral space to discuss grievances. Truces outlined

which gangs controlled certain neighborhoods, which leaders could negotiate with each

other, and how rival gangs could peacefully settle disputes. By leading truce negotiations,

workers implicitly recognized the right of gangs to exist and lent credence to the gang

code.[108] Workers also demonstrated their reluctance to immediately destroy gangs by

trying to redirect gangs towards more socially accepted goals in hopes of eventually

loosening the hold of the gang on individual members.[109] One method was to convince

gangs to protect their street reputation by hosting social events and dances instead of

fighting.[110] This strategy was at times successful. In a few cases, gangs that were

assigned a street worker decided to "go social," give up fighting entirely, and pick a new

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[106] Quoted in Walter Bernstein, "Cherubs of Brooklyn," *New Yorker*, September 21, 1957, 146.

[107] Quoted in Jones, "Cougars," 37; Don Thomas, "Clovers Progress Report," November 1957, p. 1, box 227, file 2, WCMC Records; Ronald Kotulak, "'Y' Worker Says Gangs Form from 'Aloneness'," *Chicago Tribune*, November 29, 1959, S1.

[108] Bernstein, *Youth on the* Streets, 103–105; NYCYB, *Reaching the Fighting Gang*, 106; "East Side Fears New Gang Fights," *New York Times*, August 31, 1956, 19; Vincent Riccio and Bill Slocum, *All the Way Down: The Violent Underworld of Street Gangs* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), 153; Barrett, "West Side Report," SM10; Jim Foreman, "Worker Report, Group: Egyptian Cobras," 10 June 1958, p. 3, box 227, file 3, WCMC Records; Jim Foreman, "Worker Report, Group: Egyptian Cobras," 10 June 1957, p. 1, box 227, file 2, WCMC Records; "Hard-to-Reach Youth Project Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago Record of Workers' Meeting," 9 January 1959, p. 2, box 227, file 5, WCMC Records.

[109] Grutzner, "Teen Gangs Spawned," 27; WCMC, "Breaking through Barriers," 17.

[110] MFY, *Proposal*, 166.

name to show their conversion. The Enchanters, a Harlem-based gang, was one such

group. Its members decided to abandon fighting in 1958 and changed their name to the

Conservatives to show that "now we're playing it cool."[111]

As a whole, the response to street worker programs appeared to be fairly positive.

According to police data, the number of gang fights dropped in areas where these

workers were assigned, other illegal activity fell, and some individual gang members

successfully transitioned out of the gang.[112] It even became a badge of honor for gangs to

have a street worker assigned to them. "You didn't figure as a real tough gang," one gang

member in New York claimed, "unless the Youth Board sent you a worker."[113] But there

were reported difficulties. Gang members often manipulated street workers to gain access

to the workers' connections to jobs, money, and other resources, and some hardcore

members brushed off outreach attempts entirely.[114] Additionally, dwindling municipal

budgets in many postwar cities meant that street worker programs were spread thinly and

often only deployed to selected areas after a major gang homicide.[115] Despite these

problems, sociologists and many urban officials considered street workers as the cutting-

edge of gang intervention. All three of the top gang cities—New York, Chicago, and Los

Angeles—adopted street worker programs by 1956.[116] By the 1960s, positive press

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[111] Quoted in Wayne Phillips, "Youth Replace Fights with Fun," *New York Times*, March 10, 1958, 14.

[112] WCMC, "Breaking through Barriers," 99; Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*, 190–197; "Wagner Praises City Youth Board," *New York Times*, October 31, 1957, 26.

[113] Quoted in Grutzner, "Teen Gangs Spawned," 27.

[114] Kotulak, "'Y' Worker," S1; Riccio and Slocum, "My Life," 13–19.

[115] Barrett, "West Side Report," SM10; Riccio and Slocum, *All the Way Down*, 153; Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*, 194–197.

[116] Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*, 189–190; NYCYB, *Reaching the Fighting Gang*, 2–5; WCMC, "Breaking through Barriers," ii–iii, 1; Clyde Murray, "The Church and the Acting-Out Gang," 3 February 1957, p. 1, box 21, file 2, W. Alvin Pitcher Papers, Special

coverage inspired the opening of street worker programs in smaller cities across the country and, according to the *New York Times,* "evoked interest all over the world."[117]

It was clear from the start that the detached workers' approach was a dramatic departure from that of the police. While the police were mostly interested in punishing members and crushing gangs, street workers offered services to members and temporarily accepted the gangs' presence. This divergence stemmed from ideological differences between cops and social workers. The police were a law enforcement body intent on using laws and the courts to address crime, while social workers based their strategies on an understanding that the gang satisfied vital needs of belonging and protection for gang members.[118] This divide caused tension in the cities where the two groups came into regular contact with one another. Debates between them escalated as social workers entered the community in greater numbers under the new street worker model. As long as social workers stayed within settlement houses and community centers—as they had in earlier decades—police officers generally did not consider social work a direct challenge to law enforcement. But once workers moved out into the streets and the public places where cops walked the beat, police sentiment changed. As a result, interactions between the two became a testing ground on which each group strove to establish its supremacy.

Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library (hereafter Pitcher Papers); "Hard to Reach Youth Project," 1958, p. 1–2, box 227, file 4, WCMC Records; John Barnes, "Foes of Delinquency Test Ounce of Prevention," *Los Angeles Times*, April 30, 1961, H1.

[117] NYCYB, *Reaching the Fighting Gang*, 2; Will Chasan, "Teen-Age Gang from the Inside," *New York Times*, March 21, 1954, SM17; David Zingg, "A Teen-age Gang from the Inside," *Look*, August 23, 1955; Bernstein, "Cherubs of Brooklyn"; Riccio and Slocum, "My Life," 13–19.

[118] Bernstein, *Youth on the Streets*, 71–73.

The first time most cops met a street worker was when the police were arresting one of the worker's gang members, frisking an area youth, or busting up a fight.[119] This charged backdrop was a less than ideal first meeting for both workers and police. Even after the street worker was introduced to the police, many officers remained suspicious. As one street worker remembered, "The cops…thought I was what the kids thought at first: a pimp, a queer or a dope pusher."[120] This suspicion was in part fueled by street workers' confidentiality policies. In early programs, workers could not divulge gang members' names, the presence of weapons, or known illegal activity to the police. Street workers based this policy on a belief that breaking the gang's confidence would alienate the gang and ruin the outreach program.[121] Police officers, however, argued that keeping intelligence on the gangs from the police hampered crime investigations and stymied law enforcement's ability to prevent impending gang violence. "The average cop or detective believed that the street workers were covering for the kids," reported one Chicago policeman.[122] Making tensions worse, street workers publicly disparaged cops that behaved violently or corruptly when dealing with gang youth. Workers witnessed the police treat gang members with brutality during arrests, and some workers even reported receiving the same treatment themselves.[123] In Chicago, one street worker helped a gang

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[119] Lawrence William Sherman, "Youth Workers, Police and the Gangs: Chicago, 1956–1970" (master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1970), 5; Thomas, "Clovers Progress Report," 2.

[120] Riccio and Slocum, *All the Way Down*, 130.

[121] WMCM, "Breaking through Barriers," 61, 78–79; "Youth Aide Found Not to Be Addict," *New York Times*, February 5, 1958, 21; Kotulak, "'Y' Worker," S1.

[122] Quoted in Sherman, "Youth Workers," 9.

[123] Thomas, "Clovers Progress Report," 2; "Untitled Street Worker Report," [1957], p. 2, box 227, file 2, WCMC Records; "Youth Aide," 21; Vincent Riccio and Bill Slocum, "A Dance for the Gowanus Boys," *Saturday Evening Post*, September 22, 1962, 56–59; WCMC, "Breaking through Barriers," 124–125.

member and his family file a lawsuit against the police department after officers chained

the boy to a steel pole at the local precinct and whipped him with a belt buckle.[124]

Nowhere was the dispute between street workers and police officers more evident

than in New York City, the home of the first street worker program for gangs.

Inaugurated in 1950, the New York program fell under the aegis of the New York City

Youth Board (NYCYB), a municipal agency that provided social services for all of the

city's youth. In the early years of its gang outreach program, the NYCYB had strict rules

against sharing information with the police about gang members and their activities. This

policy generated immense controversy with the New York Police Department (NYPD).

The most vociferous enemy was Police Commissioner Stephen P. Kennedy who called

the meddling of the NYCYB "too many cooks putting their spoons into the delinquency

pot."[125] Kennedy lashed out at the program by haranguing street workers' attempts to

cooperate with gang youth, particularly their efforts to broker truces. Attempting to send

a clear message to the NYCYB in 1956, Kennedy directed all of his police officers, "You

shall not enter into treaties concords, compacts, or agreements of appeasement….You

shall meet violence with force….We cannot compromise with evil. You must enforce the

law."[126] *Time* and other news outlets covered Kennedy's stand against the NYCYB and

publicized his belief that the police department was "a law-enforcement agency, not a

rehabilitative agency." The NYCYB shot back that in three years there had not been a

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[124] Sherman, "Youth Workers," 6; WCMC, "Breaking through Barriers," 114.
[125] Harrison E. Salisbury, "Lethargy of Public Found at Root of Youth Problem," *New York Times*, March 30, 1958, 1.
[126] Reprinted in "Truce on 'Rumbles'," *New York Times*, August 19, 1956, 162.

single gang-related death due to street workers' efforts.[127] This dispute brought substantial attention to the tug of war between law enforcement and street workers and spurred debate about the correct approach. Some of *Time's* vocal readers and New York's public figures applauded Kennedy's tough stance, calling detached workers "coddlers," "panty-waist" reformers, and "sob sisters."[128] But others warned that "The strong arm needs a big heart" and that a compromise between the two was necessary for any gang control program to succeed.[129]

After this very public battle, the NYCYB moved towards a compromise with the NYPD. All street workers were now expected to introduce themselves to the police precinct where they were assigned and to meet regularly with officers. The NYCYB also rewrote its policies to encourage street workers to report to the cops any impending gang fights that could not be stopped through truces or worker intervention.[130] Stressing its new stance, the NYCYB wrote that it strove to uphold "law and order" by "seek[ing] the active participation and assistance of law enforcement agencies in the community, including the police, the district attorney, and the courts."[131] Shortly thereafter, Commissioner Kennedy acknowledged the efforts of the NYCYB to accommodate police demands and set in motion plans for the police and social workers to better coordinate the

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[127] "Strong Arm of the Law," 16–22; "Youth Board Opens New Harlem Unit," *New York Times*, July 10, 1959, 9; Gertrude Samuels, "'Number 1' Project for the City," *New York Times*, June 29, 1958, SM10.
[128] "Terror Comes to City Streets," 65–66; Moley, "No Part," B5.
[129] "Letters," *Time*, July 28, 1958, 4.
[130] "Interfaith Work with Boys Hailed," *New York Times*, November 11, 1959, 28.
[131] NYCYB, *Reaching the Fighting Gang*, xiv, 10, 255.

citywide attack on gang violence.[132] By 1959, the NYCYB and NYPD were known to jointly saturate neighborhoods with high-profile gang homicides. After one such incident in New York, a police official told reporters, "Working this way, real close, with the Youth Board man, we've got our fingers on the pulse….we get to place in time now to stop trouble before it gets really started."[133]

Other cities followed New York's lead. A number of street worker programs across the country began meeting regularly with police officers, reporting gang fights to local authorities, and turning in gang weapons to the police.[134] In Chicago, the YMCA trained its detached workers that when "dealing with the police, don't challenge them; try not to threaten their position or authority….be cool."[135] On the other end, some police departments softened their stance against social workers' ideas.[136] At times, these officers helped negotiate gang truces and tried to reach out to the gang boys themselves. In Detroit, the police department ran a "get tough" program arresting gang members but also created programs for youth counseling and parent education classes on identifying gangs and how to stop them.[137] Just as in the street worker programs, employment in particular was an essential element of these officers' vision. As one frustrated cop told the *Chicago*

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[132] "Remarks of Police Commissioner Steven P. Kennedy at the Joint Conference of Key Personnel of the Police Department and the NYCYB," 22 April 1958, box 572, file 25, Salisbury Collection.

[133] Quoted in Barrett, "West Side Report," SM10.

[134] "Hard-to-Reach Youth Project WCMC Record of Workers' Meeting"; William C. Watson, "Present Relationship with the 25th District Police," [1958], box 227, file 6, WCMC Records; YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago, "The Committee for Detached Workers Second General Report," April 1958, p. 1, box 424, file 3, WCMC Records; "Hard to Reach Youth Project."

[135] Reprinted in Sherman, "Youth Workers," 18.

[136] Jean White, "Police Counsel Juvenile Clubs," *Washington Post*, June 3, 1956, D16.

[137] 84 Cong. Rec., A5551 (1955).

Tribune, "If you could find employment for many of them, we would be rid of 50 percent of the gangs."[138]

This common ground did not mean that tensions disappeared completely. There were still individual street workers and police officers who quarreled with one another in confrontations on the street. Yet, for the most part, street workers and police officers had developed a public truce. This compromise was primarily the result of public pressure and media attention. As contact between cops and workers became more common and as attention to the gang issue increased, leadership in both police departments and in street worker programs quickly realized that improving relations between the two groups was vital for both politics and safety.[139] Police departments recognized that detached worker programs were the darlings of both national news and local mayors. To continue a very public battle against a program with such growing popularity might hurt law enforcement's reputation. On the other side, street worker agencies realized the extensive power of the police. Cops controlled the spaces where detached workers did their work, a fact that was impossible to ignore in light of workers' daily interactions with police in the community. Moreover, police departments had a long-established relationship with political leaders both in municipal and state governments, a relationship that a new initiative, such as the detached worker program, at times could not compete with. Realizing that cooperation could benefit each side, the police and social workers found a tentative common ground in a blended approach of social outreach to gangs, of

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[138] Robert Wiedrich, "School in Slums Shows Some Ways to Eliminate Street Gangs," *Chicago Tribune*, December 10, 1959, A1.

[139] "Record of the Meeting of Supervisors," 9 April 1950, box 669, file 1, WCMC Records; 84 Cong. Rec., A5551 (1955); Robert Alden, "East Side Urges Report on Gang," *New York Times*, December 22, 1959, 37.

punishment to remove hardcore leaders, and of surveillance to manage those that

remained in the neighborhood. Through their struggles and compromises with each other,

police officers and street workers did the on-the-ground work of proposing and

experimenting with various crime control visions. Their efforts became the foundation for

the earliest federal discussions about gang violence and, in effect, shaped the politics that

would eventually come out of Washington.

From the Streets to the Senate: The Federal Response to Gang Violence

The federal government's decision in the late 1950s to tackle the gang issue was

not a foregone conclusion. For most of the nation's history, Americans generally

considered crime a local issue best handled by state and municipal governments. Beyond

tradition, there was also constitutional federalism to consider. The Constitution did not

enumerate domestic policing or crime control as one of the powers of the federal

government, thus the states automatically were the sole authority in this arena.[140] But

with the federal government's growing reach as a result of the New Deal and World War

II and with a burgeoning belief among many citizens that the federal government could

play a beneficial role in solving society's problems, many voters and a number of local

officials in the postwar period increasingly looked to the federal government to help in

areas it previously had eschewed.[141] Gang violence was no exception. Given that crime

was not a traditional issue for federal politicians, when Congress finally did take up the

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[140] Friedman, *Crime and Punishment*; Samuel Walker, *Popular Justice: A History of American Criminal Justice*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[141] James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945–1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur, eds., *The Great Society and the High Tide of Liberalism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005).

issue it looked to debates already going on among law enforcement and social workers to frame its own discussion of the problem.

The first major effort by the federal government to curb gang violence began with legislation to limit teens' access to weapons. The target was the switchblade, a small knife whose blade was concealed in the handle and released when the user flicked the knife or pushed a button to spring the blade upwards. In 1957, a Senate-backed study found that nearly three million American teenagers owned a switchblade primarily because these weapons were easy to conceal and cost only around a dollar.[142] The police reported that gang members in particular carried and used switchblades, while popular culture portrayals of gangs, such as *West Side Story*, emphasized the image of switchblade-wielding gang members. As concern about gang violence grew, many state and local politicians tried to contain violence by limiting this popular weapon. Twelve states had outlawed switchblade sales by 1958. These local laws, however, were toothless in the face of national distribution networks; a gang member could simply order a switchblade by mail or cross state lines to purchase one. If state lawmakers hoped to truly curb the problem, the federal legislators would have to intervene.[143]

In 1958, Congressional members proposed a bill outlawing the national distribution of switchblades. In debates, lawmakers echoed police reports and news portrayals of gangs by articulating their own support for the bill in terms of its usefulness in curbing gang violence. The switchblade, argued Senator Kenneth Keating

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[142] US Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, *Juvenile Delinquency: Hearing before the Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency*, 85th Cong., 1st sess., December 4, 1957, 96–97; US Congress, Senate, *Switchblade Knives: Hearing Before the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce*, 85th Cong., 2nd sess., July 23, 1958 (hereafter cited as *Switchblade Knives Hearing),* 1.
[143] 85 Cong. Rec., 12399 (1958).

(Republican) of New York, was "the favorite weapon of the teen-age gangs which today terrorize sections of our larger cities." Democratic Senator Sidney R. Yates of Illinois agreed, claiming "the switchblade has become the symbol, as well as the weapon of the teen-age gang." Reflecting the rhetoric that was central to redefining gangs as criminal, Yates further explained that the switchblade's use in violent acts set its owner apart as a criminal youth: "this is not the type of knife that we used when we were boys or that the Boy Scouts now use. This weapon is designed to be used exclusively for strong-arm purposes."[144]

Congress's decision to address switchblades was the direct result of public pressure and police requests. A large cross-section of American voters had begun to advocate federal action because "street-gang terrorism" was becoming so widespread that local efforts were not enough. Congressional representatives took notice of the news coverage and received calls from constituents to do something about the problem.[145] Law enforcement entered the discussion, too. Police officers considered gangs' access to weapons one of the principal factors in rising violence. In surveys conducted by the Senate, police chiefs reported that switchblades were a primary concern for law enforcement and that local laws against this type of weapon had reduced gang-related crime rates. "From a law-enforcement viewpoint," reported Boston's police chief, "these weapons are specifically devised as a vicious, insidious weapon of assault….Federal legislation that would prohibit their manufacture and interstate shipment would certainly

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[144] Ibid., 12400.
[145] "Youth Crime Study Urged in Senate," *New York Times*, September 10, 1959, 35; John E. Cone, "Delinquency and Youth Gangs," *Catholic Lawyer* 3 (1957): 101–102.

have my approval."[146] In debates on the Senate floor, Congressmen repeatedly alluded to police officers' belief that the ban would curb gang warfare, an argument Senators from both the Democratic and Republican Parties found difficult to ignore.[147] With support from police, constiuents, and both sides of the aisle in Congress, the ban on selling and manufacturing switchblades quickly made its way into law.

The ban's passage was an important turning point in crime-related politics. It demonstrated that the federal government now acknowledged its own responsibility for the fight against youth crime. It also hinted at the evolving rationale that federal legislators used to justify overstepping the boundaries of federalism. In discussions about the bill, Congressional members originally expressed hesitation about interfering in what had always been considered a local issue.[148] Yet, these same senators argued, voters and the police demanded that Congress act. To reconcile this conflict, senators utilized the interstate commerce clause. First, Congress could end the sale of switchblades through the postal service. And second, in the words of one senator, the federal government could "prohibit gangs from carrying the knives themselves across State lines to make a raid in some other town."[149] Using the federal government's ability to regulate the interstate movement of weapons, the senators reasoned, switchblade legislation was one of the few ways that Washington could constitutionally respond to the crime issue.

Passing the switchblade ban and debating street gangs on the Senate floor opened the door for more federal activity. In fact, most senators saw the bill as only the first step

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[146] *Switchblade Knives Hearing*, 2–4.

[147] 85 Cong. Rec., 12400 (1958).

[148] "Youth Crime Study Urged," 35; Cone, "Delinquency and Youth Gangs," 101–102.

[149] While there are no records of actual interstate gang wars in the 1950s, such inflated fears and rhetoric were a vital impetus for legislation. 85 Cong. Rec., 12397–12402 (1958); "Switchblades Curbed," *New York Times*, August 13, 1958, 29.

in a much-needed, federal attack on youth crime. The following year, Congress held a

series of hearings to lay the groundwork for a wide-ranging juvenile delinquency bill.

During the hearings, numerous witnesses gave testimony that stressed the central role of

gang violence in turning juvenile delinquents into hardcore criminals. As a result, the

Senate called a special two-day hearing in New York City to focus on gang violence. One

of the central planks of this special session was the difference between gang violence and

run-of-the-mill misbehavior. Expressing the same understanding that had come to typify

journalists' portrayals, Democratic Senator Thomas Hennings of Missouri opened the

hearing with a lengthy explanation of why the Senate chose to focus on youth gangs:

"Now here we are not dealing with the so-called juvenile delinquent….there is a

distinction between what might be called youthful misbehavior and crime. We are

dealing here with teenage terrorists: actual and potential murderers." Seconding

Hennings's characterization, Mayor Richard Wagner of New York testified, "this is not

juvenile delinquency, some advanced stage of truancy from school, or pinching apples

from the corner grocer….This is crime."[150]

Once again police officers were central to the federal discussion during these

hearings, but this time they were joined by street workers. As in local debates, the police

who testified lobbied for more weapons legislation and stricter sentencing for minors

accused of felonies and misdemeanors. They wanted the hardcore gang members off the

streets so that the spread of violence could be contained. Street workers meanwhile

testified to the efficacy of their own outreach work and the social work response. Their

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[150] US Congress, Senate, *Juvenile Delinquency: Hearings before the Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, Part 4*, 86th Cong., 1st sess., September 23–24, 1959 (hereafter cited as *Juvenile Delinquency Part 4*, 388, 392–393, 406.

testimony also stressed the necessity of federal funding. Many street worker programs

depended on philanthropic donations and city or state budgets, but these funds were

rarely adequate to meet social workers' demands.[151] Sustained and expansive investment

could ensure the success of these programs, street workers testified, a type of investment

that only the federal government had the resources to provide. But street workers'

testimony did not stop simply with calls of more service-oriented programs. They, like

the police, urged Congress to increase federal support for detention and tracking of gang

members who continued to be violent despite street worker intervention.[152] Although

social workers believed that most gang members were redeemable, a few could not be

saved. These demands for a joint approach evinced the common ground that both social

workers and the police had already negotiated at the local level.

The Senate committee's final report was another major turning point in the federal

government's attention to the gang issue. The senators recommended that the federal

government take on gang violence more directly by funding outreach projects, such as

street work. They advised that federal agencies design research projects to identify other

services that might benefit gang members and eliminate urban youths' needs to join

gangs. The committee also advocated tighter enforcement of narcotics, which were

thought to fuel the most disturbing gang fights, and stiffer penalties for the most violent

gang offenders. Additionally, the final recommendations included calls for Congress to

move beyond switchblades in weapons regulations. Only by tackling the spread of

firearms and ammunition, the legislators argued, would gang violence ultimately fall. The

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[151] "Record of the Meeting of Supervisors," 6 May 1958, p. 1, box 227, file 4, WCMC Records.
[152] *Juvenile Delinquency Part 4*, 405–425, 443–458.

committee's findings signaled that lawmakers at the end of the 1950s had finally begun to

embrace expanded federal intervention in crime issues, especially in the arena of gang-

related crime. But it also revealed that early on this intervention would be a centrist

program. These federal politicians were merely following the lead of social workers and

the police who testified during hearings as the most experienced experts in developing a

solution.[153] Both conservatives and liberals in Congress agreed that the ultimate goal was

to disband street gangs but to do so through a joint effort of social services and policing.

Although gang members were increasingly becoming "criminals," many of them could be

saved with the right form of intervention. At the very least, the federal government

should provide "vigorous national leadership" in this process.[154] As New York Senator

Jacob Javitz (Democrat) argued, it was time to "put the National Government's prestige

and the national governmental organization…behind the efforts of the city and the States

to deal with juvenile delinquency and youth crime."[155]

By the end of the 1950s police officers, social workers, and federal legislators had

come to an agreement about the gang problem and how to respond. Gangs were now a

major crime issue that dwarfed fears about juvenile delinquency. They were a blight upon

[153] John E. Moore, "Controlling Delinquency: Executive, Congressional, and Juvenile 1961–64," in *Congress and Urban Problems*, ed. Frederic N. Cleaveland (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 1969), 110–172; Heidi Matiyow Rosenberg, "Federal Policy toward Delinquent Youth: Legislative and Programmatic Milestones from Kennedy to Ford, 1960–1976" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008), 28–32.

[154] *Juvenile Delinquency Part 4*, 393, 398, 404, 507–509.

[155] 86 Cong. Rec., 17666–17667 (1959). The one major exception to support for federalization came from a handful of Southern senators who saw any attempts by the federal government to intervene in local government during the late 1950s as a loss of states' rights and by extension as a blow to segregation. However, these senators were in the minority on the issue of gang violence. For example, see 86 Cong. Rec., 18385 (1959).

their members, their communities, and American society but some of them could be saved from a life of crime. To deal with this threat, these actors developed a consensus approach to national gang intervention: controlling gangs would require both punishment and services, both police and social workers. Even more importantly, the majority of lawmakers at the federal level now believed that crime control had become an issue important to the federal government. It planted the seed that the federal government could and should intervene in controlling gang-related crime. Despite this federalized approach, these debates were grounded in local-level strategies devised by police and social workers while employing the definitions and rhetoric of the national media. Instead of being the drivers of crime politics, politicians were largely the responders in this early period. Over the next decade, they would be pushed to new extremes as community members, minority activists, and law enforcement developed new understandings of the gang problem and championed an expanding variety of crime fighting programs. The interjection of these new voices would cause the consensus approach to crumble and lead to the divergence of liberal and conservative crime control that later typified postwar crime politics.

Chapter 2

Race, Rights, and Revolution: Civil Rights Activists and New Approaches to Street Gangs, 1960–1968

"The truth is, though, it was because of the Young Lords, the Black Panthers and the Puerto Rican Socialist Party that made us aware that there was another alternative. You know stop the violence, stop killing each other, stop hurting your own brothers. Where we could utilize all this power to do good as opposed to evil. We saw the paraphernalia, the newspapers, and the buttons. We seen this, and you know that was big time. We said, look at this, man, why don't we be like that?[1] *— Benjy Melendez, leader of the Ghetto Brothers*

It was a Friday night, and the Westside of Chicago was burning. Fifteen young men trudged up to the third floor of a dilapidated apartment on South Hamlin Avenue. All fifteen were members of black Westside gangs: the Cobras, the Vice Lords, and the Roman Saints. They had come to the apartment for a meeting with civil rights workers to discuss the uprising now raging on the Westside.[2] Three days earlier on July 11, 1966, police officers had pulled up to a corner in the largely African American neighborhood to shut off a fire hydrant opened by local teens. When onlookers protested that the hydrant was their only relief from the heat because whites had barred blacks from local pools, the confrontation between police and residents grew heated.[3] By Friday, when the gang leaders met, the altercation had developed into what the black press called a "Bloody, Savage…Riot" of brutality by police and of bricks thrown by protesters.[4] For the first four hours of the meeting, the gang leaders argued with civil rights workers that enough wasn't being done for Chicago's street youth. There were no jobs for the summer. The

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[1] Quoted in Ghetto Brothers, *Power Fuerza* (Brooklyn, NY: Truth & Soul, 2012), liner notes, 66.
[2] Donald Janson, "Chicago Calmer as Gangs Agree to End Violence," *New York Times*, July 17, 1966, 1; James R. Ralph Jr., *Northern Protest: Martin Luther King Jr., Chicago, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 55–56.
[3] "Teenager Explains the Riot," *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 14, 1966, 4.
[4] "Anatomy of a Bloody, Savage Westside Riot," *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 16, 1966, 21.

city's government wasn't providing help. Leaders in the civil rights movement avoided

working with gang members in the poorest neighborhoods. The uprising, the gangs

argued, reflected urban youths' desire for more aid and—more importantly—political

power. As the clock inched towards 3:00 am on Saturday, Richard "Peanut" Tidwell of

the Roman Saints stood up in the middle of the tightly packed room. In front of the

others, he pledged that he would try nonviolence and that his gang would help civil rights

organizers calm the Westside. "Rioting is beneath my dignity," Tidwell told them all. He

then turned to each leader in the room and asked for a personal commitment that their

gangs would do the same. Each leader agreed. Tidwell extended his hand to the man

whose apartment they had taken over for the meeting; Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. shook

Tidwell's hand and then the hands of the other gang representatives. Two days later,

Westside streets were quiet.[5]

As this chapter will explain, the meeting between King and Westside gangs was

not a rare occurrence. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Congress

of Racial Equality (CORE), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

(NAACP), Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Panther

Party, and many other black civil rights organizations worked with gangs across the

country in meetings and rallies throughout the 1960s. They hoped that by providing

gangs with valuable ways to take part in their neighborhoods and in the rights struggle,

gang violence would decline and possibly disappear. And they were not alone. Latino

activists from the Crusade for Justice and a handful of Puerto Rican nationalist

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[5] Quoted in Alfred Friendly Jr., "Chicago Officials Voice Concern over Apparent Gang Alliance with Rights Leaders," *New York Times*, July 20, 1966, 23; Janson, "Chicago Calmer," 1.

movements also formed alliances with current and former gang members to strengthen their own causes in urban centers. By cooperating with gangs, these minority rights groups would be partly responsible for a new way of thinking about gangs and how to address them in the second half of the 1960s.

This chapter also analyzes why perceptions of race and gang violence underwent a radical transformation during the 1960s, especially from 1965 through 1968. Considered by outsiders as a multi-ethnic problem in 1950s, gangs in the 1960s were seen by these outsiders as a distinctly minority issue. One cause of this change was the growing percentage of black and Latino residents in Northern cities. This growth fed into white Americans' traditional fears about nonwhite criminality. But evolving residential patterns and historical racism do not fully explain the change or its abrupt timing. Integral to this evolution were the activities of racial minorities, from gang members and their neighbors to minority rights activists and middle-class reformers. Black and Latino activists lamented gang violence in their neighborhoods, reached out to gangs for support, and then publicized these efforts in the national media. Through these public efforts they unintentionally helped construct the racially coded language that defined gangs as African American and Latino. The role of gangs in urban uprisings also shaped changing perceptions. Some gang members were catalysts in uprisings, while others worked to quell such violence. Journalists covering these events spotlighted gang involvement, which only hardened the growing perception that gangs were no longer a white ethnic problem. Finally, gang members adopted the language and ideas of Black Power. In this new ideology gangs found a political philosophy they felt articulated their needs and identity. Although using minority power rhetoric helped members construct new

identities and mobilize, it also strengthened the perceived connection between race and urban gangs.

As perceptions changed, so did the proposed solutions. By the mid 1960s, the old model of detached workers breaking apart and reforming gang members lost favor in black and Latino communities. Minority rights activists and gang members pushed for programs that built upon and used gangs for constructive efforts. These ideas grew out of the grassroots work of activists who employed gang members along picket lines and in community programs. Meanwhile, gangs organized their own movements and sought ways to integrate themselves into the growing wave of activism. This is not to say that all urban gangs suddenly converted to political activism. The known percentage of politicized and reformed gangs was small. However, these groups received coverage from national news agencies that far outweighed their numbers. As a result, this small movement was poised to have a large impact on crime politics nationally.

Tradition and Change: Race, Crime, and Demographics

Linking people of color to crime has been a mainstay of American culture and politics since Reconstruction when policing was use to control newly-freed slaves. This tradition has largely built upon racist ideas about African Americans and, to a lesser extent, discussions about Latinos.[6] Juvenile delinquency was no exception. Since the Progressive era, when reformers created the juvenile court system, minority offenders

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[6] Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the Nineteenth-Century American South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Jeffrey S. Adler, *First in Violence, Deepest in Dirt: Homicide in Chicago, 1875–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 120–158.

have been thought of differently than white offenders. Progressives believed that offenses

by young people were a problem distinct from adult crime and thus should be treated in a

different way. Using new constructs about the vulnerability and uniqueness of childhood,

Progressives argued that children were less to blame for their actions than were adults,

thus youths' illegal acts represented misbehavior more so than crime. Unlike the

punishment-oriented adult justice system, the focus of juvenile courts became

rehabilitating errant youth in hopes of molding good citizens and adults for the future. A

belief that they could "save" these children was central to reformers' efforts.[7] Yet even

from the start, these beliefs and the system they created were laden with racial ideologies.

In most cases, black youth delinquency was not considered delinquency at all.

Progressives and generations of white American reformers who came after them did not

see African Americans youths as deserving of a "childhood" or an "adolescence," thus

minorities' illegal acts were not considered juvenile delinquency. Furthermore,

longstanding assumptions about the inherent criminality of African Americans, bolstered

by eugenic theories of the Progressive period, strengthened the belief that black children

could not be rehabilitated as successfully as white children. As a result, white Americans

largely lumped black youth accused of illegal acts and status offenses into the adult crime

category in need of punishment and incarceration. The same was true for Latino youth,

but experts in the juvenile court system often regarded young Latino men and women to

be slightly better candidates for reform than African Americans.[8] It was against this

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[7] Anthony M. Platt, *The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); Barry C. Feld, *Bad Kids: Race and the Transformation of the Juvenile Court* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3–78.
[8] William S. Bush, *Who Gets a Childhood? Race and Juvenile Justice in Twentieth-Century Texas* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 71–125; Miroslava Chávez-García, *States of*

historical backdrop that gang violence became racially coded in the 1960s. Although gangs were not racialized in the public imagination when the gang panic began in the 1950s, the propensity of white Americans to see crime as a problem inherent to nonwhite communities created an intellectual environment that made racially-biased perceptions about gangs highly likely. Moreover, because of the deeply rooted presumption linking nonwhite youth with crime, the postwar tendency to see gang-related incidents as crime strengthened the link between race and urban gangs.

Also at work were demographic changes. The population of young males in cities across the country jumped dramatically in the postwar period. In the three largest American cities—New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles—young men as a percentage of the total male population peaked in 1970, signaling an explosive growth of young men in urban centers during the 1960s (Figure 2).

Delinquency: Race and Science in the Making of California's Juvenile Justice System (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Geoff K. Ward, *The Black Child-Savers: Racial Democracy and Juvenile Justice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).
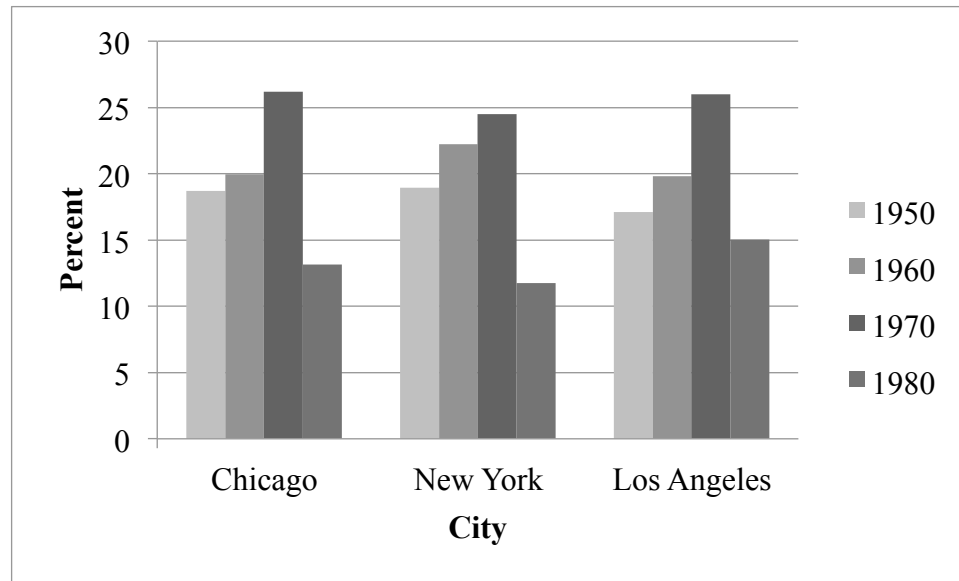
Figure 2. Males from ages 10 to 24 as a percentage of total male population, Select Cities, 1950–1980. Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Statistics, *Census Tracts, 1950–1980* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1952, 1961, 1972, 1983).

These young men were the focus of popular scrutiny for gang crimes and, to some extent, explain the increasing attention to gangs in general. At the same time, the percentage of black and Latino residents in urban centers spiked as whites fled to the suburbs and nonwhites came to the city looking for work and housing (Table 1).

	New York	Chicago	Los Angeles
1940-1950	+308.92%	+80.50%	+116.00%
1950-1960	+47.17%	+64.43%	+97.18%
1960-1970	+46.16%	+31.62%	+20.71%
1970-1980	+74.59%	+37.39%	+128.37%

Table 1. Percent change in nonwhite population, Select Cities, 1940–1980. Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Statistics, *Census Tracts 1940–1980* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1942, 1952, 1961, 1972, 1983).

The rapid expansion of nonwhite urban populations after 1945 and the continuation of this trend throughout the postwar period partially explain concerns about nonwhite gangs. With more minorities in cities, fears about their activities jumped.

But the historical traditions linking race and crime and the changing composition of cities only tell part of the story. If gang panics corresponded only to racial demographics, the height of the panic over black and Latino gangs would have coincide with the decades of greatest growth in the minority population. Yet the decade from 1960 through 1970, during which the racialization of gang images occurred, was the *slowest* period of growth for all three cities. The abrupt changes in gang stereotypes that occurred from approximately 1965 through 1968 do not fit the steady demographic trends. Fully historicizing the process by which gangs became racially coded, requires an examination of causative factors beyond the racially coded traditions and evolving demographics that provided a bedrock. It requires an examination of other actors who interjected new rhetoric into the debate during this critical period.

The African American Response to Gang Violence

One of the defining characteristics of the mid 1960s gang debate was the introduction of minority voices. Throughout the period, increasing numbers of black newspapers and politicians discussed the effects of gangs on their communities. In August 1967, *Ebony* ran a special issue on black youth in America that singled out the gang issue as a paramount concern. With a stark photograph of gang graffiti on its cover, the magazine featured a ten-page treatment of gang violence that ominously began, "Of the nation's more than ten million Negroes under the age of 19 none are so maligned as

those who comprise the restless youth gangs that swarm through big city ghettos like

aimless locusts….They are the bitter harvest of the frustration and deprivation common

to the inner cores of urban areas where the majority of the black population is confined."

The writers specifically explored Chicago's gang violence and its roots in limited

opportunities for black men in the city. While the article recognized that white gangs

were also a problem, it buried such asides deep within the text, leaving readers with the

impression that gangs were a unique response to the social and economic limitations

placed on black America.[9]

Ebony's article was not alone. It merely brought to attention a dialog that had

been growing in black communities for a few years. In 1964, black New Yorkers had

rallied against a new gang, the Blood Brothers, who had stabbed a white woman in

Harlem. Reports from the local police and national press panicked that the Blood

Brothers, who espoused black pride and borrowed ideas from the Nation of Islam (NOI),

were a new "hate gang" targeting whites.[10] The Amsterdam News ran articles denouncing

the Blood Brothers, and Harlem's black churches planned a campaign against all gangs in

hopes of curbing both the violence and the hysteria.[11] Similar anti-gang campaigns also

appeared in other cities during these early years. In Chicago, a group of young mothers

held "What's Happening" rallies in 1966 to educate the community about black-on-black

gang violence. "We can't stand still and let our children kill each other," Myra Pittman,

[9] Phyl Garland, "The Gang Phenomenon: Big City Headache," Ebony, August 1967, 96.
[10] "Report of Harlem Gang That Preys on Whites," US News and World Report, May 18, 1964, 10; Junius Griffin, "Whites Are Target of Harlem Gang," New York Times, May 3, 1964, 43; 88 Cong. Rec., 10346 (1964); Timothy Noah, "Jimmy's Big Brothers," New Republic, May 16, 1981, 14–16.
[11] George Barner and Les Matthews, "An Amsterdam News Study: The Violent Area," New York Amsterdam News, May 9, 1964, 1; "Clergy Map Harlem Fight vs. Hoods," New York Amsterdam News, June 27, 1964, 26.

one of the organizers warned fellow black residents.[12] State Senator Richard H.

Newhouse of Chicago, who would later be the first black candidate for the city's mayor,

seconded this sentiment: "as adults, we all must see that it is nonsense for our

communities to be run, in effect, by youngsters who call the neighborhood 'my

turf'….[These kids] have illegally seized turf that belongs to their elders."[13] And in San

Diego, black parents established the Volunteer Parent Organization to cool gang tensions

and civil unrest by patrolling the streets and offering outreach to urban youth.[14]

African Americans' reasons for spotlighting black gangs were complex and

diverse. They were worried about the violence in their communities that almost always

victimized other black residents. This concern applied to gang activity and general crime.

For example, Harlem residents held heated community meetings about crime in the area,

and the NAACP found that in Harlem more residents feared becoming the victims of

street crime than police brutality.[15] Similarly, in a letter to the editor of the *National

Review,* a black resident of Oakland, California denounced the "depredations of Negro

gangs," which were "feared and hated in the Negro community."[16] Second, African

Americans worried that the issues of crime and gangs threatened black demands for

equality. The black-owned *Philadelphia Tribune* blamed an "irresponsible minority" of

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[12] Thelma Hunt Shirley, "Confetti," *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 15, 1966, 8.

[13] Quoted in "Violence," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 22, 1966, 15.

[14] "Parents for Peace," *Ebony*, October 1966, 73–76.

[15] Les Matthews, "Crime in the Streets Decried at YMCA Meet," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 4, 1967, 21; Michael W. Flamm, "'Law and Order' at Large: The New York Civilian Review Board Referendum of 1966 and the Crisis of Liberalism," *Historian* 64, no. 3–4 (Spring/Summer 2002): 661–662.

[16] Thomas J. Cummins, "Letter to the Editor: Watch Out, Whitey," *New Republic*, January 22, 1966, 29–30.

the black community for giving all black residents a bad reputation.[17] In a 1959 editorial

"Six Ways to Stop Negro Crime," *Ebony's* editors argued that although black crime was

the price whites paid for ignoring the needs of African Americans, it was the "law-

abiding Negro majority" who was "the double victim of Negro crime, [experiencing]

violence to person and property and harm to its fight for equality." The editors argued

that as a solution blacks should teach their children strong morals and religion, demand

equal access to government services for the community, and support "law and order,"

which the editorial defined as a concomitant decline in police brutality and increasing

respect among African Americans for the police department. By calling attention to the

experience of black crime, *Ebony* editors recognized that they walked a thin line. They

did not want to lend support to segregationists' arguments that African Americans did not

deserve integration because of supposed "inherent" criminality. Yet the magazine's

editors, and a number of blacks surveyed in the 1960s, believed that African Americans

had "a two-way battle to wage," one against segregation and racist crime stereotypes and

one against the crimes that victimized black citizens.[18]

Gangs particularly raised the ire of black rights proponents. NAACP Executive

Secretary Roy Wilkins blasted black gang members and "hoodlums": "They are cutting

and slashing at the race's self-respect, something they can never rebuild with their knives,

their baseball bats, their brass knuckles and their filthy language."[19] *The Chicago

Defender* pointed out that whites who resisted integrated schools often did so by arguing

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[17] "Irresponsible Minority Gives 'Image' Undeserved by Law-Abiding Majority," *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 26, 1962, 4.

[18] "Six Ways to Stop Negro Crime," *Ebony*, November 1959, 128; Richard L. Block, "Support for Civil Liberties and Support for the Police," in *Police in Urban Society*, ed. Harlan Hahn (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1970), 119–134.

[19] Roy Wilkins, "Teen Age Hoodlums," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 13, 1964, 20.

that admitting black students opened school doors to the "gangsterism" that the *Defender* believed was becoming the special problem of poor black neighborhoods. "Such arguments are unanswerable," the *Defender's* editors went on, unless black voters petitioned their political representatives to outlaw youth gangs and support a law enforcement crackdown.[20] Community members agreed. A woman from Philadelphia demanded that gang members take a hard look at themselves, their friends, and the violence they wrought. "There are so many doors that are open today than have never been open for the Negro," she argued. "This is hardly the time to darken the dignity and progress of the American Negro by inhuman acts."[21]

Some of the anxieties in the black press reflected the class-based fears that had always been part of the discourse about gang violence. Like the mainstream white press before it, *Ebony* warned that the biggest danger came from those gangs that were making inroads into middle-class, black neighborhoods.[22] Some of the disdain came from rising tensions between middle- and working-class African Americans as the influx of migrants, racist residential restrictions, and economic hardships all increased in the 1960s. Middle-class blacks lamented what they believed was lower-class African Americans' refusal to conform to "respectability" as defined by middle-class standards. These middle-class blacks saw the rise in crime as symptomatic of this refusal. They often scorned the social organizations, such as gangs, that poorer African Americans used to cope with urban life

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[20] For examples of segregationists using the gang issue to support their cause nearly a decade earlier, see 86 Cong. Rec., 16976–16977 (1959); 86 Cong. Rec., 17488–17489 (1959); 86 Cong. Rec., 19116–19117 (1959); "Gang Killings Must Stop," *Chicago Daily Defender*, May 2, 1968, 19.

[21] Mrs. T. Anderson, "W. Phila. Gang Fights Do Little to Add to Progress and Dignity of Negroes," *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 1965, 6.

[22] Garland, "The Gang Phenomenon."

and blamed them for whites' refusal to accept black Americans.[23] Regardless of their

motivations, the mounting discussion among black Americans made it appear that

African American gangs were a distinct and growing problem.

As concern continued to grow in African American communities, many

developed their own solutions to the problem. Civil rights organizations were especially

active in trying to address gang violence. As the vaunted leaders of the 1960s, these

organizations took it upon themselves to address community fears and victimization all

while hoping that these efforts would help activists' own campaigns for equal rights. One

of the first documented instances occurred during the Albany Movement in Georgia

where from 1961 through 1962 SNCC, NAACP, SCLC, and local rights groups

coordinated nonviolent protests. When the movement first began, local gang members

took it upon themselves to protect civil rights meetings from police harassment by

throwing bricks at police officers. Hoping to curb such violence, one movement leader

asked gangs to serve instead as neighborhood patrols that would be responsible for

preventing violence and spreading the word about the movement's meetings. Eventually

two hundred gang members participated. They trained in nonviolent tactics and became

effective at registering black voters. Civil rights workers and researchers from Howard

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[23] Jeffrey Helgeson, "Striving in Black Chicago: Ambition, Activism, and Accommodation from the New Deal to Harold Washington" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Chicago, 2008), 17–18, 305–319; Michael Javen Fortner, "The Carceral State and the Crucible of Black Politics: An Urban History of the Rockefeller Drug Laws," *Studies in American Political Development* 27, no. 1 (April 2013): 19–20.

University celebrated the experiment and the substantial decrease in Albany's gang

violence that followed.[24]

The Albany Movement's outreach to youth gangs represented a moment of both

continuity and change for the civil rights movement. Black activists had a long history of

mobilizing youth. Historian Rebecca de Schweinitz has shown that the NAACP had used

youth protesters in the Southern movement since the 1930s and did so with increasing

success throughout the 1960s. However, earlier organizing focused mostly on middle-

class teenagers and college students.[25] As the movement went North after Albany and

focused more on economic inequality, organizers began to realize that attracting poorer

youth would be essential, especially because the majority of Northern black urbanites

were under the age of twenty-five. Additionally, gaining the support of these young

people would add credibility to organizations' campaigns as they transitioned from

focusing on the political needs of Southern blacks to the economic and social needs of

Northerners. If activists wanted to mobilize black youth as they had in the South, they

needed to start with the most organized youth groups in the city: gangs. "Let the

organized juvenile gangs help do in the 'free states' [the voter registration that] the

collegiate Civil Rights workers are doing in the Southern states," one Philadelphia

supporter urged the black community.[26] Explaining the focus on gang members, one

reporter comment that "while 'straight' community organizations sweat to produce a

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[24] Frederic Solomon et al., "Civil Rights Activity and Reduction in Crime among Negroes," in *Problems and Prospects of the Negro Movement*, ed. Raymond J. Murphy and Howard Elinson (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1966), 345.

[25] Rebecca de Schweinitz, *If We Could Change the World: Young People and America's Long Struggle for Racial Equality* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 159–174.

[26] Jason Rockwell, "Enroll Juvenile Gangs in Registration Drive?," *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 8, 1964, 7.

dozen members at a meeting, the [gangs] easily draw a thousand."[27] More importantly, as

one social worker in Chicago described the general feeling among rights activists, the

"parents who seem to be beaten" were poor targets for mobilization; their gang-member

children, however, had the "character" and vigor that mass movements could rely on.[28]

Efforts to involve gang members in the struggle spread quickly throughout the

country, and gang members embraced the opportunity. CORE reached out to gangs

nationally in 1962, building a relationship that would last until the 1970s.[29] In Los

Angeles, the head of the local NAACP chapter confirmed that their experiment with gang

recruitment had worked, saying that the organization was "the absolute vanguard of the

situation of gang controls" at the time.[30] In 1965, Philadelphia gang members took part in

a march held in sympathy with the Selma protests, and local NAACP leader Cecil Moore

used gang members on the picket lines at Girard College, an all-white, secondary school

that had resisted integration.[31] The NYCYB noted that there was a steep decline in

fighting among black youth gangs when members rallied to the cause in New York. For

many of the gangs who participated, civil rights work provided them with a new

understanding of gang violence's effect on black political aspirations. "Most of us

realized by 1960 that there was a bigger fight than a street fight" Walter Campbell, a

former member of the Assassins gang of Harlem told reporters. "We realized that the

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[27] Robert A. Levin, "Gang-Busting in Chicago," *New Republic*, June 1, 1968, 17.
[28] Elinor Paulson, "Meeting of the Corrections and Law and Order Committees," 29 February 1967, p. 1, box 227, file 3, WCMC Records.
[29] Peter Kihss, "New Chief Plans Wider CORE Aims," *New York Times*, March 2, 1966, 38; Thomas A. Johnson, "Theme of Black Parleys," *New York Times*, September 9, 1970, 32.
[30] Celes King III, interviewed by Bruce M. Tyler, transcript, tape XIII, side 2, 11 August 1985, Center for Oral History, University of California at Los Angeles Library.
[31] Peyton G. Gray Jr., "Social Workers, JAD Intrigued by Gang 'Togetherness' at Selma Rites," *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 20, 1965, 7; Matthew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 171.

more violence we caused, the more it would hurt the Negro cause and we asked

ourselves, 'Why should Negroes be fighting Negroes?' It was a time for unity and so we

got together. Maybe we couldn't go down South and be in a sit-in or a bus boycott but we

could stop fighting among ourselves."[32] Recognizing the links between their own efforts

in the city and the protests in the South, Campbell and his fellow gang members came to

understand their own potential for political power.

As the momentum of this new direction grew, the high point of outreach came in

1966 when Martin Luther King Jr. and SCLC kicked off the Chicago Freedom

Movement, the first major rights campaign by SCLC in the North.[33] When King moved

into an apartment in a neighborhood considered Vice Lords gang turf, the Lords met with

him regularly and acted as his bodyguards.[34] SCLC also convened a meeting of four

hundred members of the Disciples and Blackstone Rangers gangs where SCLC field

workers discussed the philosophy of nonviolence in hopes of preparing the gang

members for the Chicago campaign. King met with the gangs personally a few days later,

and over the following months, the gangs met with other black civic groups to plan the

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[32] Quoted in Gay Talese, "Battling Gangs Reported Waning," *New York Times*, July 31, 1964, 11.

[33] For an in depth treatment of the Chicago Freedom Movement, see Ralph, *Northern Protest*; Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor, *American Pharaoh: Mayor Richard J. Daley—His Battle for Chicago and the Nation* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), 346–357.

[34] In his expansive exploration of the Northern civil rights movement, Thomas Sugrue mentions King's interaction with the gang but misidentifies it as the Young Lords who were a Puerto Rican gang organization in a different neighborhood of Chicago. Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), 418; David Dawley, *A Nation of Lords: The Autobiography of the Vice Lords*, 2nd ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1992), 108–110; Ralph, *Northern Protest*, 56; "Southside Picket for Nazis' March," *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 18, 1966, 3.

Freedom Movement. [35] When the Chicago campaign officially kicked off on July 10 with a rally at Soldier's Field and a march to city hall, gang members were present in full force.[36]

Cooperating with gang members was not universally popular among Chicago's middle-class and elite black community. The influential *Chicago Defender* and its owner John H. Sengstacke feared that King was in over his head. Calling it an "interesting experiment,"[37] Sengstacke and his newspaper recognized that most of the responsibility lay with the gangs. "If the [gang] members can remember that they are taking on a man-sized project, and if they can remember the vital need for self-discipline—instead of resort to the switch knife—then they will have gained great stature, and Chicago will owe them a debt."[38] But emphasizing his doubts, Sengstake asked, "Can King's people keep the boys in hand?"[39] Even a few of SCLC's members questioned the tactic, but King's decision prevailed. These detractors had a point. Early on, not all of the gangs were sold on King's tactics. "I don't believe in those nonviolent marches," one Vice Lord explained to an advisor. "I can't sing no brick off my motherfuckin' head."[40] But detractors may have also questioned King's strategy because it threatened traditional forms of black Chicago activism. Many established middle-class activists resented King's encroachment onto their home territory. Moreover, they believed in the conventional approach to civil

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[35] John R. Fry, *Fire and Blackstone* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1969), 5; "Trouble in the Streets," *New York Times*, July 24, 1966, 128; Ralph, *Northern Protest*, 93–95; "King and the Gangs," *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 15, 1966, 15.

[36] Levin, "Gang-Busting in Chicago," 17.

[37] John H. Sengstacke, "Black Revolt Is Unfinished Job of 1863," *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 25, 1966, 5.

[38] "King and the Gangs," 15.

[39] Sengstacke, "Black Revolt," 5.

[40] Dawley, *Nation of Lords*, 110.

rights advocacy, which had been done by "respectable" blacks in "respectable" and gradual ways.[41] Gangs simply did not fit middle-class definitions of the "respectable" sort.

King fired back in his 1967 book *The Trumpet of Conscience,* arguing that such claims underestimated the potential of urban black men and the movement itself. "I remember walking with the Blackstone Rangers [a Chicago gang]," he wrote, "while bottles were flying from the sidelines, and I saw their noses being broken and blood flowing from their wounds; and I saw them continue and not retaliate, not one of them, with violence. I am convinced that even very violent temperaments can be channeled through nonviolent discipline, if the movement is moving."[42] As King predicted, gang members' work with SCLC did transform many of the young men. Three weeks after gang members marched with King in all-white suburbs and were attacked by white gangs and police, flyers appeared in black neighborhoods calling "ATTENTION ALL NEGRO GANGS." The flyer was the work of the Gangland Freedom Movement, a short-lived coalition of black Chicago gangs. The flyer explained that immediately after returning from the march, the gangs had discussed retaliating against the white youths who had attacked them: "Our [original] aim was to go back and 'Gang-bang.'" But, the flyer continued, the Gangland Freedom Movement had decided instead to march to city hall and demand a meeting with Mayor Richard Daley to discuss protection for blacks in the face of white attacks.[43]

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[41] For more on the class battles of the Chicago Freedom Movement, see Ralph, *Northern Protest*, 11–13, 52, 77.

[42] Martin Luther King Jr., *The Trumpet of Conscience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 58.

[43] Rauselle Tigue, "Gangland Freedom Movement Flyer," 5 August 1966, box 21, file 2, Pitcher Papers.

Such demonstrations convinced many former opponents to support the new

outreach strategy in Chicago. Within two years, many of them encouraged the use of

gangs to keep streets violence-free, supported gangs who organized and participated in

later protests, and celebrate gang members who joined national organizations, such as

Operation Breadbasket and the Rainbow Coalition.[44] One *Chicago Defender* editor

described the community's approval of the gang members' new role as "a feeling akin to

the spiritual conversion of the sinner to the delight of an applauding congregation."[45]

While this sudden embrace was partly due to King's exit from Chicago after the Freedom

Movement and the end of turf battles between black leaders, it was reinforced by a

growing awareness that when the Chicago Freedom Movement ended in late 1966 and

gang members momentarily returned to the streets, violence spiked again. Civil rights

mobilization, it seemed had been the only thing keeping gang warfare in check.[46] But

most importantly, the sudden reversal of opinion among some influential African

Americans implied a growing acceptance of political mobilization as a new gang

intervention technique.

In most cases, these civil rights organizations brought with them the attention of

the national media, thus their outreach to African American gangs received intensive

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[44] "An Editorial," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 23, 1967, 1; WCMC, "Minutes of the Meeting of the Police/Youth/Community Workgroup of the Subcommittee on Tension Areas," 10 November 1969, box 610, file 14, WCMC Records; "17 Chicago Negroes Seized in Protest at a Union Office," *New York Times*, July 23, 1969, 24; Ben A. Franklin, "Abernathy Vows Fight in Chicago," *New York Times*, August 16, 1969, 16; John Kifner, "Chicago Blacks Resume Protest in Bid for Building Trades Jobs," *New York Times*, August 22, 1969, 21; Dawley, *Nation of Lords*, 132; Michael T. Kaufman, "Black Panthers Join Coalition with Puerto Rican and Appalachian Groups," *New York Times*, November 9, 1969, 83; Adrian Dove, "Soul Story," *New York Times*, December 8, 1968, 357.

[45] "An Excellent Gesture," *Chicago Daily Defender*, March 6, 1969, 17.

[46] "The Teen Gangs," *Chicago Daily Defender*, January 11, 1967, 19.

press coverage. All of the major national newspapers covered black civil rights work with gangs. The *New York Times* celebrated the role of civil rights activism in decreasing gang rumbles across the country. In particular, the paper noted that violence was almost nonexistent in New York on the day of the March on Washington.[47] But other newspapers stressed the dangers of this new departure. The *Chicago Tribune* reported that SCLC's work with gangs in Chicago increased the standing of the gang and might fuel violence.[48] By attracting the attention of media outlets, the idea that gangs could be used for positive work received wider circulation than simply among civil rights circles. In fact, government officials also took note. In Chicago, the city's Human Rights Commission publicly debated the efficacy of such an approach.[49] The conversation quickly moved to a national platform, where on the floor of Congress in Washington, representatives discussed King's use of gang members in 1967.[50] Criminologists and social scientists noticed the work of civil rights organizations as well. Numerous experts came to Albany and Chicago to study exactly how the activists were engaging gang members, whether gangs really could be politicized, and if such work provided a viable way to control gang violence. It was this latter group that would later help convince federal officials to rethink their approach to the gang issue (see Chapter 3).[51] These

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[47] For example, see Natalie Jaffe, "Study Cites Drop in Negro Violence," *New York Times*, March 28, 1965, 60.

[48] William Granger, "Youth Police Plan Action against Rights Leaders," *Chicago Tribune*, May 29, 1966, S1; D.J.R. Bruckner, "Youth Gangs Threaten Chicago Rights Drive," *Los Angeles Times*, June 6, 1966, 29; William S. White, "Civil Rights: Extremists Breed Extremism," *Washington Post*, September 10, 1966, A17.

[49] Friendly, "Chicago Officials Voice Concern," 23.

[50] 90 Cong. Rec., 27815 (1967).

[51] Solomon et al., "Civil Rights Activity"; Jaffe, "Study Cites Drop"; James F. Short and John Moland, "Politics and Youth Gangs: A Follow-Up Study," *Sociological Quarterly* 17, no. 2

ommentators were divided over whether or not this new form of gang intervention would work, but it was clear in these discussions that the issue of black gangs had become an important focus of crime debates and that the new intervention style developed by civil rights activists was capturing national attention.

Carnalismo y La Raza: Gang Violence and the Latino Response

Like African Americans, Latinos in the late 1960s—particularly Puerto Rican and Mexican Americans—perceived gangs as a growing issue in their own communities. Although Latinos were aware of gangs during the 1950s and early 1960s, they rarely expressed major concern in that early period. In isolated cases, such as in *El Puerto*, a newspaper from Brownsville, Texas, Latino editors objected to teenage gangs who stood on street corners using foul language and harassing pedestrians, but violence was rarely a complaint.[52] A gang member in San Antonio reported to historian David Montejano that in those early days elders in the neighborhood often saw gang members as fellow community members: "We [the gang members] respected them, you know. And the people from the barrios, the women and all the older people, would give us a lot of fucking support, you know….If the dog police were harassing us in the streets, the women would come out and back us up." When non-gang residents were shot, the community would momentarily turn against the gang and argue that something had to be done to address the issue. Yet other than a few isolated events such as these, the Latino press did not focus on gangs with the same attention that the African American press

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(1976): 162–179; James F. Short, "Youth, Gangs and Society: Micro- and Macrosociological Processes," *Sociological Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (Winter 1974): 3–19.

[52] "Abusos de los quinceañeros," *El Puerto* (Brownsville, TX), April 15, 1961, 4.

did.[53] Likewise, the traditional Latino civil rights organizations, such as the GI Forum

and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), did not emphasize gangs or

gang violence as a major problem.

While the traditional middle-class activists might have been complacent, young

Latinos were not. It was through their efforts that Latino gangs became a focus of the

community. By the late 1960s, Latino students in colleges and in high schools across the

country had taken control of the Latino rights movement, beginning a new phase of

confrontational activism. This new movement heavily borrowed from *pachuco* (street

youth) culture, celebrating the activism of poor Latinos in urban centers, a decisive turn

meant to signal these new, younger activists' complete repudiation of the gradualist

tactics that middle-class, educated Mexican and Puerto Rican Americans had used for

decades.[54] This new identity was formalized at the Chicano Youth Liberation Conference

held by the Crusade for Justice in Denver in 1969. The Youth Conference was the first

major national gathering of young Latinos in history with the goal of consolidating local

movements into a national effort for rights and solidarity. More than 1500 attendees made

up of mostly college students and a few gang members decided that to be truly effective

the Chicano movement would have to throw off the colonial trappings of the Anglicized

middle-class and emulate new revolutionaries.[55] As their revolutionary role models, they

chose Latino youth gangs. Many of these activists believed that Latino gang members, by

forming groups outside of the "respectable" middle-class and taking part in violence,

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[53] Quoted in David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966–1981* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 52.

[54] Ibid., 3–4, 22–23; Carlos Munoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (London: Verso, 1989), 47.

[55] Lorrin Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen: History and Political Identity in Twentieth Century New York City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 231.

were rebelling against assimilation. These young activists first borrowed gang language and dress. Later they adopted the gangs' code of brotherhood or *carnalismo*—ultimate loyalty to neighborhood and fellow gang members—as the foundation for unity across all Chicano organizations.[56] Although in the streets *carnalismo* was often the cause of gang warfare—individual gangs fought each other to protect neighborhood and fellow members—the burgeoning Latino activists hoped to broaden the term's application in such a way that the fights that divided rival gangs could be overcome by stressing loyalty to *la raza* (the race) above loyalty to the gang.

Beyond simply adopting the symbols of gang life, these young Latinos formed alliances with gang members, and gang members readily responded. Gang members appreciated the appropriation of their values by activists and the legitimacy gangs incurred. As one gang member remembered the period, it "put a whole positive connotation into being [a gang member],...[Gang members] could go to a meeting with anybody, 'cause the movement says, 'We need you too. Because you're a Chicano too, and you're not some weirdo.'"[57] In many cities, Latino gang youth were the first to join civil rights protests in their communities.[58] In March 1968, when Chicano students staged a series of walkouts at Los Angeles public schools to protest inferior facilities and racist curricula, local gang leaders were recruited to lead some of the marches.[59] At the same

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[56] Munoz, *Youth, Identity, Power*, 75–78; Ernesto B. Vigil, *The Crusade for Justice: Chicano Militancy and the Government's War on Dissent* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 95–97.

[57] Quoted in Howard S. Erlanger, "Estrangement, Machismo and Gang Violence," *Social Science Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (September 1979): 242.

[58] Kathy L. Valadez, "Commentary: Barrio Gangs," *El Chicano* (San Bernardino, CA), April 3, 1975, 2.

[59] Marguerite V. Marin, *Social Protest in an Urban Barrio: A Study of the Chicano Movement, 1966–1974* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 75.

time, gang members on Los Angeles streets adopted the language of the movement,

becoming avid readers of *La Raza*, a well-known Chicano movement publication that

attacked the police department and aired allegations of police brutality.[60] In New York, a

group of second-generation Puerto Rican youths founded the Puerto Rican Action

Movement in 1968, which combined militant ideology with grassroots organizing among

the poor and working class. As one of the group's leaders, Jack Aqueros, told the *New

York Times*, "there's practically not one guy who hasn't been in a street gang."[61] By

reaching out to gang members, activists hoped to capitalize—much as black civil rights

groups had—on the street organizing that gangs did naturally. The youth activists also

wanted to end the violence that gang members wrought on their communities both to

prove the new organizations' legitimacy to outsiders and to ensure that their own

coalitions, which involved youths from different gangs, did not break apart.[62]

One of the most publicized examples of community movement came in 1967

when the Young Citizens for Community Action, a group of college and high school

students, opened a coffee house in Los Angeles for street youth to use as a hangout. As

more young Latinos came to the coffee shop, the Young Citizens for Community Action

evolved from a student-run organization into the Brown Berets, a group that welcomed

and was partly led by gang members and formerly incarcerated youth.[63] The Brown

Berets ultimately grew to become the largest radical Chicano organization composed of

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[60] F. Arturo Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1996), 188.

[61] Paul Hofmann, "City's 2nd-Generation Puerto Ricans Rising From Poverty," *New York Times*, April 23, 1968, 49.

[62] "'Corky' Gonzales on Unity," *El Chicano* (San Bernardino, CA), July 4, 1969, 1.

[63] Rona Marcia Fields Fox, "The Brown Berets: A Participant Observation Study of Social Action in the Schools of Los Angeles" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1970), 68, 90, 98.

nonstudent youth in the nation.[64] As Carlos Montes, a member of the Brown Berets

explained to the *Los Angeles Times* a year later, "Gang fights are going out. We're

getting kids from all the different gangs into the Brown Berets. It's going to be one big

barrio, one big gang. We try to teach our people not to fight with each other, and not to

fight with our blood brothers." The Brown Berets first convinced members from warring

gangs that they were *carnales* (ethnic brothers) and that continued warfare only divided

Latinos for the benefit of Anglo Americans. Next, the Brown Berets used gang networks

to spread the *carnales* philosophy across Latino communities.[65] The Brown Berets at

times had a contentious relationship with other gangs. Some local gangs resented the

Brown Berets' influence in the community and tried to disrupt Beret-sponsored events.[66]

Internally, the Brown Berets also had a difficult time with their own gang-infused

identity. When creating the organization's emblem, the Brown Berets intentionally

included the image of a cross, a traditional symbol tattooed on the hands of Latino gang

members, to suggest their gang roots. But at other times they tried to make it clear that

the group was "not a gang which steals or engages in street fights, but an organization to

help its people."[67] The Brown Berets gained popularity and legitimacy in the late 1960s

and early 1970s as they won over barrio residents who applauded the decrease in gang

violence that usually occurred when the gangs politically organized. The Brown Berets

also won support by taking part in important national protests, such as SCLC's Poor

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[64] Munoz, *Youth, Identity, Power*, 85.
[65] Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers*, 124–128; Vigil, *Crusade for Justice*, 55, 62; Vincent Burke and Jack Nelson, "Clash on Eve of Poor March," *Los Angeles Times*, June 19, 1968, 1.
[66] Fox, "Brown Berets," 147.
[67] Ibid., 146, 141; "'Brown Berets' Speak," *La Guardia* (Milwaukee, WI), December 21, 1969, 7.

People's March in Washington, DC in 1968.[68] The organization's success inspired other

groups, such as the Mexican-American Low Riders Association, which grew out of the

unification of disparate Latino car clubs and gang members in Los Angeles.[69]

The Young Lords was another group that mobilized Latino gang members, but

unlike the Brown Berets, the Young Lords originally started as an organized street

gang.[70] Founded in the 1959 by seven Puerto Rican boys, the Young Lords gang

protected Puerto Ricans from attacks by whites in the Lincoln Park neighborhood of

Chicago. By the mid 1960s, most of the gang's members had served time in juvenile

detention and had been politicized behind prison walls. As a result, they had come to re-

imagine the effects of gang warfare on the Puerto Rican community.[71] As the Young

Lords later explained in their newspaper, "we began to see that in many ways we were

oppressing our own people and also that we were headed towards a dead end."[72] By the

end of 1968, the gang had politically mobilized, blocking slum clearance projects that

threatened their neighborhood as well as working to cool gang feuds in the area.[73] The

Young Lords' numbers quickly grew as other gangs in Chicago applied for membership

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[68] Vigil, *Crusade for Justice*, 55.

[69] Fox, "Brown Berets," 187–188.

[70] For a historical overview of the Young Lords, see Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen*; Johanna
Fernandez, "The Young Lords and the Postwar City: Notes on the Geographical and Structural
Reconfigurations of Contemporary Urban Life," in *African American Urban History Since World
War II*, ed. Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009),
65–68.

[71] Hilda Vasquez Ignatin, "Young Lords Serve and Protect," *Young Lords Newspaper*, May 1969,
p. 6, http://digicol.lib.depaul.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/younglords/id/33,
Young Lords Newspaper Collection, De Paul University Archives (hereafter cited as Young
Lords Newspaper Collection).

[72] "To the Workers at Grant Hospital," *Pitirre*, Summer 1970, p. 5,
http://digicol.lib.depaul.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/younglords/id/108, Young Lords
Newspaper Collection.

[73] Ignatin, "Young Lords Serve and Protect," 6.

in the Young Lords' emerging political organization.[74] In 1969, the Lords formed a

formidable alliance with Chicago's largest and most powerful Puerto Rican gang, the

Latin Kings, after the police shot and killed an unarmed teenager on Latin Kings' turf.

The Lords, the Latin Kings, and their female auxiliary the Latin Queens formed the

United Puerto Rican Coalition, which evolved into an organization responsible for

coordinating protests against police brutality and was composed of local gangs and a

handful of Latino churches.[75] For many Latin Kings and Young Lords, their newfound

activism was both a fight for Latino rights and personal dignity. "We want to be able to

walk down the street with our heads up high and let the people look at us that way," a

Latin Queen argued. "We want to want to be able to go home and let our parents

understand us….and be able to look at us as freedom fighters and not gang bangers."[76]

Like the Brown Berets, this Latin Queen showed ambivalence about the role of gangs

within the Latino community. She recognized that gangs brought violence to their

neighborhoods and that adults in the community disapproved of this violence. But she

also considered her fellow gang members the core of a new generation of activists.

Despite this ambivalence, the Young Lords never abandoned their gang heritage.[77] Their

purple berets were worn in homage to their traditional gang colors, and their rhetoric

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[74] "Little Joe Speaks," *Young Lords Newspaper*, January 1970, p. 2,
http://digicol.lib.depaul.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/younglords/id/75, Young Lords
Newspaper Collection.
[75] "'El Barrio Esta Despierto'," *Young Lords Newspaper*, October 1969, p. 5,
http://digicol.lib.depaul.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/younglords/id/54, Young Lords
Newspaper Collection.
[76] "Nuestros Hermanos," *Young Lords Newspaper*, January 1970, p. 2,
http://digicol.lib.depaul.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/younglords/id/75, Young Lords
Newspaper Collection.
[77] Pablo Guzman, "La Vida Pura: A Lord of the Barrio," in *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices
from the Diaspora*, ed. Andres Torres and Jose E. Velazquez (Philadelphia: Temple University
Press, 1998), 157.

throughout the 1960s celebrated their connection to "their people": "junkies, gang members, prostitutes, and all poor people."[78]

The Young Lords received increasing public attention from journalists and politicians, especially after their New York chapter staged an infamous garbage protest in the streets of Spanish Harlem in 1969, blocking major streets with piles of garbage that the city's sanitation department had neglected to collect.[79] The Young Lords' work, combined with that of the Brown Berets and other Latino youths, piqued the journalists' curiosity. A handful of news stories appeared after the New York garbage strike that discussed the radicalism of Puerto Rican and Chicano gangs while highlighting the problem of Latino gang violence in some American cities.[80] Despite this attention, however, the specter of Latino gangs never rose to the same fever pitch as did the clamor over black gangs, even though Latino gangs had a much longer history in American cities and police statistics showed they were just as pervasive. Part of this difference was due to the large amount of media attention that African American civil rights groups brought to their cooperation with gangs. The young Latino activists did not have the same media pull. But the focus on black gangs can also be explained by the urban uprisings that swept across the country from 1965 through 1968.

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[78] Cha Cha Jimenez, "Letters to YLO," *Young Lords Newspaper*, Winter 1969, p. 13, box 5, Young Lords Collection.

[79] Miguel "Mickey" Melendez, *We Took the Streets: Fighting for Latino Rights with the Young Lords* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), 88–111.

[80] Jose Yglesias, "Right On with the Young Lords," *New York Times*, June 7, 1970, 215.

Gangs in the Long Hot Summers

While some scholars have argued that the Harlem riot in 1964 began a new period

of journalists' coupling young black men and crime, the turning point for gangs and

perceptions about gangs came during the Watts rebellion in August 1965.[81] Early in the

uprising, Los Angeles Police Chief William H. Parker told the press that the looting in

Watts was clearly "a rebellion of a gang of Negro hoodlums."[82] National newspapers ran

with the comment, calling black gangs the instigators of the riot. *The Los Angeles Times*

blamed "hoodlum gang depredators" for fanning the uprising once it had begun.[83] *The*

New York Times emphasized that the growth of gangs, such as the Red Devils, the Black

Shirts, and the Slauson Street Gang, was a clear explanation for why Watts and not other

areas felt the "violent outburst."[84] And an early report of the riot sent to California's

governor from advisors on the ground reported that the riot spread along the turf lines of

local gangs and that the "guerilla tactics" used by participants were "identical" to those

used by gang members in their own disputes.[85] Officials' early conclusions stemmed

from a long-standing history of linking minority gangs with unrest in Los Angeles. The

LAPD had held Mexican gangs accountable for the zoot suit riots in the 1940s even

though later investigations proved that white servicemen were primarily responsible.[86] In

the 1950s, the Los Angeles County Sherriff's department warned that if unrest reoccurred

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[81] For an example of the Harlem thesis, see Melissa Hickman Barlow, "Race and the Problem of Crime in *Time* and *Newsweek* Cover Stories, 1946–1995," *Social Justice* 25, no. 2 (1998): 177.

[82] Wallace Turner, "Experts Divided on Rioting Cause," *New York Times*, August 14, 1965, 8.

[83] Paul Weeks, "Causes of Riots Assessed by City," *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 1965, 1.

[84] Theodore Jones, "Evening in Watts: 'Us and the Cops'," *New York Times*, August 29, 1965, 55.

[85] Quoted in Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 99.

[86] Edward J. Escobar, *Race, Police, and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

in the city, it would start with gang turf wars.[87] A decade later, the number of black gangs

had been on the rise in Watts and had attracted police scrutiny. Thus, when violence did

finally occur in 1965, it took little time for the authorities to see a link. Yet investigations

by the state-appointed McCone Commission many months after Watts—with more time

for investigation and reflection—uncovered a more complex picture. Law enforcement

records showed that fewer than 5 percent of those arrested during the rebellion were gang

members and that there was "scant evidence that the gangs…actually started the riots."[88]

While the McCone Commission debunked the myth of the gang instigator, it did hear

testimony from law enforcement and gang members that gangs had been involved in

spreading the disturbance beyond the epicenter. The commission's final report also sided

with police who argued that the only explanation for "the sudden appearance of Molotov

cocktails in quantity" was the involvement of gangs who had used these weapons in gang

rumbles since the 1950s.[89] The final picture was one that admitted that gang members

may not have started the uprising but did take part in the violence and its growth.

To many white Americans it did not matter that a gang constituted a tiny minority

of Watts participants; gangs' presence and the continued media coverage increased fears

about black gangs. In early 1966, gang expert Lewis Yablonsky published an article in

the *New Republic* in which he claimed that gang members were "both sparks and

generators" in the riot. "The core rioter," he argued, "[was] the gang youth turned into a

defender and hero of the race struggle by his violence." He ominously warned that

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[87] Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, "Juvenile Gang Activity in Los Angeles County," 1958, box 567, file 5, Salisbury Collection.

[88] Tom Goff, "Report Describes Juveniles in Riot," *Los Angeles Times*, November 23, 1965, 3; Peter Bart, "Watts Commission Will Publish Findings," *New York Times*, October 31, 1965, 129.

[89] California Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots, *Violence in the City: An End or a Beginning?* (Los Angeles, 1965), 22–23.

"Negro gangs that fought each other on weekends may train their sights—if not a few

rifles—on the 'real enemy'": "whitey."[90] Alerted to gang members' involvement after

Watts, reporters noted the participation of gangs in Newark and Memphis riots.[91] Even

media coverage of uprisings in Cairo, Illinois; Des Moines, Iowa; and New Haven,

Connecticut—cities that previously had never made headlines for their gang problems—

joined the trend.[92] Echoing an earlier assertion by Attorney General Nicholas

Katzenbach, the *National Review* definitively claimed by 1968, "Whether in

Philadelphia, Tampa, Watts, Detroit, or Hartford, the youth gangs in all our ghettos are

pivotal influences determining whether the incident becomes a riot.[93] In some cases, the

stories that claimed gang involvement turned out to be untrue. The Senate's commission

on major disturbances from 1965 through the first half of 1968 cited only 1 riot in Joliet,

Illinois out of a total of 166 as having enough evidence to sustain the contention that it

had been caused by gangs.[94] In one humorous anecdote, journalist Tom Wolfe described

how during an uprising in San Francisco in 1966, street workers rushed to the epicenter

of a riot because of reports that gangs were at the heart of the disturbance. The city hoped

that by bringing in gang experts they could negotiate an immediate truce and bring the

uprising to an end. But once on the scene, the experts wandered aimlessly among the

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[90] Lewis Yablonsky, "Watch Out, Whitey: Negro Youth Gangs and Violence," *New Republic*, January 1, 1966, 10–12.

[91] Thomas A. Johnson, "Newark Negro Leaders Agree No One Person Speaks for All," *New York Times*, July 18, 1967, 22; "Transcendent Symbol," *Time*, April 12, 1968, 35–38.

[92] "Spreading Fire," *Time*, July 28, 1967, 15; William Borders, "Puerto Rican Population Swells in Connecticut," *New York Times*, August 26, 1967, 29.

[93] "Riots 'Conspiracy' Is Called Untrue," *New York Times*, August 1, 1966, 13; Morgan J. Doughton, "The Unfinished Story of Kingfish Cohen," *National Review*, July 16, 1968, 697.

[94] US Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, Hearings before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Part 13,* 90th Cong., 2nd sess., September 10–11, 1968 (hereafter cited as *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, Part 13*), 2762–2777.

violence unable to find any gang members. The reports had been wrong. Gang members were simply not involved.[95]

Beyond directly identifying gangs as participants, journalists employed a subtle but distinctive shift in their language when describing groups of young people involved in riots. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, newspapers that covered collective violence used the term "gang" to refer to uprisings by both white and black youths. After Watts, however, the press began to use the phrase "roving gangs of youth" to describe only black participants, which played on fears of reckless, directionless violence by street gangs.[96] Simultaneously, newspapers stopped describing racial violence by white youths with the term "gang," instead describing them as "groups" and "bands" although organized white gangs continued to be involved.[97] Neither did the press cover the role of Latino gangs in urban rebellions, although there was evidence that Chicano and Puerto Rican gang members did participate.[98] This media coverage and these language choices were part of a larger rhetorical pattern by the press and public authorities to negatively frame the African American rebellions. As other scholars have argued, it was common

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[95] Tom Wolfe, *Radical Chic & Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), 121.

[96] A survey of the *Chicago Tribune, New York Times,* and *Los Angeles Times* using Proquest Historical Newspapers Database shows that from 1965 to 1970 the phrase was used four times more often than in any other five-year period in the century. Stanley Cohen has called the use of stock phrases "symbolization," a process by which words or symbols are created that can be used in future reactions to similar events to imply a connection or a shared interpretation. Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (London: Routledge, 1972), 29.

[97] For a sample, compare Kathleen Teltsch, "'Incidents' Here Protested at UN," *New York Times*, September 25, 1964, 23; "Louisiana Governor Denies Rights Aides Were Beaten," *New York Times*, February 5, 1965, 17; Michael Stern, "Anti-Negro Group Loosely Formed," *New York Times*, July 23, 1966, 8; Andrew Diamond, *Mean Streets: Chicago Youths and the Everyday Struggle for Empowerment in the Multiracial City, 1908–1969* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 230.

[98] For two examples of the rare instances when Latino gangs were mentioned in riot coverage, see "Chicago Riot: 'Venganza!'," *Newsweek*, June 27, 1966, 27; "Willie Wood Tackles Tough Job—Youth Work in Washington," *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 20, 1966.

for whites in power to emphasize the participation of groups already vilified by society, such as communists, the formerly incarcerated, and "hoodlums" in these uprisings. By doing so, these reports stressed an image of lawlessness and undermined the actual political nature and legitimacy of these violent forms of protest.[99] But in doing so, these efforts also helped recast the race-based perceptions of urban gangs. By placing gangs at the center of urban black riots, these accounts put gangs at the center of urban black communities and strengthened the link between blackness and gang membership.

African American gangs had mixed reactions to the idea that gangs might be involved in the uprisings. A few agreed with the image promulgated by the white press that street gangs were the cause of the problem and should be policed in order to keep riots from happening. Local NAACP officials who had patrolled the streets of Watts asserted that "gang organization" was in part responsible for the maintenance of the uprising.[100] In a survey of African Americans in Detroit, a large majority claimed that their city's riot had been the product of "hoodlums, gangs, prostitutes, and pimps."[101] When Cleveland's African American community staged violent protests in 1966 and 1967, police officials and the city's mayor blamed a small hardcore group of black gangs

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[99] For a discussion of the vital role of language in framing the urban rebellions and the civil rights movement, see Joe R. Feagin and Harlan Hahn, *Ghetto Revolts: The Politics of Violence in American Cities* (New York: MacMillan, 1973), 8–9; Kevin Mumford, *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Vesla M. Weaver, "Frontlash: Race and the Development of Punitive Crime Policy," *Studies in American Political Development* 21, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 248; Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 326; Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: New Press, 2007), 75.

[100] Horne, *Fire This Time*, 177.

[101] "Riot Destruction Spawns Pride, Detroit Study Shows," *Chicago Daily Defender*, October 24, 1967, 9.

for the uprising.[102] The City Council ordered a crackdown on black street gangs, and

white mayor Ralph S. Lochner told the police to "fill every jail in Cleveland if

necessary." The city's black citizens largely supported the belief that gangs were at fault,

and many championed this riot prevention plan. Newspapers reported that most African

Americans, including those on the City Council, strongly supported the measure. Some

black leaders went as far as asking black residents to ignore police brutality that may

occur against gang members as a result of the new initiative. "Forget this police brutality

business," one leader counseled, "and if the cops have to use a little force, look up at the

stars, look away."[103] Carl Stokes—an African American candidate who at the time was

running to replace Lochner and who would become the nation's first black mayor of a

major city—took a centrist approach, agreeing that gangs were at the heart of the riots

and needed to be the city's focus. But he tempered his comments. Black gangs, he

argued, had been provoked to violence by the fact that white police officers had ignored

the attacks these young black men had faced at the hands of white gangs.[104]

       SCLC and CORE leaders, however, chose to focus their efforts on reaching out to

gangs. In Cleveland, they impugned the city's war on gangs and chose instead to work

with gangs to quell unrest. These groups hoped that instead of being the agitators, gangs

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[102] "Grand Jury Scores Clergy for 'Helping' Ohio Rioters," *New York Times*, December 29, 1966, 28; Paul Hofmann, "Cleveland Democrats Urging Mayor Lochner Not to Run Again," *New York Times*, May 24, 1967, 22.

[103] Quoted in Ben A. Franklin, "Few Leaders Object to Order to Police to End Vandalism and Arson," *New York Times*, April 24, 1967, 1.

[104] Leonard N. Moore, *Carl B. Stokes and the Rise of Black Political Power* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 45–49.

could be the antidotes.[105] In the words of the *Chicago Defender*, "The idea, of course, is that violence—if it comes—will originate with the teen gangs, and that it is much better to bring the gangs under control and to channel their energies into non-violent directions."[106] Martin Luther King Jr. and other rights workers had already tried this approach in Chicago in the summer of 1966 with some success. SCLC had convened forums for gang members to discuss the Watts uprising and its impact. When violence did erupt on the Westside, King met with gang members he hoped could calm the uprising. As noted above, all of the gang members at the meeting agreed to do their part. "We're trying to get people not to riot," Jeff Fort a leader of the Blackstone Rangers explained his gangs' rationale later on the street. "We know we can't win fighting the police and the National Guard." A few black police officers commended these gang members and met with the gangs to coordinate their efforts.[107]

The peacekeeping work of urban gangs was motivated by a variety of factors. For some, like Fort, it was a realistic appraisal of the community's strengths and weaknesses in the face of state power; there were better ways to fight back that might not unleash the destructive police presence that often came in the wake of such rebellions. For other gang members, it was an opportunity to win respect from the community and from the civil rights organizations that the gangs had begun to work with. And still others saw peacekeeping as a political bargaining chip. If they helped law enforcement and the

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[105] "'Long Hot Summer' Violence Splits Officials, Rights Figures," *Chicago Daily Defender*, May 6, 1967, 6; "DC, Chicago Help Youths to Avert Violence," *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 3, 1967, 5.

[106] Sengstacke, "Black Revolt," 5.

[107] Quoted in Donald Mosby and Arnold Rosenzweig, "Woodlawn Gang Joins Cops to Keep Peace," *Chicago Daily Defender*, July 20, 1966, 1.

government reestablish control, they might be able to bargain for services in the future.[108]

Not all gang members, however, participated in quelling Westside unrest. The CPD

reported that some of the arrestees during the city's riot belonged to street gangs.[109] And

a Vice Lord member later recounted, "We didn't need SNCC and CORE and SCLC to

kick off a riot in 1966. Gangbangers were involved because young dudes just didn't have

any other way to go."[110] But the Vice Lords and many of their members eventually

supported the cause to keep uprisings to a minimum. The Vice Lords joined black civic

groups in organizing gangs into squads to keep down unrest in 1967 and 1968.[111] The

gang even built an elaborate float for a local parade that sported the Lords' insignia, a

rainbow, and a banner advising Chicago youths to "KEEP A COOL SUMMER."[112]

Gangs in Los Angeles did similar anti-riot work. The most celebrated were the

efforts of the Sons of Watts, a group of gang members who organized after the Watts

uprising to rebuild their community and prevent violence in the future.[113] When unrest

threatened to return in 1966, the Sons of Watts went on the radio to urge people to stay

calm and keep the streets cool.[114] On the East Coast, African American gang leaders in

Buffalo, New York came together after an uprising in 1967 to serve as a liaison between

black youth and the establishment, alleviating the alienation that gang members believed

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[108] William A. Anderson, Russell R. Dynes, and E.L. Quarantelli, "Urban Counterrioters," *Society* 11 (April 1974): 50–55.

[109] Sam Washington and Donald Mosby, "Gangs Continue Growth Despite Suppression," *Chicago Daily Defender*, December 20, 1966, 4.

[110] Quoted in Dawley, *Nation of Lords*, 108.

[111] "Editorial," 1.

[112] For a photograph of the float, see Dawley, *Nation of Lords*, 80.

[113] Ray Rogers, "One-Time Youth Gang Takes New Aim on Future as 'Sons of Watts'," *Los Angeles Times*, September 2, 1966, A1.

[114] "Racial Calm Asked by Ex-Rioters," *Chicago Daily Defender*, October 22, 1966, 6.

fueled violent protests.[115] In Brooklyn, New York, a reader of *Amsterdam News* argued

that such outreach work by gangs was vital to quelling the potential for unrest in the Big

Apple.[116] All of these efforts by gangs and civil rights organizations to control urban

unrest received national attention. Soon, government officials and politicians would begin

to see such outreach and mobilization as a new way to deal with gang-related crime, but

it unintentionally strengthened the damaging perception that gangs were primarily an

African American problem. By justifying their gang outreach as riot control, black

activists did not challenge the basic premise that gangs were the cause of African

American uprisings, and thus reinforced the link between blackness, gang membership,

and violence. Furthermore, gang members themselves failed to challenge this tenet and

even depended on it for support in their efforts. Thus the long hot summers fed the

fledgling portrayal of gang involvement as dependent on race, a concept that only became

stronger as gang members moved to embrace Black Power in the second half of the

decade.

"Tell It Like It Is": Black Power and Gang Politics

According to historian Peniel Joseph, Black Power was "the movement for radical

self-determination" by primarily urban black Americans who sought control of their own

neighborhoods, their own political systems, and their own economies all while

celebrating black culture and heritage.[117] Traditionally, scholars have highlighted the

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[115] Thomas A. Johnson, "Buffalo Negroes Plan Youth Group," *New York Times*, July 3, 1967, 6.

[116] Arthur R. Stone, "Letter to the Editor: Paine's Words," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 9, 1967, 8.

[117] Peniel E. Joseph, ed., *Neighborhood Rebels: Black Power at the Local Level* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 11.

central role of the NOI, the Black Panthers, and the Deacons of Defense in the Black

Power movement.[118] But as Thomas Sugrue has noted, Black Power was not a defined

and coherent movement. It was understood in a variety of ways and served as a

foundation for a number of diverse groups. Gangs were no exception; they were drawn to

Black Power ideology and courted by Black Power organizations throughout the 1960s

and 1970s. Black Power first attracted many gang members because of its focus on the

brutality of the criminal justice system. Critiques of the police, courts, and jails that

discriminated against blacks in both the North and the South resonated with gang

members who had had multiple encounters with law enforcement and had often spent

time in juvenile detention or prison. Additionally, gang members recognized some of the

similarities between Black Power ideology and gang values. Black Power celebrated

masculinity and armed resistance in much the same way that gangs trumpeted ideals of

manliness, respect, and self-protection. Black Power involved a "collectivist ethic" built

on a sense of loyalty to group, community, and race, which had always been a component

of gang discourse. Finally, the language of Black Power resonated with gangs because

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[118] For examples of the vibrant historiography of Black Power and growing efforts to explore its meaning and role in American history, see Paul Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution: The History of the Black Panther Party* (Tuscaloosa: University Alabama Press, 2007); Devin Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power, and the Making of American Politics, 1965–1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009); Yohuru Williams, *Black Politics/White Power: Civil Rights, Black Power and the Black Panthers in New Haven* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Lance Hill, *The Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Donna Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Mumford, *Newark*; Peniel E. Joseph, "The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field," *Journal of American History* 96, no. 3 (December 2009): 751–776.

Black Power accentuated the grievances and mobilization of poor, urban blacks, a vital component of street gangs.[119]

Like other groups who agreed with the basic tenets of Black Power, gangs constructed their own discourse, using Black Power ideas that worked for the gang experience while adding new elements unique to their own lives.[120] For example, many gang members came to see their own gang warfare through the lens of racist oppression. "Whitey has tricked us to fight among ourselves," Toehold, a Vice Lord from Chicago, claimed in 1969. "Two years ago I wouldn't have thought like this, but I have made meetings and now I say whitey is the cause of blacks fighting blacks."[121] Gang members often adopted the language of Black Power's heroes to explain their battles with white gangs. When a black youth was shot in a white neighborhood in Chicago, black gang members retaliated by attacking white gangs and destroying property in white residential areas. "[Whites]'ll think twice before they do it now," claimed one black gang member. "And that's why I say like Malcolm X, 'Violence sometimes serves its purpose.'"[122] Gang members also argued for black self-determination, a foundational goal of Black Power.[123] "I want to be able to run our own community," demanded Cupid, a member of the Vice Lords. "If we get rollin' we don't need that honky. I want our own black banks, our own black currency exchange—I don't want no honky to take my check and take

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[119] Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 339, 343–344; Murch *Living for the City*; Countryman, *Up South, 192*.
[120] Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 339.
[121] Dawley, *Nation of Lords*, 107.
[122] Quoted in R. Lincoln Keiser, *The Vice Lords: Warriors of the Streets* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1979), 8.
[123] Horne, *Fire This Time*, 13.

forty or fifty cents: I want a brother to take it."[124] This black-controlled system, Black

Power advocates often argued, would not be possible without revolution, which gang

members felt uniquely prepared for. "We know we're ready for a revolution, because

we've been out here fighting some of the best fighters in the world," shouted one Disciple

to fellow gang members at a rally in Chicago.[125]

Two groups in particular embraced Black Power to create their own gang-

centered enterprises. In 1968, gang members in St. Louis formed the Liberators, modeled

after the Black Panthers. The Liberators wore the iconic black berets of the Oakland-

based Panthers and ran a free breakfast program like their role models had.[126] The

Liberators also released a manifesto of ten "beliefs" that mirrored the Panthers' Ten Point

Program while incorporating the NOI's Ten Beliefs. Like the Panthers and the NOI, the

Liberators called for more jobs, free land, comprehensive education, and basic equality

for black people. Two of the Liberators' beliefs outlined respect for and cooperation with

black women, an element that came directly from the NOI's manifesto. Despite this

overlap, there were subtle differences. The Liberators gave substantially more weight to

concerns about the criminal justice system, an emphasis that grew directly out of their

experience as gang members. The politicized gang members demanded the freedom of

black prison inmates, an end to police brutality and the bond system, and a community

policing system manned solely by African Americans. While the NOI and the Panthers

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[124] Quoted in Dawley, *Nation of Lords*, 178.

[125] "Panther Rally," *Young Lords Newspaper*, May 1969, p. 13,
http://digicol.lib.depaul.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/younglords/id/33, Young Lords
Newspaper Collection.

[126] William B. Helmreich, "The Black Liberators: A Historical Perspective," in *Black Power: In
the Belly of the Beast*, ed. Jusdon L. Jeffries (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 281,
285; Clarence Lang, "Black Power on the Ground: Continuity and Rupture in St. Louis," in
Joseph, *Neighborhood Rebels* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 79–81.

devoted two of their ten points to police and prisoners, the Liberators' devoted nearly half.[127]

Directly to the south in New Orleans, another gang organization followed a similar path. In November 1966, local gang leader Warren Carmouche called a meeting of area youth at the Algiers-Fischer Housing Project, during which the group founded Thugs United, an organization for politically conscious gangs.[128] Carmouche acknowledged that from the beginning the Black Panthers had played a role in helping the organization understand its mission and articulate its vision.[129] This influence appeared repeatedly in Thugs United public statements and newsletters, the latter of which also printed political cartoons from the NOI's *Muhammad Speaks*. Echoing language that had become central to Black Power, Thugs United, claimed that it would "tell it like it is to those in power, government agencies, philanthropies, industrialists, and the folks at City Hall, in the state capitals, and in Washington, that Black people will determine their own destiny, welfare, and way of life." The Thugs blasted the black middle class for ignoring the plight of urban blacks and averred that Thugs United would not "run or escape, from the Ghetto" like the black bourgeoisie. The group also celebrated African American culture and made the slogan "Black is Beautiful" its

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[127] For copies of each group's manifesto, see Kenneth S. Jolly, *Black Liberation in the Midwest: The Struggle in St. Louis, Missouri, 1964–1970* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 73; Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform, and Renewal* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 404–403, 446–447.

[128] "United Fund for the Greater New Orleans Area Preliminary Staff Report: Thugs United", 12 March 1970, p. 1, Community Services Council of Jefferson Collection (Mss 34), Louisiana and Special Collections Department, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans (hereafter cited as Community Services Council Collection).

[129] "Sense of Pride Is Thugs' Goal," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, April 21, 1970.

mantra.[130] When outsiders suggested that the organization change its rhetoric to

something less obviously black nationalist in order to secure more support from the

government and traditional rights groups, Thugs United refused. "The Thugs scorn

euphemism, stating that they work with prostitutes, pimps, winos, and jail-birds to mutual

advantage."[131] For Carmouche and the other Thugs United members, their authenticity

was based in their connection to those ostracized by the middle-class civil rights

organizations, a mindset that Thugs United shared with the Black Panthers and NOI.

Gangs appropriated the language of the Black Power movement intentionally as a

result of interactions with major thinkers in the movement. Many of the early leaders of

traditional Black Power organizations, such as the Black Panthers, had at one time been

gang members themselves.[132] Many of these groups also recruited from the ranks of

active gang members.[133] At first, though, some gangs hesitated to fully embrace these

overtures. Gang members feared that Black Power, which demanded that previous gang

rivals band together, might undermine a gang's reputation as fierce fighters.[134] They also

worried that these new Black Power groups were invading the turf gangs had worked

hard to protect.[135] But many were quickly won over by the ideology. In Chicago, the

Black Panther Party under Fred Hampton formed an alliance with the Blackstone Rangers

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[130] Thugs United Inc., "Weekly Times," n.d., p. 2 and 6, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, New Orleans Branch Collection [Mss 28], Louisiana and Special Collections Department, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans.

[131] Ellen Ferber, "It's Y.O.U.," *American Education*, September 1969, 19.

[132] "United Fund Report: Thugs United," 4; Lanny Thomas, "First People's College Class Small But Proud," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, April 25, 1970.

[133] Earl Caldwell, "Panthers: They Are Not the Same Organization," *New York Times*, July 27, 1969, E6; Self, *American Babylon*, 224–226.

[134] Caldwell, "Panthers"; Self, *American Babylon*, 224–226.

[135] Jon Rice, "The World of the Illinois Panthers," in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940–1980*, ed. Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 54–55.

gang, an alliance that ran so deep that Stones leaders served as pallbearers at Hampton's

funeral after he was murdered by the CPD.[136] Similarly, Philadelphia's first Black Power

organization, the Black People's Unity Movement, drafted gangs to petition public

schools to teach black history and to improve the quality of education in black

neighborhoods.[137] A few years later in 1969 when gang violence spiked in Philadelphia,

the Black Panthers opened their first Philadelphia-based office to work with gang

members on the streets. They hoped that by recruiting gang members to join the

movement, gang youth would see the ways in which their violence perpetuated an

oppressive system.[138]

Black Power outreach did not simply end with black gangs. Latin gang members

also found inspiration in Black Power. Cha Cha Jimenez, the gang leader who turned the

Young Lords into a political organization, was originally politicized himself while in

prison by an NOI representative who encouraged him to read political tracts, including

Malcolm X's autobiography.[139] Jimenez and the Young Lords used the NOI's concept of

black nationalism to inform their own philosophy of Puerto Rican nationalism and

sovereignty.[140] Meanwhile, the Chicano Brown Berets were inspired by meetings with H.

Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael of SNCC, both of whom lead SNCC to embrace

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[136] US Congress, Senate, Select Committee to Study Government Operations, *Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans, Book 3*, 94th Cong., 2nd sess., April 23, 1976, 185–223; Curtis J. Austin, *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006), 196–207; Rice, "The World of the Illinois Panthers," 54–55.
[137] Countryman, *Up South*, 228–243.
[138] "Panthers Open a Chapter for Blacks in Philadelphia," *New York Times*, June 29, 1969, 44.
[139] Ignatin, "Young Lords Serve and Protect," 6; Fernandez, "Young Lords and the Postwar City," 66–67.
[140] For more on the cross germination of black and Puerto Rican nationalism generally, see Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen*, 226–227.

black nationalist ideology in the late 1960s. The Berets spent time at their coffee shop

with Ron Karenga the leader of the Us organization, another influential Los Angeles-

based Black Power group that celebrated racial pride and self defense.[141] The Brown

Berets also copied the free medical clinics and breakfast programs ran by the Black

Panthers along with many of the Panthers' speeches and statements.[142] This ideological

crossover facilitated interethnic gang cooperation. The African American Black Panthers

and the Chicano Brown Berets worked together in 1967 and 1968 to cool gang warfare in

Los Angeles between blacks and Latinos.[143] In Chicago, the Puerto Rican Young Lords

lost no time building alliances with the city's politicized black gangs. The Lords hosted a

"Month of Soul Dances" with the Blackstone Rangers for local youth, and they

participated in rallies with the Disciples. In their newspaper, the Young Lords also ran

articles and advertisements on Rising Up Angry, a local radical magazine and community

organization that tried to politicized poor, white gangs. In their support for Rising Up

Angry, the Young Lords used a synthesis of gang ideology and minority power ideas to

explain the movement:

> They are trying to help [the gangs] understand that the enemy of
> street organizations are not Latin Kings Corp, PVP's, but someone
> bigger than that, a gang that was has more members, has more
> weapons, controls larger 'turf' and will kill any of us whether we
> are brown, black or white: they are the Chicago Pig [Police]
> Department, the biggest gang in Chicago. They are at the local
> level; at the State level we have the National Guard, and at the
> National level is the Army."[144]

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[141] Ruben Salazar, "Brown Berets Hail 'La Raza' and Scorn the Establishment," *Los Angeles Times*, June 16, 1969, 3; Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 128.

[142] Munoz, *Youth, Identity, Power*, 85–86; Marin, *Social Protest*, 143–150; Fox, "Brown Berets," 140.

[143] Marin, *Social Protest* 157; Fox, "Brown Berets," 190.

[144] Ignatin, "Young Lords Serve and Protect," 6.

Borrowing the term "pig," ubiquitous in Black Power literature to refer to police officers, the Lords argued that the real gang war was the rising violence between those with the power of the state behind them (the police) and those with the power of the people on their side (the gang members). Such statements also demonstrated the cooperation and shared ideological roots of Latino and African American gangs, underscoring a recent trend in political historiography to explore the linkages between black and Latino mobilization in the 1960s. These gangs' efforts undermine urban historians' arguments that hatred between Latino and black gangs has always been an impediment to cross-ethnic coalitions.[145]

Gang members' alliance with Black Power tied their minority identities to their experience in the gang. In doing so, these gang members sought connection with a political ideology that made sense of their lives in urban America and offered a route to empowerment. They also added new inflections to black nationalism, thus multiplying the approaches and applications of Black Power ideology. But they unintentionally gave the police and many journalists fodder to further racialized the gang issue. The overlapping rhetoric and membership of both gangs and minority power groups meant that reporters often conflated gangs and Black Power organizations. For example, in June 1969, *Time* ran an article that blurred the line between Black Power organizations—what the magazine called "black extremists"—and gang warfare. *Time* described the "almost

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[145] For examples, see Brian D. Behnken, *Fighting Their Own Battles: Mexican Americans, African Americans, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Texas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Albert M. Camarillo, "Blacks, Latinos, and the New Racial Frontier in American Cities of Color: California's Emerging Minority-Majority Cities," in Kusmer and Trotter, *African American Urban History Since World War II*, 39–59; Matthew C. Whitaker, "Great Expectations: African American and Latino Relations in Phoenix Since World War II," in Kusmer and Trotter, *African American Urban History Since World War II*, 83–97.

casual mayhem" that gangs had brought to the streets of black neighborhoods and in the same breath reported on the deaths of a former Black Muslim and a member of the Black Panthers, giving the impression that violent street gangs and these political groups were one and the same.[146] Law enforcement seemed to encourage this conflation. Many local police departments used their gang experts to monitor Black Power organizations, an organizational decision that lent support to discussions that equated gangs with Black Power. Additionally, police chose to encourage journalists who saw the two groups as the same.[147] Calling Black Power groups "gangs" in the early years also served to undermine in the general public's mind the legitimacy of Black Power demands. Put simply, if black nationalist groups were gangs and gangs were now considered criminals, then these black activists were a crime problem. At times, Black Power activists tried to correct this conflation by arguing that groups like the Panthers were "NOT a gang" but stressed that they were "not critical of gangs" either.[148] Another source of confusion stemmed from the response of the black middle class. The traditional civil rights organizations, such as the NAACP and the Urban League, disapproved of gang members' embrace of Black Power.[149] While poorer, urban African Americans supported the Black Power evolution of groups like Thugs United, the Vice Lords, the Disciples, and the Liberators, elite African Americans saw this development as a windfall of support for the black nationalists who challenged traditional campaigns for integration. These alliances also

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[146] "Guerilla Summer?," *Time*, June 27, 1969, 34–35.

[147] Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Viking, 2011), 189; 90 Cong. Rec., 22211 (1968); "Telegram from Alfred J. Nelder to Ronald Reagan," 11 August 1969, box 15, file 41, Joseph L. Alioto Papers, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco, CA.

[148] Leroy Thomas, "Rush Backed in Pending Gun Trial," *Chicago Daily Defender*, May 27, 1971, 27.

[149] King interview by Tyler, tape XIII, side 2.

undermined middle-class attempts to win over black street youth. Taken together, the media portrayals, gang members' public pronouncements, and the activism of Black Power groups further calcified the stereotype of the black gang member.

The 1960s were a pivotal moment for the racial discourse about American gangs and gang crime. Events, such as the civil rights campaigns in Chicago and Los Angeles and the uprisings in Watts and Cleveland, captured the attention of Americans and focused concerns about gangs on nonwhite youth. At some moments, blacks and Latinos close to these events had the opportunity to take part in shaping the perceptions of gangs in their communities and at large. Some of these individuals saw gangs as damaging to their neighborhoods and obstacles to the cause for equality. Others believed that gangs were central to minority youth culture and could be powerful allies in political organizing. Gang members themselves took part in constructing identities that bridged their gang membership and their involvement in black and Latino struggles. While many of these interpretations competed with one another, they shared one common theme: gangs were an important issue for Latino and African Americans. These competing and converging lenses in turn helped focus news coverage that carried an increasing number of stories about gangs involved in civil rights movements and in minority rebellions. These reports used the different ideas that were circulating in the black and Latino communities, integrating them into a framework that played on general white fears about minorities, crime, and unrest. But just as these forces were changing the perceived racial cast of American gangs, they also brought to the fore new intervention strategies. It was black civil rights workers and Chicano students who were the first to suggest that using

gangs for positive work could be more effective in controlling gang violence than the 1950s attempts to destroy gangs. And it was gang members themselves who showed that they were both willing and able to redirect their organizations. Ultimately, it was the efforts of Latinos and African Americans that designed a new "constructive" approach to the gang issue. This approach would become the primarily direction of crime control in the years that followed and would force a wedge between liberals and conservatives in national crime politics.

Chapter 3

Liberal Crime Prevention and the War on Poverty, 1961–1968

"Just think….illiterate gang kids writing proposals to the OEO. These kids flipped me out." – Fred Goode, advisor to the Real Great Society[1]

In May 1968, more than one hundred delegates from fifty gangs across the country met in East St. Louis, Illinois. They had come to the city to form a national organization of street gangs. This was not some clandestine meeting of the Hollywood imagination. The delegates had been invited to the city by Southern Illinois University on whose campus the events was held, and numerous government and community officials attended the conference. During the previous fall, a meeting in New York of a gang known as the Real Great Society (RGS) had proposed creating a nationwide network for gangs involved in activism. Calling this new national group Youth Organizations United (YOU), the New York contingent quickly contacted others in Illinois, California, and Louisiana.[2] Together they spent the next six months planning a four-day conference for gangs who wished to become YOU members. Sitting around the conference room on the first day of the conference in May was a diverse cross-section of urban youth. The majority of the delegates were between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five. Most came in their gang jackets, and all wore at least some insignia or color to represent their affiliation. Present were the Black Power advocates from Thugs United in New Orleans. The Sons of Watts from Los Angeles also attended dressed in green shirts and brightly colored beads. They were joined by two new groups from San Francisco: the primarily

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[1] Quoted in Roger Vaughan, "The Real Great Society," *Life*, September 15, 1967, 82.
[2] "$1-Million Given to Urban League," *New York Times*, November 20, 1968, 30.

Latino Mission Rebels and Asian American gang members from Leeways. The

Conservative Vice Lords of Chicago were there with their black leather jackets, as were

the Brown Berets from the West Coast. Sure not to miss the conference, RGS had arrived

days earlier to meet with gangs in the university's neighborhood; East St. Louis was

Imperial War Lords territory, and YOU had to ask the War Lords' permission for a

national gang summit on their turf.[3] In all, sixteen states and the District of Columbia

were represented at the conference. So too were a number of federal agencies. Members

of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and the Department of Health, Education

and Welfare (HEW) attended the proceedings, and the Department of Labor had paid for

some of the early planning sessions. Even Vice President Hubert Humphrey telegrammed

to express his hopes for YOU's success.[4]

The founding of YOU and the federal support for YOU's conference in 1968

demonstrated just how much gangs and the federal government would change over the

course of the 1960s. As gangs marched down Chicago streets with SCLC and rallied with

Puerto Ricans in New York and Los Angeles, they found legitimacy in the eyes of many

outsiders. The most important of these new supporters were liberal politicians in the

federal government. The following chapter explores how federal officials in the late

1960s gave millions of dollars directly to street gangs and their members in hopes of

[3] "Youth Organizations United: First National Conference," 15 May 1968, p. 1, 18, 20, Delinquency Study and Youth Development Center Records, Louisa H. Bowen University Archives & Special Collections, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville; "Youth Organizations United (YOU) Nine Months Report," 8 March 1971, p. 10, Textual Records from the Department of Justice, Office of the Deputy Attorney General, Record Group 60: General Records of the Department of Justice, 1790-2002, National Archives, College Park, MD (hereafter cited as DOJ Records); Richard W. Poston, *The Gang and the Establishment* (New York: Harper & Row 1971), 135; "Youth Groups Assemble," *East St. Louis Journal*, May 16, 1968.
[4] Poston, *Gang and the Establishment*, 133, 143; "Youth Organizations United" 4; Conservative Vice Lords, "A Report to the Public," 1969, p. 18, Chicago Historical Society.

keeping gang violence contained. Many believed that such efforts would become the foundation for an attack on all types of crime. Direct funding was a radical departure from the federal government's tentative response in the late 1950s. Instead of championing moderate programs such as weapons legislation and detached workers, which found support among both the left and the right, the new approach was solely a liberal initiative. Federal support provided gangs with a sense of legitimacy as community organizations and reshaped gang members' identities. As a result of these cooperative ventures between gangs and the federal government, gangs changed their rhetoric and activities to fit the demands of federal agencies. In doing so, many gang members came to see themselves as important actors in their communities and reimagined the purpose of their gangs.

Sociological Theories and a New Liberal Vision

The first tentative steps by liberal policymakers to address gang violence came during President John F. Kennedy's administration. Throughout Dwight Eisenhower's presidency, almost all of the movement on youth crime and delinquency had occurred because of Congressional action. His successor, Kennedy, however, had campaigned heavily on the issue of delinquency. Kennedy's election in November 1960 signaled that the White House's quiet reserve on the issue was coming to an end.[5] One of Kennedy's earliest initiatives was to establish the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency

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[5] John E. Moore, "Controlling Delinquency: Executive, Congressional, and Juvenile, 1961–64," in *Congress and Urban Problems*, ed. Frederic N. Cleaveland (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 1969), 115, 121–123; Victor S. Navasky, *Kennedy Justice* (New York: Antheneum, 1971), 167.

and Youth Crime in 1961. From its inception, the committee fell under the joint control

of the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Department of Labor, and HEW. This structure

reflected the traditional belief that youth crime was an issue best solved by a joint

approach of the criminal justice system and of social service providers, a decision

seconded by Robert F. Kennedy, the committee's head. The executive order establishing

the committee also declared that the group's primary purpose would be to ensure that

"the resources of the Federal Government be promptly mobilized to provide leadership

and direction in a national effort to strengthen our social structure and to correlate, at all

levels of government, juvenile and youth services."[6] This statement reflected President

Kennedy's desire to continue the efforts of Congressional legislators who argued in the

late 1950s for federal intervention and management. But it also hinted at a change. The

president and his advisors were beginning to turn their focus exclusively towards social

services. As one of their first efforts, the President's Committee and the Kennedy

Administration helped legislators push a new juvenile delinquency bill through

Congress.[7] The new bill specifically targeted gang violence by creating employment

initiatives that would hire gang members to perform paid work in recreation programs,

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[6] John F. Kennedy, "Executive Order 10940," 11 May 1961, The American Presidency Project, University of California Santa Barbara, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=58878; "Welcoming Remarks by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy to the Citizens Advisory Council," 1961, p. 4, box 391, file 6, WCMC Records.

[7] Nancy Marion, *A History of Federal Crime Control Initiatives, 1960–1993* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 25, 31; Moore, "Controlling Delinquency," 134–139; Heidi Matiyow Rosenberg, "Federal Policy toward Delinquent Youth: Legislative and Programmatic Milestones from Kennedy to Ford, 1960–1976" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008), 91.

parks, and public institutions throughout the country. The bill also subsidized detached worker programs in many cities.[8]

Kennedy embraced these measures largely because of new research by sociologists and street workers. The most innovative that caught the administration's attention was a highly publicized program on New York City's Lower East Side known as Mobilization for Youth (MFY). MFY originally grew out of the frustrations of street work. As workers flooded New York neighborhoods in the late 1950s, they were able to break up fights and prevent many acts of violence, but they found it difficult to eventually sever the hold of the gang on its members. Street workers discovered that the biggest challenge to breaking those ties was addressing the root causes of gangs in deteriorating neighborhoods: unemployment of both gang members and their parents, poor schools, squalid housing, and a city bureaucracy that either was ignorant of or ignored the demands of working-class residents. Without getting at these roots, street work was merely a band-aid.[9] Some, such as the NYCYB's leadership, called for more public housing development and slum clearance, two increasingly popular responses to urban blight at the time.[10] But one group of reformers chose a more holistic strategy based on the theoretical and experimental efforts of sociologist Clifford Shaw in Chicago. Shaw, a researcher at the University of Chicago, had been the inventor of the street work strategy in the 1930s. Under his original vision, street workers were only one component of a larger program that sought to build a sense of community in poor neighborhoods and to

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[8] "City's Gang Wars Ascribed to Girls," *New York Times*, March 10, 1961, 29; C.P. Trussell, "Youth Crime Curb Backed by House," *New York Times*, August 31, 1961, 29; "Y.W.C.A. Will Hold Symposium on Girls," *Chicago Tribune*, November 6, 1966, B6.

[9] WCMC, "Breaking through Barriers: A Report on the Hard-to-Reach Youth Project of Chicago," 1960, p. 91, box 1, file 2, Spergel Papers.

[10] "Youth Crime Laid to Neighborhood," *New York Times*, August 6, 1957, 18.

integrate young men into that community. Shaw believed that in addition to street workers reaching out to gang members, a successful program needed personnel to provide jobs and services for the entire community and to politically mobilize neighborhood residents to advocate for their own benefits.[11] When cities like New York integrated street workers into their gang intervention programs in the 1950s, they only adopted street work, leaving the larger community on its own. It was this selective approach that MFY's creators hoped to correct.

With Shaw's full set of theories in mind, a group of sociologists, community activists, clergy members, and politicians opened MFY in 1962. MFY used all of the traditional tools of street workers. MFY personnel met with gang members in gang hangouts, discussed personal issues with the members, and provided job and school counseling services. But they went a step further by involving the entire community in building the project. MFY asked gang members' parents to form parent groups to keep the kids out of trouble. As one settlement house worker active in the project described it, "parents are approached as allies rather than clients."[12] But they also offered the parents counseling and taught them how to negotiate complex municipal bureaucracies in order to gain access to welfare and housing benefits. Moving even further out into the community, MFY worked with other adults in the area registering voters, organizing local merchants, and encouraging residents to lobby city hall for improvements to their

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[11] Eric C. Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings: Youth Gangs in Postwar New York* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 189–190.
[12] Ruth S. Tefferteller, "Delinquency Prevention in the Neighborhood," *Crime and Delinquency* 10, no. 3 (July 1964): 226.

neighborhood.[13] James E. McCarthy, the administrative director of MFY, explained the

program to the *New York Times* as an attack both on gangs and on the lack of organizing

among adults who felt marginalized by the system:

> Essentially we are attacking the handicaps of poverty. We are
> trying to stimulate a neighborhood of some 107,000 people to
> recognize that they have the means—if they try—to change their
> condition, that they can influence their own futures, that they can
> fight City Hall, that they make their neighborhood a much better
> place in which to live.[14]

MFY's political activity agitated many entrenched interests in the city. Riled parties

included slumlords who resented MFY's intrusion; the NYPD, which was angered by

MFY's support for a civilian review board to oversee the police department; and a few

vested political interests who feared the ways in which a newly active voting block might

upset local politics. In the New York State Senate, conservative senators attacked the

MFY program as an "extremist" organization because it had supported rent strikes and

school boycotts in New York.[15] Yet many liberal and moderate politicians locally and

nationally saw the program as a potential model for the rest of the country's fight against

gang violence. MFY received support from the National Institute of Mental Health, the

Ford Foundation, New York Mayor Richard Wagner, the state's Governor Nelson

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[13] MFY, *A Proposal for the Prevention and Control of Delinquency by Expanding Opportunities*, 1962; Harold H. Weissman, ed., *Community Development in the Mobilization for Youth Experience* (New York: Association Press, 1969).

[14] Quoted in Layhmond Robinson, "Juvenile Project Making Headway," *New York Times*, May 23, 1963, 37.

[15] Alfred Fried and Harold H. Weissman, "The Attack on Mobilization," in *Community Development in the Mobilization for Youth Experience* (New York: Association Press, 1969), 137–162; "MFY. Defended from the Pulpit," *New York Times*, January 4, 1965, 32; Alyosha Goldstein, *Poverty in Common: The Politics of Community Action During the American Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 125–126.

Rockefeller, and a number of Democratic senators.[16] The Kennedy Administration was

no exception. Robert F. Kennedy extolled the program for its innovative vision, and the

President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency chose to fund MFY—along with fifteen

other programs across the country—as part of the first presidentially-managed program to

fight youth crime and gang violence.[17] Under the guidance of the President's Committee,

similar programs were established in Houston, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Minneapolis,

Detroit, St. Louis, Charleston, New Haven, and Cleveland.[18]

Despite all of these innovative efforts, MFY's most radical approach was

organizing and mobilizing gang youth. According to MFY's original proposal:

> Opportunities for collective social action should be incorporated
> into any large-scale delinquency program....because we believe that
> a feeling of alienation from the larger society is a fundamental
> dynamic in much collective delinquent behavior....The task is to
> direct the expression of alienation against the social structure which
> is its cause and to discourage its expression in delinquent acts. In this
> way, the discontented may help to alter the very inequalities which
> oppress them."[19]

Much like the civil rights activists mobilizing in this period, MFY's founders believed

that instilling gang youth with a sense of purpose and power within society would temper

gang-related crime. The program stressed that providing political, social, and economic

"opportunities" for young urban men could be a solution to the gang problem. This

language came directly from the theories of sociologists Richard Cloward and Lloyd

Ohlin who both served as advisors to MFY. In 1960, they had coauthored one of the most

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[16] For more information on MFY see Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*, 211–216; Noel A. Cazenave, *Impossible Democracy: The Unlikely Success of the War on Poverty Community Action Programs* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).

[17] President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime, "Report to the President," 31 May 1962, p. 19, box 391, file 6, WCMC Records; Cazenave, *Impossible Democracy*, 5.

[18] Moore, "Controlling Delinquency," 129–131; "Welcoming Remarks," 5–7.

[19] MFY, *Proposal*, 69.

politically influential books of the twentieth century, *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs.* In it, Cloward and Ohlin argued that gangs developed among juveniles who had conventional social and economic goals but had no legitimate ways to reach them. The typical gang member wanted a good car, money in his pocket, and respect from the other men in his neighborhood, but the larger society denied him employment that could provide these things. In response, boys banded together to organize illegal activities that earned them money or respect. Gangs, the authors believed, weren't the product of teenage psychosis or problematic parenting. Gangs were a logical reaction to a system that provided urban youth with absolutely no opportunities for success.[20] Cloward and Ohlin's remedy for gang violence was obvious: create opportunities *within* the system for gang members to reach their goals. Less overtly, Cloward and Ohlin contended that society didn't have to crush gangs to achieve these ends. In fact, the gang might be the very conduit for providing youth with opportunities. The book set off a flurry of publications. Other sociologists agreed with Cloward and Ohlin's diagnosis and argued that it was the federal government's responsibility to fund new, opportunity-oriented programs. In the words of one academic, "the larger society had to open the flood gates of opportunity" by creating comprehensive urban programs to deal with substandard housing, defunct schools, high unemployment, and poor healthcare. According to these sociologists, only collaborative work by gangs, government, and community organizations could achieve these goals.[21]

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[20] Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin, *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960), 86, 119.

[21] Irving A. Spergel, "An Exploratory Research in Delinquent Subcultures," *Social Service Review* 35, no. 1 (March 1961): 45; Irving A. Spergel, *Street Gang Work: Theory and Practice* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1966); James F. Short, Ramon Rivera, and Ray A. Tennyson,

These new theories quickly made their way to the desks of Washington

policymakers. The Kennedy Administration and a number of Democrats in Congress took

note of the work at MFY, celebrating it as a "a fresh, innovative approach to delinquency

prevention."[22] Meanwhile, the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency tapped

Lloyd Ohlin to serve as its lead expert. There, his job would be to provide the White

House with a clear, unified vision for gang and juvenile delinquency programs

nationwide.[23] Most importantly, liberal policymakers' adoption of Cloward and Ohlin's

ideas about gang violence would have wide-ranging effects extending far beyond

Kennedy's short term and the small world of gang intervention. When Lyndon B.

Johnson took over the presidency and began to focus on crime as a political issue, he did

so using the language and theories championed by the two sociologists, making these

ideas the founding principles of the War on Poverty.[24]

"Warring on Poverty Is Warring on Crime"

When President Johnson announced the War on Poverty in January 1964, he saw

the new federal initiative as a way to address inequality and poverty across America.

From pledging funds for quality of life improvements in Appalachian mining towns to

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"Perceived Opportunities, Gang Membership, and Delinquency," *American Sociological Review* 30, no. 1 (February 1965): 56–67.

[22] President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime, "Report to the President," 13.

[23] Moore, "Controlling Delinquency," 127–128.

[24] Daniel P. Moynihan, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty* (New York: Free Press, 1969), 179; Cazenave, *Impossible Democracy*, 6; Michael W. Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 25; Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, "The Politics of the Great Society," in *The Great Society and the High Tide of Liberalism*, ed. Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 259.

fixing problems in the inner city, Johnson hoped the War on Poverty would address the growing tensions over racial inequality and help the working class join the prospering middle class. Johnson was not alone in his optimism and commitment. Most Americans at the time assumed that the strength of the American economy could support such initiatives by providing jobs to those who wanted or needed them. Critical to voter acceptance was Johnson's assurance that these goals could be achieved without the construction of massive welfare programs or the redistribution of income, which were anathema to most voters and politicians.[25] Instead, the administration relied on a rationale that built upon American traditions of personal initiative and hard work. Officials achieved this goal by using Cloward and Ohlin's language of increased "opportunities" as the framework for the War on Poverty. To cure poverty the government didn't need to handout welfare checks. It only had to provide more opportunities to access jobs, training, safe streets, and better schools, a fact reflected in name of the department created to run the program: the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO).[26]

      The only truly revolutionary element of the War on Poverty was the inclusion of the Community Action Program. When first added to the War on Poverty bill in 1964, community action was described as a program to foster "community development" and increase residents' engagement in high-poverty areas.[27] According to the original plan, it would encourage the development of agencies headed by, composed of, and geared

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[25] James T. Patterson, *America's Struggle against Poverty in the Twentieth Century*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 108.

[26] James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945–1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 538–539; Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 67.

[27] Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 536; Moynihan, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding*, xvi, 144.

towards the poor. These community-run organization would therefore achieve "maximum feasible participation of the poor." One reason for this move was a burgeoning belief that grassroots activists had a better sense of the needs of low-income Americans. Furthermore, a program designed to be a "hand-up" not a "hand-out" required that the poor themselves buy into the initiatives and create the community structures necessary for neighborhood improvement. War on Poverty architects also hoped that mobilizing the low-income Americans to design and manage their own federally funded programs would create a system by which federal money could bypass entrenched state and municipal authorities who had stymied previous reforms.[28]

As legislation for the War on Poverty took shape in Washington, events on city streets pushed lawmakers to think of the program as more than simply a cure for poverty and political disenfranchisement. In July 1964, an uprising by Harlem residents after a white police officer shot and killed a black teenager instigated the first of many riots that would constitute four years of "long hot summers" across the country. For many Americans, rioting by urban youth represented the extreme effects of poverty and racial disparity. Johnson, his advisors, and the congressional members who supported the War on Poverty argued that increasing opportunities for minorities and the poor, especially in cities, would eliminate the root causes of these uprisings. Liberal policymakers saw the community action component as a way to include these groups in local and national politics. These policymakers believed that by providing a conduit for political debate and

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[28] Though this was the original intent of the legislation, few programs were able to maintain independence from local elites and municipal authorities. Moynihan, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding*, 69–71, 83–87; Quadagno, *Color of Welfare*, 8.

inclusion, urban minorities would feel that violent protests were unnecessary.[29] In doing

so, War on Poverty architects intentionally set out to control the boundaries of acceptable

political protest. As long as the poor worked within the system by engaging in

"maximum feasible participation" programs sanctioned by the OEO, their protests were

legitimate.[30] Thus the War on Poverty also became a war on civil unrest.

But the battlegrounds of this war were not simply economic resources and

political power.[31] The War on Poverty was also a crime control initiative.[32] Democrats

had been sporadically worried about crime issues, particularly youth crime, since the

1950s. The presidential campaign of 1964 sharpened the Johnson Administration's

attention to the issue. While Johnson was busy on Capitol Hill pushing antipoverty

legislation through Congress, his Republican opponent, Barry Goldwater, toured the

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[29] Gareth Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 196; Kent B. Germany, *New Orleans after the Promises: Poverty, Citizenship, and the Search for the Great Society* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 216–220; Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), 375.

[30] Goldstein, *Poverty in Common,* 111–154, 199–244; Devin Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power, and the Making of American Politics, 1965–1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

[31] For examples of traditional scholarship that has focused on the economic and political aspects of the War on Poverty, see Moynihan, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding*; Patterson, *America's Struggle against Poverty;* Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984); Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement;* Doris Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Quadagno, *Color of Welfare*, 122; Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century US History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Marguerite V. Marin, *Social Protest in an Urban Barrio: A Study of the Chicano Movement, 1966–1974* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991); J. David Greenstone and Paul E. Peterson, *Race and Authority in Urban Politics: Community Participation and the War on Poverty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); Germany, *New Orleans after the Promises*; Attiat F. Ott and Paul Hughes-Cromwick, "War on Poverty: Two Decades Later," in *Lyndon Baines Johnson and the Uses of Power*, ed. Bernard J. Firestone and Robert C. Vogt (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 51–62.

[32] For examples of scholarship that favor a crime-oriented reading of the War on Poverty, see Vesla M. Weaver, "Frontlash: Race and the Development of Punitive Crime Policy," *Studies in American Political Development* 21, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 240; Flamm, *Law and Order*, 46.

country talking about rising crime and the need for Americans to respond. Johnson and

other liberal Democrats in Washington saw the War on Poverty as their legislative

answer to Goldwater's challenge. In his 1966 Special Message to Congress on Crime,

President Johnson used antipoverty rhetoric to explain crime's causes: "Where legitimate

opportunities are closed, illegitimate opportunities are seized. Whatever opens

opportunity and hope will help to prevent crime and foster responsibility." While not a

panacea, he admitted, the War on Poverty was "vitally important to crime prevention."[33]

The Presidential Commission on the Causes of Crime, appointed by Johnson in 1965,

agreed. In its final report, the commission argued that the roots of crime drew

nourishment from the soil of poverty in urban America:

> Warring on poverty, inadequate housing, and unemployment, is
> warring on crime. A civil rights law is a law against crime. Money
> for schools is money against crime. Medical, psychiatric, and
> family counseling services are services against crime. More broadly
> and most importantly, every effort to improve life in America's
> 'inner cities' is an effort against crime.[34]

One major focus of this new war on crime was gang violence. The OEO and the

Johnson Administration both accepted the interpretations of gang crime that had come to

dominate American thinking by the early 1960s. OEO officials publically worried about

poverty and rising unemployment in urban centers as a cause. Johnson's Secretary of

Labor, W. Willard Wirtz, warned in 1964 that there was an "outlaw pack" of

adolescents—more than 350,000 strong—disillusioned by life and roaming the streets.

The primary problem, according to Wirtz, was that urban teens lacked employment and

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[33] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Special Message to the Congress on Crime and Law Enforcement," 9 March 1966, The American Presidency Project, University of California Santa Barbara, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=27478.

[34] Quoted in Gary LaFree, *Losing Legitimacy: Street Crime and the Decline of Social Institutions in America* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 10.

training. Through War on Poverty programs developed specifically for these hardcore

youths, Wirtz argued, "We can get poverty, unemployment and ignorance out of the

nation's bloodstream." But if America failed to act, yesterday's problem kids would

become today's gang members and tomorrow's criminals.[35] Internally, reports filtered

around the OEO that expressed concern about the growing link between minority youth

and gang membership.[36] And as a perceived relationship between gangs and urban rioting

grew, the OEO privately discussed the need to address the gang problem if the federal

government hoped to bring calm to the streets.[37]

    With fears about riots, crime, and gangs as a backdrop, OEO officials began to

consider antipoverty initiatives to specifically target gangs in early 1967. The solution

they devised was to use gangs as part of the community action component of the War on

Poverty. Based on the same arguments that had become common among civil rights

activists who were already working extensively with the OEO,[38] federal officials

reasoned that gangs had a history in the community and were surprisingly good at

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[35] Quoted in John P. Shanley, "Wirtz Concerned by 'Outlaw Pack'," *New York Times*, March 19, 1964, 14.

[36] Joan W. Moore, "Mexican-Americans: Problems and Prospects," nd, pp. 9, 19, 26–27, 30–31, box 26, Office of Economic Opportunity, Office of Program Development, Research Reports, 1966–1972, Records of the Community Services Administration 1963–1981, Record Group 381, National Archives, College Park, MD (hereafter cited as OEO Office of Program Development Collection).

[37] Urban Systems to Gerson Green, 5 November 1968, box 7, file "Urban Systems, Inc., Technical Report—1968," OEO Office of Program Development Collection; Memoranda from Maurice A. Dawkins to Sargent Shriver, 14–29 June 1967, box 2, file "Civil Rights (4 of 4), Textual Records from the Office of Economic Opportunity, Office of the Deputy Director, Records of the Community Services Administration, 1963–1981, Record Group 381, National Archives, College Park, MD (hereafter cited as OEO Office of Deputy Director Collection). See also Chapter 4.

[38] Some of the earliest groups funded through the Community Action Program were grassroots political organizations that had been active for years in the civil rights movement. War on Poverty officials found that working with established community groups made the agency's goal of maximizing the poor's participation much easier than starting from scratch.

recruitment and retention of members. Gangs—unlike schools or summer recreation

programs—had contact with their members throughout the year in the intimate settings

where poor, urban youth lived.[39] Moreover, gang leaders enjoyed the respect and

emulation of gang members and other marginalized youth. In the words of the OEO,

street gangs—with a bit of professional guidance—were "a natural and logical vehicle"

for community action.[40] Like Cloward and Ohlin and the creators of MFY, the OEO and

the representatives on the President's Crime Commission argued that the federal

government had to provide opportunities for "responsible involvement" by gang

members in the larger society. Gang members should be allowed to "run youth centers of

their own" and federal officials should "encourag[e] them to participate in civil rights and

political activities….to give [the gang member] a reason to care about what happens to

his world."[41] Once integrated, this line of reasoning continued, gang members would see

no benefit to violence and crime and gang-related crime rates would plummet.

The OEO's decision explicitly supported the idea that gangs should no longer be

forced to disband. Instead, the federal agency legitimized gangs as authentic urban

organizations that represented minority youth. This plan was a definitive break from the

consensus approach of the 1950s that aimed to break gangs apart in order to reduce

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[39] "Urban Systems, Inc., Technical Report," 5 November 1968, box 7, OEO Office of Program Development Collection.

[40] "Final Report Contract OEO B89-4641, Volume I: Program Operation," 30 November 1967, box 10, OEO Office of Program Development Collection; US Congress, Senate, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, *Examination of the War on Poverty: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty, Part 13,* 90th Cong., 1st sess., May 17–18, 1967, 4236.

[41] President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society* (New York: Dutton, 1968), 190, 192; Franklin E. Zimring and Gordon Hawkins, "Crime Commissions," in *Encyclopedia of Crime and Justice*, ed. Sanford H. Kadish (New York: Free Press, 1983), 353–357; "Final Report Contract OEO B89-4641."

crime. The OEO and Johnson Administration's novel approach would not have been possible without the intellectual environment created by sociologists and minority activists in the 1960s. At its foundation, this new federal plan drew on sociologists' conviction that gangs needed to be integrated into the system to reduce crime. To this was added the argument and experience of minority activists that gangs could be worked with and that there was no inherent need to destroy the gang. And finally, the new federal thinking responded to the concerns of government officials who noted the maturing relationship between gang youth and black nationalism as well as the popular conflation of gangs and riots. If gang members could be convinced to work with the establishment instead of against it, the government might be able to co-opt powerful gangs and quell urban unrest.

"Opportunity Please Knock": Gangs in the War on Poverty

Although the OEO had brought together the ideas of the civil rights activists and sociologist to rethink how the antipoverty agency might use gangs, federal officials did not immediately jump to fund massive gang projects. The OEO recognized that working with this "previously untapped" community group was a "high risk" venture and had no precedent at the federal level.[42] It remained to be seen how gang members themselves would respond. Only with their cooperation and acceptance would such a program succeed. The OEO started its foray into gang-violence reduction with small-scale projects, and it was only because of gangs' positive response that the program eventually grew to the size it did.

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[42] Poston, *Gang and the Establishment*, xi.

The OEO launched its experiment with gangs through a small group in San Francisco led by the blunt and sometimes brash Jesse James. James, a former gang leader and convicted felon, founded the group in 1965 after two young gang members approached him for alcohol on the streets of San Francisco's Mission district. In that moment, James saw the chance to redeem himself and to rebuild the neighborhood. A few weeks later, he established the Mission Rebels, an organization run jointly by youths and adults that strove to fulfill teenagers' goals for their community. In its founding manifesto, the Mission Rebels "declared war on 'an image that does not give a true picture of youth'," the image that painted its Latino, gang-member participants as criminals and castoffs. Instead, the Rebels wanted to prove that gang members and urban youth could create something positive in their lives and in their communities.[43] When the Mission Rebels applied to the OEO for a grant in 1967, OEO officials seized the chance to fund a group that looked like youth community action because of the participation of gang leaders but also appeared safe because gang members worked closely with adult supervisors. Awarded $82,000 by the OEO, the Mission Rebels used the money to find one thousand jobs for unemployed youth and send more than one hundred dropouts back to school.[44] Two years later, the OEO gave the Rebels an additional $297,000 making it

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[43] Quoted in *Report on the First Conference to Discuss National and International Proliferation of Significant Breakthrus in Community Development*, 28 October 1967, p.2, box 50, file "NY City OEO Programs (Compilation) 1967 Oct," Textual Records from the Office of Economic Opportunity, Office of Inspection, Inspection Reports Evaluating Community Action Programs, 1964–1972, Records of the Community Services Administration 1963–1981, Record Group 381, National Archives, College Park, MD (hereafter cited as OEO Office of Inspection Collection).
[44] "The James Gang Rides Again," *Time*, October 13, 1967, 41; Mission Rebels, "Operation Opportunity Request for Refunding on Local or City Wide Basis," March 1968, p. A-2, box 1, file 4, Oscar Burdick Collection of Letters and Misc. Relating to the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1960s and 1970s [BANC MSS 99/196C], The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley (hereafter cited as Burdick Collection).

the largest antipoverty program in San Francisco. To justify the second grant, the OEO

pointed to the Rebels' earlier successes in combating youth unemployment endemic in

the neighborhood. But the OEO also highlighted the calming effect the program had on

urban streets. While other cities experienced violent protests, not a single riot rocked the

Mission during the first funding period.[45] A *Time* magazine profile celebrated the

cooperation between the Rebels and the federal government, largely portraying the

program as an anti-riot measure that worked because youth were given a voice and a

sense of power in the system. "The reason that [the] rebels…do not revolt is obvious,"

Time reported. "Its members call their own shots."[46]

The Mission Rebels, however, did not have complete control over the program;

with government funding came government influence. The first to go were books by and

lectures on revolutionary figures like Che Guevara.[47] Next, to demonstrate that they

understood the purpose of OEO funding, the Mission Rebels went to great lengths to

stress in their communications with the OEO and their board of directors that they were

actively fighting uprisings.[48] Later that year, the Rebels even shifted their rhetoric just in

time for a visit by Sargent Shriver, the head of the OEO. James and the Rebels painted a

new slogan on the walls at their center. "Please, we would rather do it ourselves," it

proclaimed, mirroring the OEO mantra. "All we ask is the opportunity." Despite these

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[45] "Summary Data and Project Work Sheet Grant Number 8237," 30 November 1969, box 11, file "Final Report, Contract OEO B89-461, Vol. III-Part I, Community Development Project Analysis," OEO Office of Program Development Collection; Michael Bernick, *Urban Illusions: New Approaches to Inner City Unemployment* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1987), 103.
[46] "James Gang Rides Again," 41.
[47] Marjorie Heins, "Los Siete de la Raza," *Ramparts*, March 1971, 22.
[48] Mission Rebels, "Report to Board of Directors," 5 June 1967, box 1, file 4, Burdick Collection; Jesse James, "Report on Summer Activities," 11 September 1967, box 1, file 4, Burdick Collection.

modifications, the Rebels never lost sight of their original commitment to "stimulat[e] two levels of change—in youth and in the establishment." Ultimately, the group succeeded. The Rebels reached hundreds of young people in the Mission and positively shaped the lives of many of its members. But it also profoundly affected OEO plans for future gang programs. Many at the OEO reveled in the success of the Mission Rebels and used it to justify other gang intervention efforts. If a group of adults and gang members could run the jewel of San Francisco's poverty program, other cities with gang problems could benefit from similar gang-run initiatives. Shriver could barely contain himself enthusing, "I believe we should have thousands of groups like it."[49]

Shriver got his wish when New York's Real Great Society (RGS) secured an OEO grant in 1968. The OEO and RGS had a relationship that predated even the Mission Rebels, but OEO officials were hesitant at first to fund RGS. Unlike the Mission Rebels who at least had an adult at the helm, RGS was headed entirely by former gang members who were still relatively young. RGS was organized on the Lower East Side of New York City in 1964 after two leaders called a truce between their gangs. As Angelo Gonzales of the Dragons and Chino Garcia of the Assassins later told reporters, the gangs had come to realize that "gang wars were pointless" and that they wanted something different.[50] They quickly set up a small dance club, the Fabulous Latin House, in hopes of making money and giving their members a place to hang out. Although the business venture failed shortly thereafter, the club helped them make connections with community activists. Through these connections, RGS expanded its influence beyond its neighborhood. In

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[49] Quoted in "James Gang Rides Again," 41.
[50] Quoted in "A 'University' Is Opened by Former Street-Fighters," *New York Times*, June 27, 1967, 23.

1965, the members toured the nation speaking about the need for society to see gang

members as active citizens and for gangs to turn their skills towards productive

endeavors. RGS spoke in front of Westinghouse researchers in New Mexico, a national

convention of teachers in Philadelphia, inmates at the Alabama State Prison, and judges

and police officers at the University of Wisconsin.[51] By 1967, the organization had

legally incorporated and secured preliminary grants from the Astor Foundation and the

New York City government. The money sent by these organizations went towards the

creation of University of the Streets, an education facility where gang members, city

youth, and neighborhood adults could take and teach classes.[52]

From the beginning, Gonzales and Garcia had their sights set on working with the

federal government. In the early years, they imagined the best they could offer was their

expertise in violence. "We figured the one thing we all knew how to do was fight,"

recalled Garcia. "So we wanted to round up some of the old boys and form this army and

offer our services to the government. We were thinking of invading Cuba." The Spartican

Army, as they called it, never took off. Instead, Garcia and Gonzales found it much easier

to adapt their goals to those of the new antipoverty program. "We knew President

Johnson was trying to get to us," Rodriguez reported to *Life* magazine. "But he just didn't

know how. He just never got in the groove….He just doesn't have our background."[53]

From that point on, they were no longer the leaders of the Assassins and Dragons; they

were the *real* Great Society, everything Johnson hoped his antipoverty programs could

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[51] Poston, *Gang and the Establishment*, 23–28, 38–40.

[52] Ibid., 67; Vaughan, "Real Great Society," 80, 82; "University of the Streets Fact Sheet," 5 January 1970, box 113, file 2140, Mayor John Lindsay Subject Files: Univeristy of the Streets, New York City Municipal Archives.

[53] Quoted in Vaughan, "Real Great Society," 80.

be. RGS's interviews with reporters demonstrated the gang's understanding of federal

funding politics. Gang members knew that stories of conversion—whether real or

fabricated—were compelling for the press, voters, and federal officials. In fact, the

members of RGS understood that funding was contingent on their ability to show that

their gang had given up on violence as a legitimate form of identity and protest.

Furthermore, the gang adopted the rhetoric of antipoverty programming. By stressing

their "real" connection to the neighborhood and fashioning themselves as the authentic

voice of urban youth, they aligned themselves with the language of community action

and further supported their claims to War on Poverty funds.

While the OEO subsidized some of the costs for RGS's early speaking tours, the

federal government rejected a request for further financial support in 1966. It wasn't until

1968 that the OEO finally came around. This about-face was in direct response to RGS's

anti-riot work in the summer of 1967. On July 23, a white police officer shot and killed a

boy in East Harlem, a predominantly Latino community. As rumors of a riot spread

downtown, the members of RGS rushed to Harlem. Throughout the night, the former

gang leaders distributed leaflets, conferred with police, debated with adults, and urged

angry youth to "cool it."[54] Three weeks later, RGS sponsored the East Harlem Youth

Conference at Columbia University to discuss community problems and how to avoid

unrest. Attended mostly by Harlem youth, the conference began with shouts of Black and

Latino Power and calls for coordinated uprisings. Nevertheless, by the second day the

attendees had resolved that they could prevent riots if the establishment would "give the

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[54] Ibid., 82, 91.

youths of E. Harlem a voice in community planning."[55] RGS's embrace of anti-riot

rhetoric at the conference was most likely shaped by the OEO's growing support for the

Mission Rebels in San Francisco. It was no secret that the Rebels had won funding

because the group offered relief from unrest, and RGS would have understood that

similar efforts in New York would make the gang palatable to Washington. In their

overture to the government, RGS and the conference attendees depended on the growing

perception that gang youth were integral to deciding whether street protests turned

violent. And from this position of leverage, they appeared ready to negotiate with

government officials in order to gain access to political influence and federal funding.[56]

The conference and the anti-riot actions of the gang gave the OEO proof that it could rely

on RGS. The final push came from Robert F. Kennedy, now a senator from New York,

who called Sargent Shriver to advocate for funding.[57] In 1968, the antipoverty agency

granted the former Assassins and Dragons nearly $260,000 for their program at the

University of the Streets.[58]

In addition to federal funding, a new fervor among gangs for organizing came out

of the East Harlem Youth Conference. One of the adult advisors to RGS had advocated at

the meeting, "RGS has to become political. In order to change the government, youths

must create a movement to gain power and control, and the one way is to unite."[59] Many

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[55] Ibid., 91; *Report on the First Conference,* 5; Luis Aponte-Parés, "Lessons from El Barrio—The East Harlem Real Great Society/Urban Planning Studio: A Puerto Rican Chapter in the Fight for Urban Self-Determination," *New Political Science* 20, no. 4 (December 1998): 406–408.
[56] For more on the ways counterrioters used political negotiations like these with the white establishment to gain political power, see William A. Anderson, Russell R. Dynes, and E.L. Quarantelli, "Urban Counterrioters," *Society* 11 (April 1974): 50–55.
[57] Poston, *Gang and the Establishment*, 147.
[58] Peter Kihss, "Ex-Gang Leaders Obtain US Funds," *New York Times*, February 27, 1968, 53.
[59] *Report on the First Conference*, 5.

attendees agreed that gangs beyond New York needed to cooperate with one another and

that there might be a place for a national organization to coordinate the fledgling activism

of gang members. Out of this conversation, a month later, YOU was born.[60] YOU, one of

the most ambitious projects undertaken by urban gangs in the 1960s, established a

national command center for gangs involved in community action. It collected

information on gang programs, offered a communication network among these

organizations, provided support and training for members, advised gang leaders on

securing private and public funds, and "encourage[d] the development of new gangs."[61]

At YOU's founding conference in East St. Louis, the attendees pledged to provide the

national structure necessary to expand previous "token" gang programs into real urban

change.[62] According to YOU's president, Warren Gilmore, "eighty percent of the time

[the gangs] are hungry for it. There's action in it. Dignity. Self-respect. A chance to feel

important without ending up in jail," and YOU wanted to ensure that all eighty percent

had a chance to take part.[63]

 Gilmore was a leader of the Conservative Vice Lords of Chicago, a gang whose

story perfectly captured the ways in which working with the civil rights movement had

turned street gangs into allies of the federal antipoverty program. Founded in 1958 by a

handful of inmates at the Illinois State Training School for Boys, the Vice Lords grew to

become one of the strongest and most violent African American gangs on Chicago's

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[60] "Youth Organizations United" 16.
[61] Poston, *Gang and the Establishment*, 132.
[62] "Youth Organizations United," 18.
[63] Ellen Ferber, "It's YOU," *American Education*, September 1969, 19.

West Side.[64] From 1964 to 1967, the Vice Lords occasionally participated in community

organizing and the civil rights movement. They helped with Martin Luther King Jr.'s

poverty campaign in Chicago and rallied with community leaders against police brutality

but nothing formal or enduring resulted. In 1967, however, the Vice Lords' new leader

Alfonso Alford changed that. Alford had looked around his neighborhood and realized

that all of the gang members from the 1940s were gone, either dead or in prison. Chilled

by the lack of options for his members, he pushed the group further along what gang

members called the "conservative" path by encouraging civil rights work, renouncing

violence, and working for community goals.[65] Alford even added the term "conservative"

to the gang's official name to signal their conversion away from gang warfare.[66] But fear

of prison and death was not the gang's only motivation. Its work with civil rights activists

had cultivated awareness of inner-city issues, the viability of direct action, and the

political power that the Conservative Vice Lords wielded. In the words of Cupid, a

member of the gang:

> all them fellows working for that Commission on Youth Welfare
> [the city government's youth agency] all them cats, man…that's
> the most sickening sight I ever seen. All them sit back there in their
> office making five to ten thousand dollars a year, running out
> program after program….One day we going to be able to vote, and
> them guys going to be out of a job![67]

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[64] R. Lincoln Keiser, *The Vice Lords: Warriors of the Streets* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), 1–7.

[65] Gang members' use of the term "conservative" signaled a decision by the gang to abandon violence and gang fighting; it did not indicate a change in political stance or a move towards politically conservative views. To denote the different uses of the term in this dissertation, I use conservative with quotes to note when it is being used as gang members understood the term in relation to gang violence.

[66] David Dawley, *A Nation of Lords: The Autobiography of the Vice Lords*, 2nd ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1992), 103–107.

[67] Keiser, *Vice Lords*, 70–71.

The gang's members fully embraced this outlook by 1968. In a letter to Mayor Richard Daley, the Conservative Vice Lords stressed that they "want[ed] the people of Chicago to respect us as businessmen and concerned citizens." The Lords framed their conversion not as a repudiation of the gang, but as a legitimate way to use gangs for good. "We are attempting to direct the misspent energies of streetfighting to the constructive development of social and economic programs," they argued.[68] And, like other reformed gangs, the Lords emphasized that their utility rested on the fact that only *they* could talk to hardcore youth because only *they* understood youth problems.[69] The appeals and rhetoric paid off. The Conservative Vice Lords received money from Sears Roebuck, Western Electric, and the Rockefeller Foundation, which the gang used to open a restaurant, clothing shop, employment service, and the House of Lords recreation center. They ran a beautification project to plant "grass where there was glass," cleaning up their neighborhood. The Lords also received a grant from the Department of Labor to run courses on business and black history at the House of Lords.[70] That same year, the Vice Lords helped plan the YOU conference where Vice Lord leader Warren Gilmore was elected head of the new national organization.

Gilmore and all of the delegates at the first YOU conference understood that YOU's primary goal was to eventually secure funding from the OEO. In fact, one of the unspoken reasons for the May conference was to develop a program proposal to submit to the OEO's funding office. YOU's hopes were not unfounded. OEO officials told RGS

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[68] Quoted in Dawley, *Nation of Lords*, 122.
[69] Ibid., 128.
[70] Keiser, *Vice Lords*, 9; Dawley, *Nation of Lords*, xvi, 113, 122, 128; Conservative Vice Lords, "Report to the Public."

advisors at the beginning of the conference that "YOU had a bandwagon going" at the

agency; all the YOU delegates needed to do was submit an acceptable request for funds.[71]

The influence of the OEO and these outside forces is hard to gauge since YOU did not

keep minutes of the closed-door sessions. But a close look at the difference between

primary accounts of the conference and the final report submitted to the OEO uncovers

how official pronouncements written for the expressed purpose of garnering federal

support were modified to make the organization favorable to Washington. Youth

members who attended the sessions reported that in the early days of the conference "We

just degenerated into a black-militant gathering….[due to] a nonconstructive alliance

[who] think all you have to do is stay militant and violent enough, and *ipso facto*, change

will come." Others seconded this recollection and emphasized that Black and Latino

Power was the phrase on everyone's mind because many of the same gangs that had

already embraced Black Power on their own attended the conference. By the end of the

weekend, though, other voices had prevailed and eventually constructed an organization

that made community improvement—not race pride—their goal.[72] In fact, the literature

printed by YOU after the conference was completely devoid of minority-power slogans

and militancy. Instead, YOU used the commonly articulated argument that the group

would be a cure for rioting.[73] Emphasizing YOU's willingness to work with federal

officials, the final report submitted to the government recognized that "The future of

Y.O.U. is actually in the hands of the citizens of this country and its elected

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[71] Quoted in Poston, *Gang and the Establishment*, 133, 143.
[72] Quoted in Ibid., 141.
[73] Ferber, "It's YOU," 17; "Youth Organizations United," 3, 18.

representatives. For even in the most idealistic situations, organizations like Y.O.U. cannot operate without a fiscal base and civic support."[74]

Such a dramatic difference between the closed-door meetings and public pronouncements demonstrated that YOU understood the political reality. If it hoped to secure federal funding, it would need to cooperate with the federal government. The gangs also knew that in the tense climate of 1968, hints of Black or Latino Power in their official pronouncements would make the federal government hesitant to continue its relationship with YOU. Yet the fact that Black Power rhetoric was so strong during conference meetings is important. It emphasizes the effects that race consciousness and philosophical dialogues were having on streets gangs. It also suggests that not all gangs who took part in YOU agreed with the organization's belief that suppressing minority power rhetoric was necessary for obtaining support and recognition.

When YOU submitted its proposal to the antipoverty agency, it hoped to follow in the footsteps of its members from the Mission Rebels and RGS. But what YOU really wanted was a federal grant that would match the funds flowing into the Blackstone Rangers of Chicago. In 1967, the Rangers had received a one-million-dollar grant from the OEO, the largest gang grant in history. The Blackstone Rangers, one of the biggest gangs in the country with nearly four thousand members, emerged in 1959 when a group of kids, tired of daily beatings by other gangs, banded together to protect themselves in Chicago's Woodlawn neighborhood. Slowly, through fights and a fierce reputation, the gang grew. By 1964, the gang had become so large that the Stones established the Main

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[74] "Youth Organizations United," 12.

21, a governing council of twenty-one members to organize territory and duties.[75] A year later, the Main 21 created the Ranger Nation, a conglomeration of all the smaller Blackstone Ranger sets in Chicago.[76]

Conflict climaxed in 1966 when an intense war between the Blackstone Rangers and another gang, the Eastside Disciples, began over turf in Woodlawn. By mid July, gangs fought nightly on the streets and tensions escalated further when riots threatened to breakout in the area. When increasing casualties of both gang members and non-gang residents pushed the situation to a crisis point, community activists and city agencies intervened, imploring the gangs to work out their differences.[77] The Blackstone Rangers were the first to contemplate cooperation. Influenced by their intermittent involvement in King's Chicago Movement, many of the Stones' leaders sought some way to cool tensions and curb potential disturbances. The Main 21 held mandatory dances every night at a local church to keep a close eye on younger members who posed the greatest threat of violence. Immediately after the dances, leaders enforced citywide curfews and sent their members directly home. Meanwhile, the Main 21 implemented a 24-hour hotline for residents to report violence. When someone reported an incident, a small number of the gang's leadership visited the location to cool any possible rioting. Through the hotline, the community began to rely on the power of the Main 21 and the ability of gang leaders to talk young men and women out of violent protests.[78] In the fall, the police department

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[75] Richard T. Sale, *The Blackstone Rangers: A Reporter's Account of Time Spent with the Street Gang on Chicago's South Side* (New York: Random House, 1971), 63–64, 76.

[76] John Hall Fish, *Black Power/White Control: The Struggle of The Woodlawn Organization in Chicago* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 119.

[77] Phyl Garland, "The Gang Phenomenon: Big City Headache," *Ebony*, August 1967, 98.

[78] Fish, *Black Power/White Control*, 124; "Gang or Emerging Social Order," *Science News*, July 27, 1968, 80.

finally convinced the Stones and the Disciples to meet for truce talks. Although the ceasefire only lasted a few days, the mediation was an important turning point for the Stones. At a press conference heralding the truce, the Stones expressed their growing concern for the community and a desire to stop the gang's violence.[79]

With momentum for change churning among the gang's members and recognizing that outsiders were increasingly interested in the gang, the Blackstone Rangers staged an incredibly successful musical production "Opportunity Please Knock." It was so popular that the *Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* featured it on national television and *Ebony* devoted a full-color article in its August 1967 issue.[80] Intrigued by the publicity, Democrats in Congress took note, especially Senator Jacob Javits of New York who dined with the Main 21 and became one of the Stones' strongest champions on Capitol Hill.[81]

But Javitz was not the first federal official who noticed the Stones; the OEO had already come knocking. A year earlier the OEO had received a grant proposal from another group in the neighborhood, The Woodlawn Organization (TWO). TWO was an adult-run community group that spearheaded campaigns on behalf of Woodlawn to stop the encroachment of the University of Chicago and to dismantle the Daley Machine that ruled Chicago politics. TWO also focused on quality of life issues affecting Woodlawn residents, especially rising crime and violence at the hands of the Blackstone Rangers.[82]

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[79] "Organization Men," *Newsweek*, June 5, 1967, 34; "5 Shot in Chicago after Truce Pledge," *New York Times*, July 23, 1966, 9.

[80] "'Opportunity Please Knock': Youth Gang Produces Lively Show with Guidance of Oscar Brown Jr.," *Ebony*, August 1967, 104–107.

[81] 90 Cong. Rec., 233335–233336 (1967); *Examination of the War on Poverty*, 4230; "Organization Men," 34.

[82] Fish, *Black Power/White Control*, 9, 16, 21–24, 127.

In August 1966, TWO had submitted a proposal to the OEO for a project that would

"rehabilitate" the Blackstone Rangers, but the OEO had declined funding. Given the

ongoing ideological shift in the federal government in regards to gangs, antipoverty

officials in Washington were not interested in a program directed *at* the gang. They

wanted to see a program directed *by* the gang.[83]

Realizing that it would have to work with the Stones, TWO started to build

bridges by meeting with the gang. In the fall of 1966 and early spring of 1967, Jerome

Bernstein, OEO Deputy Director of Manpower, stepped in and met repeatedly with TWO

and the Stones to further cultivate the relationship. Insiders at TWO recalled Bernstein as

the most vocal advocate of the Stones' involvement in the process. The OEO wanted a

gang-run program, and Bernstein was going to get it.[84] At these meetings, the Stones, the

OEO, and TWO negotiated the framework for the project and finally submitted a

proposal to Washington in April. The final product was a training program that would

place eight hundred gang members in area jobs. One of the major changes to the original

TWO proposal was that gang leaders, not professionals, would constitute the majority of

the program's staff and teachers.[85] This decision reflected the antipoverty agencies'

evolving belief in the power of organized gangs to direct their own programs and was

even expressed in language the Stones themselves added to the proposal. In these

additions, the Stones stressed that the gang provided gang members with a sense of

belonging, identity, and security. They also emphasized that instead of requiring young

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[83] US Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders: Hearings before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Part 9*, 90th Cong. 2nd sess., June 20–21, 1968, (hereafter cited as *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, Part 9*), 1810; Fish, *Black Power/White Control*, 135.
[84] Fish, *Black Power/White Control*, 131–134.
[85] *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders*, *Part 9*, 1811.

people to abandon the gang, the gang could be used to motivate change in gang members

and in the community. "Existing programs," the Stones argued,

> tend to require that the member make a choice between continued
> involvement with his [gang] or participation in the program. When
> confronted with that choice, the youth turns to his organization….
> because his membership represents one of the few successful
> experiences he has had during his life in the ghetto….the various
> programs fail to capitalize upon the nature of the organization and
> to take into account the unique functions it performs for its
> members.[86]

On May 31, 1967, the OEO officially handed over $927,431 to the Blackstone Rangers,

its largest gang grant ever.

A few successes were immediately apparent. Of the 499 members who enrolled,

the program matched 83 with jobs. Attendance rates at the Stones' training center

hovered between 65 and 70 percent, far better rates than those of the public schools in

Woodlawn.[87] However, there were challenges. The 499 enrollees fell far short of the 800

the OEO and Stones had hoped for. Most enrollees came to the program so poorly

prepared in reading and math that it was impossible to find many of them jobs even after

a year of remedial classes. In addition, the gang members who staffed the center had

educational shortcomings of their own, which made it difficult to address students'

weaknesses.[88]

While problems emerged in the classroom, successes in the street were more

obvious. As a precondition for funding, the OEO demanded an effective truce between

the Disciples and the Stones. The pressure from the government and the promise of a

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[86] Fish, *Black Power/White Control*, 136–137.

[87] *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders*, *Part 9*, 1814, 1845.

[88] Ibid., 1814; James F. Short, "Youth, Gangs and Society: Micro- and Macrosociological Processes," *Sociological Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (Winter 1974): 16.

grant did the trick. The gangs called the first effective ceasefire in April before funding

commenced, which resulted in a dramatic drop in juvenile homicides.[89] Furthermore,

during the year of funding, gang experts saw a noticeable drop in crime and arrest rates in

the area while similar rates jumped around the city.[90] The OEO further influenced the

gang by emphasizing the government's expectation that the program would curb riots. In

a May 1967 memo to the OEO, Bernstein stressed that the agency needed the Stones'

grant because the "program was uniquely designed to meet the need now before the

'long, hot summer' agitates the youth of the community."[91] The Blackstone Rangers,

fully aware of the OEO's goals, tried to deliver on their end of the bargain. First, the

Stones bussed young gang members out of the city for summer picnics to keep youth off

the streets.[92] The Stones and their rivals the Disciples were also "very helpful," according

to police, in cooling tensions after a white merchant shot an African American man in the

neighborhood.[93] In September, the Chicago police department credited the gang with

defusing a volatile situation at Forestville High School where "a potentially dangerous

crowd" began throwing rocks and shouting at officers. When the Stones heard about the

disturbance, Herbert "Thunder" Stevens of the Main 21 rushed to the school. Stevens

shouted at the crowd "when I come back, I don't want to see anybody on the streets. I

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[89] Fish, *Black Power/White Control*, 138.

[90] Irving A. Spergel, *Evaluation of the Youth Manpower Demonstration of the Woodlawn Organization* (Chicago: School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago, 1968), 315.

[91] Quoted in *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders*, *Part 9* 1835.

[92] James Alan McPherson, "Chicago's Blackstone Rangers Part I," *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1969, 74–84.

[93] *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders*, *Part 9*, 1844; "What Next?," *Time*, August 11, 1967, 21–24; "Youth Gangs in a New Role," *Chicago Sun-Times*, August 6, 1967, 19.

want these streets cleared." Fifteen minutes later, the crowd was gone.[94] Journalists in

major cities picked up the stories, and the OEO was ecstatic about the good publicity.[95]

The real test came, though, in April 1968 in the wake of Martin Luther King Jr.'s

assassination. Upon hearing the news, Jeff Fort and David Barksdale, presidents of the

Stones and the Disciples respectively, called a meeting of both gangs near the University

of Chicago. An estimated four thousand gang members met at the location to show their

support for King and to emphasize their decision to keep their neighborhoods peaceful.

Nervous policemen strapped with riot gear patrolled the edges of the crowd as the gang

leaders voiced their desire to show "that [the gangs] could police South Side youth

without troops."[96] After they pledged peace, the gangs returned immediately to their turfs

to patrol the streets. As Jeff Fort recalled later, "lots of us, we was out on the streets all

night long, that first night, telling them younger ones, 'Man don't do it, brother. Go on

home. Stay off the street, man. It ain't gonna do no good you being out here.'"[97] While

other areas of Chicago erupted with protests that week, violence was noticeably absent in

Woodlawn, the Stone's turf, which contained the city's largest concentration of black

residents.[98] Spurred by a need to please the OEO, a desire to show respect for King, and

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[94] Quoted in McPherson, "Chicago's Blackstone Rangers Part I"; US Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders: Hearings before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Part 10*, 90th Cong. 2nd sess., June 24–26, 1968, 2109–2110; "South Side Crowd Stones Police as Protest Rally Sets Off Uproar," *Chicago Tribune*, September 15, 1967, 1; "Department Commendations," *Chicago Police Star* 9, no. 2 (February 1968): 18.

[95] Memorandum Steve Clapp to Edgar May, 15 September 1967, OEO Office of Inspection Collection.

[96] Donald Janson, "Five Negro Militants Accused of Arson in Chicago Rioting," *New York Times*, April 9, 1968, 36.

[97] Quoted in Sale, *Blackstone Rangers*, 100.

[98] The Stones' patrols provide at least one powerful explanation for what historian Janet L. Abu-Loughod calls the "puzzling anomaly" of the peacefulness of Chicago's South Side after King's

the need to save their own community from destruction, the Stones kept the streets quiet.

The OEO's efforts with the Blackstone Rangers and other gangs paved the way

for local governments and national corporations to do the same. Over the next few years

in New York, the mayor's office funded a reformed gang known as the Ghetto Brothers

that established a neighborhood clean up campaign in the Bronx, and the city's

Department of Parks worked with other gangs on the Lower East Side.[99] The city council

also supported plans by a coalition of gangs and students to build a recreation center on

the Upper West Side.[100] Los Angeles's city hall paid for a variety of programs that

successfully work with gangs interested in community improvement.[101] Private

organizations contributed as well. The list of research foundations that supported gang

programs included venerable groups such as the Ford, Astor, and Kettering Foundations.

The University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia funded the Young Great Society, yet

another group of gang members who organized job training and education programs

using the rhetoric of the War on Poverty.[102] Celebrities interested in other social

movements clamored to help, too. Gangs received support from Sammy Davis Jr. and

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assassination. Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Race, Space, and Riots in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 93; Judy Stone, "'The Best Thing We Knew Was Gang War'," *New York Times*, October 13, 1968, D16; Amanda I. Seligman, "'But Burn— No': The Rest of the Crowd in Three Civil Disorders in 1960s Chicago," *Journal of Urban History* 37, no. 230 (March 2011): 237–240; Spergel, *Evaluation,* 320–325.

[99] Martin Gansberg, "200 Youths in Bronx Help Clean a Section of Crotona Park East," *New York Times*, October 31, 1971, 42; Morris Kaplan, "Harlem Dropouts Train to Build Parks," *New York Times*, November 17, 1968, 64.

[100] Earl Caldwell, "Recreation Center Is Proposed by Youths of Upper West Side," *New York Times*, February 24, 1969, 41.

[101] "$283,000 Outlay for Youth Jobs Tentatively Ok'd," *Los Angeles Times*, July 7, 1967, A1.

[102] Pennsylvania Crime Commission, Department of Justice, *A Report on the Inquiry into Gang Violence in Philadelphia,* July 31, 1969, 27; Russell L. Ackoff, "A Black Ghetto's Research on a University," *Operations Research* 18, no. 5 (October 1970): 763–767; Barry Krisberg, *The Gang and the Community* (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1975).

Sidney Poitier.[103] Meanwhile, major corporations, including Standard Oil, Western

Electric, Shell, and Sears, contributed to gang-run community programs. These corporate

supporters had a variety of motivations. Some honestly supported civil rights initiatives

while others were spurred by fear of further urban unrest. Still others showed interest in

the profits that might be possible by partnering with urban youth to better understand the

consumption patterns of inner-city residents, especially adolescents.[104] Regardless of

their motivations, corporations and their involvement demonstrated how far the idea of

gangs as community development organizations had spread.

The federal government's support for gang-run programs during Johnson's

presidency was a new and daring path for the national government. It represented the

culmination of pressure from academics that had captured the ear of liberal policymakers

during the Kennedy Administration as well as the example set by civil rights activists. It

was also made possible by gang members who agreed to align themselves with the

OEO's vision. Because of all of these actors, the federal government pursued a gang

intervention program that was far removed from the consensus approach of the 1950s.

Yet these efforts were short-lived. By the early 1970s, YOU and its member

organizations would be fighting to stay alive. What caused this dramatic reversal when

these early experiments seemed so promising? The answer lies in the role that the

conservative "law and order" movement came to play in national politics. As the OEO

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[103] "YOU Nine Months Report."

[104] Anthony Ripley, "Negro Youth Groups Enlist Aid of Urban America's Trustees," *New York Times*, June 10, 1968, 36; John A. Hamilton, "'Mr. Mountain, You Must Get Involved!'," *New York Times*, June 17, 1968, 38.

mounted its campaign for gang programs, a second group of Washington policymakers set out to stymie its efforts. Behind them were the police officers and law enforcement officials who felt that federal agencies had gone too far. The battle that followed shaped both the narrative of "law and order" and the mistaken belief, still common today, that postwar liberal programs were entirely ineffective in the face of crime.

Chapter 4

Blue Power: "Law and Order," the Police, and Gang Violence, 1967–1976

"Law enforcement is testing its political muscle, emboldened by the easily sensed mood of a public demanding domestic tranquility at any price. The police claim they can provide instant peace of mind—the slogan is 'law and order' and until their campaign collapses in futility, the police will push even harder for complete control of law enforcement." – The Nation[1]

"I just don't get it," the police officer told writer R.T. Sale. "The country's all wrong, we're all wrong—the working man. What's wrong with me except I had to work for everything I got?" Sale had come to Chicago in 1968 to study the growing importance of the Blackstone Rangers in federal politics and street violence. It was a Wednesday evening in July; Sale and his photographer parked their car and grabbed their equipment to spend yet another night on the streets. Quickly, a patrol car pulled behind them. The officer in the driver's seat beckoned them to approach. He asked their business and, upon learning that they were there to study the gang, the policeman offered his opinion. He explained that like other workingmen he had been cheated by the government. While *he* had worked six days a week in an ice cream factory as a young man, the teens in the gang got free money. Now that he had moved up into the police department, *his* hard-earned salary subsidized what he saw as criminals and cheats. "With all these government handouts they get, they don't have to work," the cop told Sale. "Look, so they have been discriminated against. No one's denying that. OK. But be nice. Gain respect. Show that you're as good as a white man. I mean, these things [that I have] like success—they were won through hard work. Effort. Not through violence." Looking towards the gang's

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[1] Ed Cray, "The Politics of Blue Power," *Nation*, April 21, 1969, 496.

headquarters, the officer warned, "Well, I'm just telling you, they better not push us too far. Otherwise, someone…will step up and show them who's boss."[2]

The federal government's decision to chart a more liberal course in the 1960s for gang intervention through the War on Poverty angered most police officers. As this chapter will demonstrate, the police understood that through such measures government officials were signaling that they approved of sociologists' and civil rights activists' approaches. Doing so simultaneously undermined law enforcements' authority over the issue and upset the balance that police had negotiated with detached workers on the street in the late 1950s. Law enforcement in cities across the country considered the OEO's efforts a direct affront to police power when it came to controlling gangs and gang-related violence. Police officers believed that the OEO's intervention was a symptom of larger and more profound political and social changes of the decade. Many of these changes left law enforcement feeling anxious about their abilities to fight crime, their status within society, and their conservative worldview.

But as the Chicago patrolman warned Sale, the police weren't about to passively accept these changes. Officers challenged what they saw as threats to their profession and their conservative values by politically organizing and intervening in national politics to a degree not seen in decades. Police officers' political mobilization grew out of their understanding of their position in the larger society. At times, they identified with the self-styled majority: law-abiding, middle-class, white Americans who worked hard and paid their taxes. At other times, the police saw themselves as an exclusive group

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[2] Richard T. Sale, *The Blackstone Rangers: A Reporter's Account of Time Spent with the Street Gang on Chicago's South Side* (New York: Random House, 1971), 108.

separated by the danger of their work and by the attacks they faced from protestors, the courts, the press, and the public. This duality would become central to police politics, and through it police officers would successfully politicize "law and order." On one hand, the police used their exclusive status to set themselves apart as crime experts best suited to draft gang intervention strategies. On the other, officers' majority status helped them identify with the Silent Majority, a label Richard Nixon used in his presidential campaign to mobilize white, middle- and working-class Americans angered by the changes of the 1960s. Police officers used the rhetoric of the Silent Majority to secure Republican politicians' support and the support of American voters at large. By pursuing this two-pronged approach, cops simultaneously cultivated their power to shape debates about crime and built political bridges with groups outside of their profession. Ultimately, the marriage of "expert image" and "regular Joe" ensured that "law and order" politics resonated deeply with American voters who had come to expect professional guidance in policy formation but simultaneously celebrated populist sentiments. Because of these efforts, police officers found a powerful political voice.

Police officers also became vocal critics of the War on Poverty's form of crime control. They advocated more prisons, more police, and more federal funds for criminal justice, all policies identified with "law and order" and the postwar rise of the carceral state. Postwar historiography has largely ignored these officers' political activity.[3]

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[3] For examples, see Nancy Marion, *A History of Federal Crime Control Initiatives, 1960–1993* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994); Robert Mason, *Richard Nixon and the Quest for a New Majority* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Heather Ann Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History," *Journal of American History* 97, no. 3 (December 2010): 703–734; Stuart A. Scheingold, *The Politics of Street Crime: Criminal Process and Cultural Obsession* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991); Dennis D. Loo and Ruth-Ellen M. Grimes, "Polls,

Historians and political scientists primarily use top-down analyses that portray the police as merely the objects or unwitting tools of powerful politicians.[4] The only exceptions to this rule have been studies of police activism against community review boards and in support of better pay.[5] Yet police officers did more than just fight for autonomy and salaries. They shaped a widespread political movement and were primary players in the politicization of crime nationally.[6] In fact, the conservative politicians whom scholars credit with building the carceral state actually depended on politically mobilized police officers to build the "law and order" movement. In the area of gang prevention, cops provided the expert testimony that doomed many liberal gang initiatives. Police officers intentionally targeted programs such as the Blackstone Ranger training school in Chicago not because the program failed to prevented crime, but because law enforcement fundamentally disagreed with the program's premise. Through their attacks, officers gave

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Politics, and Crime: The Law and Order Issue of the 1960s," *Western Criminology Review* 5, no. 1 (January 2004): 50–67; Vesla M. Weaver, "Frontlash: Race and the Development of Punitive Crime Policy," *Studies in American Political Development* 21, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 230–265; Katherine Beckett, *Making Crime Pay: Law and Order in Contemporary American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Michael W. Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).
[4] For examples, see Sidney L. Harring, *Policing a Class Society: The Experience of American Cities, 1865–1915* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983); James Q. Wilson, *Varieties of Police Behavior: The Management of Law and Order in Eight Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968).
[5] For examples, see Hervey A. Juris and Peter Feuille, "The Impact of Police Unions: Summary Report," in *The Ambivalent Force: Perspectives on the Police*, ed. Arthur Niederhoffer and Abraham S. Blumberg (Hinsdale, IL: Dryden Press, 1976), 385–393; Dennis A. Deslippe, "'Do Whites Have Rights?': White Detroit Policemen and 'Reverse Discrimination' Protests in the 1970s," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 3 (December 2004): 932–960.
[6] Contemporaries did not approach police activism with the same blinders that historians have. For example, sociologist and congressional advisor Jerome Skolnick stressed in 1969 that police campaigns for better benefits were distinctly different from police efforts to shape social policy. These efforts to shape policy, Skolnick argued, posed the greatest problem in politics and the most distinctive departure from police traditions. Jerome Skolnick, *The Politics of Protest* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), 274, 281–282; Leonard Ruchelman, *Police Politics: A Comparative Study of Three Cities* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1974), 23.

Richard Nixon a persuasive platform in 1968 that stressed the shortcomings of liberals'

crime fighting efforts and the War on Poverty. Police officers also supported conservative

politicians at the polls, ensuring the rise of the "law and order" movement. Finally,

policemen used the gang issue to run for office themselves on anti-crime platforms. Once

elected mayors and legislators, they would shape municipal approaches to gangs that

favored punishment over cooperation, ushering in decades of tough-on-gang policies.[7]

Police officers were important grassroots sources of "law and order" rhetoric. Their

efforts explain the carceral state's electoral allure and the rightward shift of crime politics

in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Under Siege: Police Anxieties

Police officers' political activity in postwar America was a definite break from the

past. When the police field first emerged in nineteenth-century America, alderman in

cities across the country appointed police officers to the force. Once a member of the

police department, an officer was an intermediary between politicians and the

community, helping residents access jobs and social services offered by political

machines. As both the beneficiaries and brokers of patronage, these early policemen were

integral to urban politics and corruption. Progressive reformers at the turn of the century

tried to remove police officers from the political arena by instituting civil service exams

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[7] Historian Eric Schneider's work has acknowledged the fundamental shift in gang prevention
approaches after the 1970s but links it solely to gang involvement in gun violence and drug sales
at the end of the decade. I argue here that the transformation began earlier and that it also had
political roots. Eric C. Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings: Youth Gangs in
Postwar New York* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 189.

and barring the police from publically supporting political candidates.[8] In an 1892

Massachusetts Supreme Court Case, Judge Oliver Wendell Holmes famously supported a

patrolman's termination after the officer solicited donations for a political organization.

"The petitioner may have a constitutional right to talk politics," Holmes opined, "but he

has no constitutional right to be a policeman." Holmes's decision set a national precedent

that largely kept policemen from overt political campaigning for nearly eighty years.[9]

But police officers' banishment from politics abruptly changed course in the

1960s. In this period, the police were a fairly homogeneous group with a distinct identity

and worldview. The noisy halls and locker rooms of police precincts were home to

mostly white men who had grown up in working-class, urban homes headed by factory

workers and former cops. With only a high school education, recruits headed to the police

academy where they trained for the force. For most, becoming a police officer was a

means to join the middle class. Law enforcement offered the steady pay, the social

acceptance, and the job security needed to buy houses outside of the city and to send

children to college.[10] But officers' newfound status was vulnerable.[11] Police officers

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[8] For the role of political machines and reformers in early policing, see Samuel Walker, *A Critical History of Police Reform: The Emergence of Professionalism* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1977); Harlan Hahn, *Urban America and Its Police: From the Postcolonial Era through the Turbulent 1960s* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2003), 3–11; Wilbur R. Miller, *Cops and Bobbies: Police Authority in New York and London, 1830–1870* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999); Harring, *Policing a Class Society*; Richard C. Lindberg, *To Serve and Collect: Chicago Politics and Police Corruption from the Lager Beer Riot to the Summerdale Scandal* (New York: Praeger, 1991); Stacy K. McGoldrick and Andrea McArdle, eds., *Uniform Behavior: Police Localism and National Politics* (Gordonsville, VA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Eric H. Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America, 1860–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[9] *McAuliffe v. Mayor of New Bedford*, 155 Mass. 216, esp. 220 (1892).

[10] David C. Perry and Paula A. Sornoff, *Politics at the Street Level: The Select Case of Police Administration and the Community* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1973), 24; Robert C. Wadman and William Thomas Allison, *To Protect and to Serve: A History of Police in America*

resided precariously near the bottom of the middle class, and postwar declines in law enforcements' pay relative to other occupations compounded the problem.[12] Cops lived in working-class neighborhoods that were often the first to face racial integration pressures. And the policing profession itself became a public battleground for minority inclusion in the 1960s. For cops and other Americans on the slippery bottom of the middle class, the social advances of minorities and the poor appeared to be a zero-sum game—it seemed obvious to white cops that they would be the losers.[13]

Unsurprisingly, the police intensely guarded their status. One example was police officers' disapproval of civil rights movements and public protests. In a 1968 survey of eleven majority-white police departments, researchers found that 60 percent of officers felt that African Americans were pushing too fast for their rights.[14] A survey of the general public found that 58 percent of voters shared the same opinion.[15] Voicing a common fear among some white Americans, one New York policeman told a researcher, "Blacks have more rights than they ever had and they want more. They don't want to be

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(New York: Prentice Hall, 2003), 144; Arthur Niederhoffer, "A Study of Police Cynicism" (PhD diss., New York University, 1963), 69; James Sargent Campbell, Joseph R. Sahid, and David P. Stang, *Law and Order Reconsidered: Report of the Task Force on Law and Law Enforcement to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence* (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), 292; James Michael Norris, "An Economic Analysis of the Police Labor Market" (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 1980), 202; Robert Leuci, *All the Centurions: A New York Cop Remembers His Years on the Street, 1961–1981* (New York: William Morrow, 2004), 114.

[11] For a discussion of lower middle-class anxieties, see Barbara Ehrenreich, *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989).

[12] Skolnick, *Politics of Protest*, 252–253.

[13] Max Gunther, "Cops in Politics: A Threat to Democracy?," in *The Police Rebellion: A Quest for Blue Power*, ed. William J. Bopp (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1971), 66; Jacob Chwast, "Value Conflicts in Law Enforcement," in Niederhoffier and Blumberg, *Ambivalent Force,* 139.

[14] W. Eugene Groves and Peter H. Rossi, "Police Perception of a Hostile Ghetto: Realism or Projection," in *Police in Urban Society*, ed. Harlan Hahn (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1970), 89.

[15] *Harris Survey*, October 1969, iPOLL Databank (USHARRIS.69OCT.R6).

equal to whites, they want to be superior to whites!"[16] When minority protests turned

violent during the long hot summers of the 1960s, police overwhelmingly blamed black

criminality and militancy, discounting claims that the uprisings had roots in justified

grievances against political and social inequality.[17] National opinion polls showed that

Americans, both black and white, largely agreed and believed that participation in riots

should be a federal crime.[18] The police abhorred the antiwar unrest on college campuses,

too. They felt that the upper-class students who blocked campus buildings and challenged

police barricades were attacking American values and wasting the educational

opportunities that law enforcement families coveted.[19]

Similarly, the police turned against the War on Poverty and other "permissive"

liberal programs. Like many white Americans who watched riots on television and shook

their heads at growing poverty expenditures, white officers saw themselves as part of the

"law-abiding majority" who worked while "criminally-inclined minorities" received

federal support.[20] Inherent in these proclamations was an attachment to the ideals of a

white, working- and middle-class America, which by the 1960s had begun to embrace

more conservative social and political values as they tried to safeguard the rights and

privileges won during the New Deal and prosperity of the 1950s.[21] Indeed, the police

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[16] Nicholas Alex, *New York Cops Talk Back: A Study of a Beleaguered Minority* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1976), 130.

[17] Hahn, *Urban America and Its Police*, 132.

[18] *Harris Survey*, October 1966, iPOLL Databank (USHARRIS.101166.R1B).

[19] Seymour Martin Lipset, "Why Cops Hate Liberals—and Vice Versa," *Atlantic Monthly*, March 1969, 82; A. James Reichley, "The Way to Cool the Police Rebellion," *Fortune*, December 1968, 109–111.

[20] Skolnick, *Politics of Protest*, 259.

[21] For more on the roots and diverse elements of this evolving identity and how contemporaries articulated it, see Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 246; Ben Wattenberg and Richard M. Scammon, *The Real*

tended to be slightly more conservative than the average voter.[22] One study of officers

found that many police officers supported political candidates from the more extreme end

of the right, such as the John Birch Society.[23] In a slightly exaggerated but pithy

observation, one criminologist reported to *Time,* "You don't often find a liberal in

policing. And if you do, by the time he's been in awhile-longer, he's going to be voting

for Governor Wallace."[24] One oft-cited example of their conservatism was police

officers' views on juvenile delinquency. In a 1969 study conducted while Wisconsin was

in the heat of a gang panic, the state's police officers heavily endorsed printing the names

of juvenile gang members in the newspaper. While the average Wisconsin voter agreed

that tougher laws were needed, voters strongly disagreed with violating the traditional

anonymity afforded juvenile offenders. Nearly 80 percent of Wisconsin cops also told

researchers that juvenile gang crime could not be fixed by the social services approach

that had become a traditional fixture of gang rehabilitation. Yet only 40 percent of voters

took this conservative stance.[25] While this survey represented only the views of

Wisconsin law enforcement, results from other studies showed that Wisconsin officers

were the norm; the police largely favored punitive policies for juvenile delinquency.[26]

Majority: An Extraordinary Examination of the American Electorate (New York: Coward-McCann, 1970).

[22] Chwast, "Value Conflicts in Law Enforcement," 143.

[23] Skolnick, *Politics of Protest*, 282.

[24] While police officers did make up a large number of George Wallace's supporters in 1968, a review of police journals (such as *Law and Order, Police Chief, Peace Officer, Minnesota Police Journal, Chicago Police Star,* and *Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association Bulletin*) indicates that police organizations and police officers primarily supported Richard Nixon. Moreover, the more conservative magazines that supported Wallace in 1968, such as *Valor*, embraced Nixon in 1972. "The Police Need Help," *Time*, October 4, 1968, 44.

[25] William P. Lentz, "Police Attitudes towards Delinquency Control," *Law and Order* 17, no. 6 (June 1969): 42–44.

[26] Niederhoffer, "Study of Police Cynicism," 268.

Although, the police generally shared the values of the majority, at times officers

felt excluded from the mainstream. This feeling primarily stemmed from police officers'

perception that the press, minorities, and the courts targeted law enforcement in unique

ways. In the words of one New York officer, "the public doesn't really appreciate what a

policeman is trying to do today; the press is against him, the courts are against him, the

people are on his back."[27] In an early 1960s study, nearly 75 percent of officers claimed

that newspapers "enjoyed" reporting stories of police misconduct.[28] Images of police

using dogs against protestors in Birmingham or swinging clubs outside of the Chicago

Democratic Convention made officers feel they had become the symbol of evil in protest

dramas. Being cast—in many cases rightfully—as the transgressors hardened police

officers' siege mentality.[29] So, too, did police brutality charges from civil rights groups,

urban youth, and gangs.[30] Contemporary and historical studies have proven that anti-

police brutality campaigns were necessary across the country to overcome police

departments' historical violence against minorities and the poor.[31] But, importantly,

police officers did not perceive their own culpability. Ninety-five percent of white

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[27] Alex, *New York Cops*, 140.

[28] Niederhoffer, "Study of Police Cynicism," 284.

[29] William A. Westley, *Violence and the Police: A Sociological Study of Law, Custom, and Morality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970), xiii–xvii.

[30] William J. Bopp, "The Patrolmen in Boston," in Bopp, *Police Rebellion*, 177.

[31] For historical works on police brutality in the twentieth century, see Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), 325–332; Edward J. Escobar, *Race, Police, and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Marilynn S. Johnson, *Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York City* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).

officers in 1968 believed that the police treated blacks and whites equally.[32] Most cops

felt that *they* were the real victims of brutality. To support this contention, they pointed to

student demonstrators who sometimes hurled rocks and insults at police officers during

protests. Officers were especially angered by black militants who shouted "Kill the Pigs!"

and whom law enforcement blamed for the rising number of police officers shot on

duty.[33]

Law enforcement saw the courts as another enemy. Beginning in the late 1950s,

the Supreme Court increased restrictions on the police to safeguard the rights of the

accused. Unsurprisingly, officers viewed these changes as a liberal assault on their

profession and as a major challenge to their law enforcement duties. As one officer in

Norfolk, Virginia groused, "You see a guy snatch a purse and you got to recite the

Declaration of Independence at him while you're chasing him. You can't shoot him so

you got to hope he'll start laughing and lose his wind."[34] Bitterness filtered down to the

local level where lower courts seemed to favor short sentences and rehabilitation for

convicted offenders.[35] Juvenile and family courts were particularly infuriating to police

officers tasked with controlling gang violence.[36] In a notable case in New York, three

members of a Brooklyn gang set fire to a building, killing a rival gang member and five

other residents. When a family court judge released the three accused and ordered them

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[32] Groves and Rossi, "Police Perception," 108.

[33] Talmage Powell, "Our Downgraded Police: A National Peril," *Valor* 6 (June 1967): 5; "Killing Cops: The New Terror Tactic," *US News and World Report*, August 21, 1970, 11–13.

[34] Campbell, Sahid, and Stang, *Law and Order Reconsidered*, 69, 288–290.

[35] "Protecting the Innocent Often Protects the Guilty Even More," *Michigan Police Journal* 30 (October 1961): 13; "Editorial," *Valor* 6 (June 1967): 2; Perry and Sornoff, *Politics at the Street Level*, 28.

[36] US Congress, House, *Crime in America: Drug Abuse and Criminal Justice*, *Hearings before the Select Committee on Crime*, 91st Cong., 1st sess., September 25–26, 1969, 263.

to leave the state, the New York Police Department exploded in protest, calling it a symptom of the increasing leniency of the courts and a cause of the gang problem.[37] Law enforcement officials also expressed anger at liberal politicians who appeared to side with these judicial decisions. "The hypocrisy of the whole liberal movement in this country is a cause of our feelings of frustration and anger," complained a patrolman. "The doors are always opened to the criminal. But when it comes to the police they slam the door in our face."[38]

While one might expect that these feelings were confined to white officers, in reality many of these opinions crossed racial lines on the force. Black officers as a whole were not as conservative as whites in the profession, yet studies of black patrolmen showed that they worried about job security, deplored mass uprisings, disagreed with the courts, and felt unsupported by the public, just as white officers did.[39] Black cops were also torn about the War on Poverty. They were less afraid of increasing welfare expenditures than whites, but they did not completely support liberal programs. For example, a black officer from New York remarked that the War on Poverty "was a big hoax."[40] One major difference, however, was that black officers were almost five times as likely as white officers to acknowledge the problem of police brutality. Although African Americans made up a tiny percentage of law enforcement officers nationwide, they did make up a sizeable minority of police departments in cities like Chicago (17 percent of the force), New York (8 percent), and Philadelphia (19 percent) where gang violence

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[37] Michael Knight, "2 Harlem Youths Held in Extortion," *New York Times*, October 17, 1972, 36; "Freeing by Judge of 3 in Fatal Blaze Angers Detectives," *New York Times*, October 10, 1973, 51.

[38] Alex, *New York Cops*, 131.

[39] Groves and Rossi, "Police Perception," 90, 106, 108, 111.

[40] Patricia Lynden, "Why I'm a Cop," *Atlantic Monthly*, March 1969, 105.

attracted police attention.[41] Thus black officers who shared the same concerns as white

officers became integral to the fight over gang-related policies.

Feeling attacked from all sides, the police came to see themselves as a

disadvantaged group. Although most police officers did not agree with the demands and

tactics of civil rights and Black Power groups, they recognized that minority political

rhetoric had become a useful strategy for drawing public and federal attention. "In the

last few years," wrote a popular police journal, "our Republic has heard the voices of

many who have claimed unfair treatment. We have run the field from the underprivileged

Blacks, the welfare families, women's lib., to the homosexuals who want to do their thing

too. Along the way we should have discovered something…policemen have civil rights

just like everyone else….After all the police are the most abused and misunderstood

minorities that we have in our country [sic]."[42] Like other groups who watched African

Americans successfully pressure policymakers to ensure equal treatment, white cops

appropriated the frameworks of the black civil rights movement.[43] The police called for a

"Blue Power" movement to increase police officers' political and social power in the face

of attacks on their status.[44] In doing so, they copied the very campaigns demanding Black

Power that they also attacked, an irony not lost on observers at the time.[45] The police also

celebrated the slogan "Pigs Are Beautiful," which used a common Black Power slogan

("Black is Beautiful") to undermine a derogatory label black activists used against the

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[41] Kenneth Reich, "Nation's State Police Remain Largely White," *New York Times*, December 16, 1970, 9; Alex Poinsett, "The Dilemma of the Black Policeman," *Ebony*, May 1971, 123–131; Johnson, *Street Justice*, 25–27.
[42] Donald O. Shultz, "Police Vote Power," *Enforcement Journal* 11, no. 3 (September 1972): 13.
[43] For a discussion of how various groups used minority rhetoric for political purposes, see John D. Skrentny, *Minority Rights Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).
[44] Bob Houston, "Blue Power," *Enforcement Journal* 10, no. 3 (June 1971): 21–22.
[45] Hans Toch, "Cops & Blacks: Warring Minorities," *Nation*, April 21, 1969, 491.

police ("Pigs").[46] Police offers found a rationale for entering politics by thinking of themselves as a beleaguered "minority"—a group that needed special, legislated protections to achieve equal citizenship rights—in an era when such rhetoric successfully won rights for others.[47]

Surprisingly, police officers' contradictory identities both as a self-perceived "minority group" seeking "Blue Power" and as a legitimate part of the white, middle-class majority did not raise questions in the press or in police publications. This may have partly stemmed from shared grievances: the groups that threatened the police "minority group" also threatened the white majority. But more significant was that although the police *felt* that they were under attack, most Americans actually sided with them. While 50 to 70 percent of officers believed that the average American had little respect for law enforcement, a majority of Americans supported the police fight against brutality charges and against the Supreme Court.[48] Most importantly, more than 70 percent of Americans claimed that they had a "great deal of respect" for law enforcement, a percentage that climbed throughout the 1960s.[49] Although polling data is not always an exact

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[46] Paul Simon, "Pigs Are Beautiful!," *Minnesota Police Journal* 42, no. 3 (June 1970): 15; F.G. MacAloon, "What's in a Name?," *Law and Order* 18, no. 9 (September 1970): 128; "The Country's Cops Finally Discover That Pigs Are...," *Life*, July 31, 1970, 64–66; Art Glickman, "Cops Take the Sting Out of the Term 'Pig' by Using It Themselves," *Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 1970.

[47] Alex, *New York Cops*, 188; Campbell, Sahid, and Stang, *Law and Order Reconsidered*, 295; Deslippe, "'Do Whites Have Rights?'".

[48] Hahn, *Urban America and Its Police*, 97; *Gallup Poll*, November 1970, iPOLL Databank (USGALNEW.70LAW.R13); *Gallup Poll*, April 1965, iPOLL Databank (USGALLUP.709.Q011B); *Gallup Poll*, August 1967, iPOLL Databank (USGALLUP.749.Q13B); *ORC Public Opinion Index*, December 1966, iPOLL Databank (USORC.67JAN.R4).

[49] *Gallup Poll*, April 1965, iPOLL Databank (USGALLUP.709.Q011A); *Gallup Poll*, August 1967, iPOLL Databank (USGALLUP.749.Q13A); *Gallup Poll*, August 1969, iPOLL Databank (USGALNEW.696988.Q27).

measurement of national opinion, such a large majority does suggest that members of the American public did not consider police officers to be outcasts.[50] The police actually had much in common with some segments of the general population.

Police Expertise: From Beleaguered "Minority" to Elite Professionals

In 1969, as police discontent reached a peak, *The Nation* proposed that one solution was to "dealienat[e]" the police and to "depriv[e] them of the stigmas of minority status."[51] *The Nation* was not far off the mark in encapsulating one strategy that law enforcement used. Instead of seeing their "minority" status in negative terms characterized by a loss of rights and influence, police tried to redefine the meaning of "minority" to denote exclusivity and status. Police officers advocated efforts to establish law enforcement as an elite profession with the crime-fighting expertise needed to fix America's growing "law and order" problems. By stressing their uniqueness in terms of professionalism, the police turned their elite status into an asset and lobbied for the punitive policies central to their crime control vision. This process was readily apparent in law enforcement's attempts to reshape gang control programs.

Because of Progressive-era reforms, policing had acquired many of the attributes of a profession by the 1960s, including a body of knowledge that unified the profession, a system of training to teach this knowledge, and a code of ethics regulating members'

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[50] For a discussion of polling accuracy, see Burns W. Roper, "Are Polls Accurate?," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 472 (March 1984): 24–34; Timothy J. Flanagan, "Public Opinion on Crime and Justice: History, Development, and Trends," in *Americans View Crime and Justice: A National Public Opinion Survey*, eds. Timothy J. Flanagan and Dennis R. Longmire (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 6–9.

[51] Toch, "Cops & Blacks," 493.

behavior.[52] Police officers had also established professional societies to organize their

members, although these groups ran the gamut from the elite International Association of

Chiefs of Police (IACP) to fraternal organizations, such as the Patrolmen's Benevolent

Association (PBA) and the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP).[53] Due to these efforts,

postwar Americans regarded policing as more professional than they had in the

nineteenth century. Yet there were limits to this professional recognition. Americans

ranked police officers fifty-fourth in a list of the ninety most professional fields in 1960,

primarily because lawyers and judges ranked higher as authorities in criminal justice.

Officers' limited pay, lack of college education, and relatively low social status

undoubtedly contributed to this ranking.[54] While police were proud to have made the list,

they worried that they weren't ranked higher. "No matter how professionally a job is

done," argued *Police Chief* magazine, "the fact remains that the status of 'professional' is

conferred by a consensus of society. It must be fought for, and it must be earned."[55]

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[52] For a discussion of professionalization and professional status, see Louis Galambos, "Technology, Political Economy, and Professionalization: Central Themes of the Organizational Synthesis," *The Business History Review* 57, no. 4 (Winter 1983): 471–493; Richard H. Hall, *Occupations and the Social Structure* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1969), 72–82, 270, 290, 297.

[53] Sociologists and historians who study professions primarily focus on teachers, doctors, and lawyers. Policing and officers' fight for professional status remains unexplored. The absence of the police from the literature may stem from scholarly debates about whether or not the police, as an arm of the state, can be considered a professional class. However, such abstract discussion had no influence on police officers' self-conception or strategies. Moreover, such distinctions never arose in discussions among voters and the media about police professionalism. For more on this debate, see Hahn, *Urban America and Its Police*, 11–12, 81–82, 91; Institute for the Study of Labor and Economic Crisis, *The Iron Fist and the Velvet Glove: An Analysis of the US Police*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Crime and Social Justice Associates, 1982), 65–67, 70; Ruchelman, *Police Politics*, 2–3.

[54] Hall, *Occupations and the Social Structure*, 270, 290, 297.

[55] J. M. Moynahan, "Am I a Professional?," *Police Chief* 37, no. 2 (February 1970): 24.

To fight for their status as professionals, police undertook a variety of programs.[56] First, law enforcement made numerous calls for college education. Some argued that more schooling would train officers to handle the new legal restrictions enacted by the courts and to efficiently address rising unrest on city streets.[57] Others believed that requiring a college degree would minimize the way professionals in medicine, law, and education spurned law enforcement's claims to professional status.[58] Second, police departments pushed new public relations campaigns, such as Officer Friendly programs and community meetings, to both assuage turbulent relationships with urban residents and publicize law enforcement's new professional image.[59] Police departments even tried an experimental wardrobe change from the traditional military-inspired police uniforms to blue blazers and dress pants. "The purpose," wrote a lieutenant in Florida, "is to erase the years old image of an overweight, red-nosed, dull-witted, and uneducated politically appointed and motivated cop."[60] Because of a blazer program in New Jersey, one police chief happily reported, "We've become respectable—just like doctors, school teachers, and the corner druggist."[61]

At first these professionalization efforts were meant to support law enforcement's demands for better pay and benefits, but the police also realized that professionalism

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[56] For more on the process of raising an occupation's professional status, see Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); Terence Charles Halliday, *Beyond Monopoly: Lawyers, State Crises, and Professional Empowerment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[57] "Need for Improving Police Image and Extended Training Advocated," *Michigan Police Journal* 35 (November 1966): 12.

[58] Nolen W. Freeman, "The Years of Question," *Law and Order* 17, no. 3 (March 1969): 14.

[59] Reginald J. Alden, "Police Public Relations," *Valor* 6, no. 1 (September 1967): 6–8.

[60] James L. Matz, "Our Blue Blazer Program," *Law and Order* 18, no. 11 (November 1970): 22.

[61] Quoted in Victor Czanckas, "An Experiment in Police Uniforms: An Interim Report," *Police Chief* 37, no. 6 (April 1970): 28–29.

offered a solution to political marginalization. By the mid 1960s a few police

organizations had begun to argue that the police should become more political. However,

the appropriate level of political involvement deeply divided officers. On one side were

those who supported overt political lobbying. Some unions publicly championed crime-

related policies, and most of the professional police journals that officers and departments

subscribed to began printing lists of bills under consideration on Capitol Hill. These

journals also distributed lists of legislators and urged readers to write their representatives

to explain law enforcement's views on gun control, the death penalty, suspects' rights,

and sentencing guidelines. These articles conveniently outlined the "correct" view

officers should have on each issue.[62] On the other end of the spectrum were officers who

feared that political involvement would be a step back to the Gilded Age, opening the

police to corruption charges and political reprisals. But some of these hesitant officers

recognized that involvement in crafting legislation could be the answer to many of law

enforcement's complaints, especially as the federal government continued to increase its

involvement in crime politics in the postwar period.[63]

Police officers resolved this standoff by thinking of police work as a professional

enterprise. Offering expert knowledge on legislation is "one of the prices of

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[62] For a representative sample see, "Legislative News/Views: House and Senate Considerate and Understanding," *Peace Officer* 13, no. 9 (September 1969): 24–25; Ed Lewand, "Help Secure Legislation—Make Your Voice Heard," *Peace Officer* 12, no. 3 (March 1970): 15–16; "PCPA Committee Report," *Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association Bulletin* 44, no. 1 (Winter 1975): 6–7; "Death Penalty and Training Supported," *Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association Bulletin* 42, no. 2 (Spring 1973): 7; Richard Feider, "President's Message," *Minnesota Police Journal* 43, no. 1 (February 1971): 5; Joseph L. Donovan, "Make Your Voice Heard!," *Minnesota Police Journal* 39, no. 2 (April 1967): 80–81; "Here Are Your Minnesota Congressmen," *Minnesota Police Journal* 41, no. 1 (February 1969): 15.

[63] Fred Feaker, "Topeka's LIVE Public Relations," *Law and Order* 16, no. 3 (March 1968): 30; Dorothy Fagerstrom, "Personal Political Relations," *Law and Order* 17, no. 3 (March 1969): 28.

professionalism" the FOP's leader argued. "No one would expect school teachers to

remain silent while the Legislature discusses educational policy."[64] In a 1968 issue of *The*

Police Chief, a congressional press secretary explicitly solicited cops' opinions on crime

legislation, "Crime is a new issue and people are terribly unsophisticated about it….It is

up to *you* to teach police issues to the public."[65] All of these writers stressed the new

urgency of crime issues in the face of rising crime rates. They also recognized that many

groups, from reformers and rights activists to politicians and journalists, seemed to be

taking the lead in the debate. But, law enforcement argued, legislators and voters needed

expert guidance, and no one was better equipped to help than the police. Warming to the

suggestion, the police journal *Law and Order*—one of the staunchest resisters to police

political activity—rationalized, "Keeping duly elected legislators informed of what type

of legislation is needed for effective, efficient law enforcement is not politics, it's

common sense. Legislators are not clairvoyant or omniscient. They need accurate

information and thoughtful expressions of opinion concerning police work."[66] While *Law*

and Order's editors may not have considered professional advising to be a political act,

police guidance ultimately shaped politics and policies.

In the realm of gang violence, the CPD was a leader in using its professional

expertise to change policies. Since the 1950s, when juvenile gang violence first attracted

Chicago's attention, the local police department had played a central role in both

containing and shaping gang activity. The police brokered gang truces and ran summer

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[64] "FOP Hires New Legislative Counsel," *Peace Officer* 18, no. 3 (March 1976): 21.

[65] Mark H. Furstenberg, "Police and Politics," *Police Chief* 35, no. 8 (August 1968): 12, 14, 18.

[66] Dorothy Fagerstrom, "'That's Not Politics'," *Law and Order* 18, no. 4 (June 1970): 104.

recreation programs to keep kids out of gangs.[67] If violence spiked, the CPD led efforts to

dismantle gangs and imprison gang members. When the OEO chose the Blackstone

Rangers as recipients of War on Poverty funding, the federal government increased the

power of gangs while ignoring law enforcement. The CPD saw this funding as an attack

on their profession and a repudiation of law enforcement's vision of crime control. One

Chicago officer told the *New York Times* that the police department had broken the gangs

into "small controllable groups and that crime had decreased as a result," but OEO

funding had undermined these efforts.[68] A leading gang control officer blasted the OEO

program as "tear-jerking nonsense" and claimed, "Ultra white liberals with good

intentions' make the job of policing Chicago's gangs more difficult."[69] The OEO

recognized the boiling disapproval among the majority of the police.[70] Although, as other

scholars have argued, antipoverty officials were worried about Mayor Richard Daley's

resistance to the War on Poverty,[71] OEO officials warned workers in Chicago that the

most powerful threat to the gang program was actually the police department.[72]

In March 1967, immediately after the federal government announced its support

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[67] "Reach Out Year 'Round," *Chicago Police Star* 9, no. 8 (August 1968): 14; "5 Shot in Chicago after Truce Pledge," *New York Times*, July 23, 1966, 9.

[68] "Poverty Project Is Blamed for Rise in Chicago Crime," *New York Times*, July 2, 1968, 23.

[69] Irene Powers, "Profit Keeps Gangs Going," *Chicago Tribune*, October 15, 1969, C2; "Did Federal Funds Aid Crime Rise?," *US News and World Report*, July 15, 1968, 8.

[70] There is some evidence that not all Chicago police officers disagreed with the OEO program, however, the vast majority of officers did. For examples, see David Dawley, *A Nation of Lords: The Autobiography of the Vice Lords*, 2nd ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1992), 113, 145, 161.

[71] Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor, *American Pharaoh: Mayor Richard J. Daley—His Battle for Chicago and the Nation* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 2000), 8, 318–319, 440; Bill Moyers, "Epilogue: Second Thoughts," in *Lyndon Baines Johnson and the Uses of Power*, eds. Bernard J. Firestone and Robert C. Vogt (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 349–362; Ruchelman, *Police Politics*, 55, 79–81.

[72] "Statement by Bertrand M. Harding on the OEO Demonstration Grant to the Woodlawn Organization," 24 June 1968, box 3, file "Natl. Advisory Council—June 24, 1968, 10:30am," OEO Office of Deputy Director Collection.

for the Blackstone Ranger program, the police department created the Gang Intelligence

Unit (GIU), a specialized group of officers to track gang members and to break up gangs

in the Windy City.[73] According to its founding document, the GIU would develop cases

against groups that "encourage[d] anti-social and criminal tendencies" of street gangs.

These targets included the Black Panthers, civil rights organizations, and even the OEO.[74]

To apply pressure, the elite GIU officers used repeated arrests of known gang members,

undercover operations to infiltrate meetings, and raids on gang members' homes, meeting

places, and the headquarters of organizations that supported the gang.[75] Over the span of

a year, the GIU became one of the most highly organized police units in America and a

leader in law enforcement approaches to urban gangs.

The GIU used the information it gathered in Chicago to apply pressure in

Washington when the Senate opened an investigation into the OEO's gang program in

1967. Led by conservative Southern Senator John L. McClellan who had been a

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[73] Irving A. Spergel, *Evaluation of the Youth Manpower Demonstration of the Woodlawn Organization* (Chicago: School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago, 1968), 216.

[74] "Order Establishing the Chicago Police Department Gang Intelligence Unit" reprinted in US Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders: Hearings before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Part 12*, 90th Cong. 2nd sess., June 3, 9–10, 1968, (hereafter cited as *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorder, Part 12),* 2474.

[75] In the vast majority of these arrests, the GIU was unable to either press charges or to successfully try the accused, attesting in part to the fact that these arrests where primarily a pressure tactic. Andrew Diamond, *Mean Streets: Chicago Youths and the Everyday Struggle for Empowerment in the Multiracial City, 1908–1969* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 267; Robert A. Levin, "Gang-Busting in Chicago," *New Republic*, June 1, 1968, 17–18; Robert D. McFadden, "Rejected Prosecutor: Edward Vincent Hanrahan," *New York Times*, December 21, 1971, 28; Francis Ward, "New Targets for GIU—and New Flack," *Chicago Journalism Review* 2, no. 6 (June 1969): 7–8; Spergel, *Evaluation*, 221–232; "Gang Intelligence Report Draft 1," 1969, box 610, file 14, WCMC Records.

outspoken opponent of the entire War on Poverty since its beginning,[76] the Senate sent a team of investigators to Chicago to find proof that the Stones had used federal funds to incite riots. When the Senate's investigative team couldn't find such proof, the GIU offered detailed databases of gang members' names, activities, and arrest reports to ensure that the investigators did not return to Washington empty-handed.[77] During McClellan's public hearings on the Blackstone Ranger program in the summer of 1968, GIU officers also testified on Capitol Hill. In fact, more than one third of the thirty-two witnesses at the hearings were Chicago police officers and another quarter of the witnesses were encouraged to testify by the GIU.[78] In their testimony, police officers and their witnesses told Senators about sex and marijuana parties at the Stones' training center and the conviction of Blackstone Ranger president Eugene Hairston for ordering the murder of a drug dealer who threatened the neighborhood.[79] Police also testified that federal funds had been used to buy guns, ammunition, and grenades from Black Nationalists and Communists, rumors which later proved to be false.[80]

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[76] David Critchley, *The Origin of Organized Crime in America* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 196; Weaver, "Frontlash," 244, 254; "Senate Backs Crime Plan Calling for Youth Corps," *New York Times*, May 15, 1968, 16.

[77] Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Chicago Police behind Probe into Blackstone Rangers Affair," *Washington Post*, July 12, 1968, A21; John Hall Fish, *Black Power/White Control: The Struggle of The Woodlawn Organization in Chicago* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 161.

[78] This number includes both Annabelle Martin (the mother of eight gang members) and George Rose (one of the Main 21). The press and a number of experts involved in the hearings alleged that the police department had pressured Martin and Rose to testify against the program. Shortly after agreeing to testify, murder charges against two of Martin's sons were dropped as were drug possession charges against Rose. The police vociferously denied that they had bargained with Martin or Rose for their testimony. James Alan McPherson, "Chicago's Blackstone Rangers Part I," *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1969, 78–79, 84; "Ex-Gang Warlord Calls Minister 'Malicious Liar'," *New York Times*, June 27, 1968, 29.

[79] *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, Part 9*, 1806, 1926–1927.

[80] The evidence of gun purchases rested on a story told by the GIU of their successful raid on the First Presbyterian Church, an ally of the Stones, where police found guns in the basement. The

Crime statistics were central to the GIU's case. One of the most important

responsibilities of the GIU from its inception was to maintain a database of gang

members and to track gang crimes throughout the city.[81] As historian James Gilbert and

sociologist Stuart Hall have both shown, the agency responsible for defining crimes and

for collecting statistics fundamentally shapes how crime is understood and addressed.[82]

Specialized gang units are particularly good examples of this process because the terms

"gang" and "gang violence" have been historically and geographically malleable.[83] When

the GIU official began tracking gangs in Chicago, it seized the power to define the extent

of the problem and the conditions of gang membership. In the words of one youth worker

in Chicago, the GIU had "the power to determine what is good and bad for the

community…what groups should exist and what groups should be destroyed."[84] Officers

knew that the public largely saw statistics—despite their notorious malleability—as

GIU later admitted that the federal Treasury Department and the GIU had stored the guns there as part of a truce negotiation between the Stones and the Disciples. The police simply left the guns in the safe, staged a raid, and then publicized the arsenal. Ibid., 1941–1943; "Minister Replies to Ex-Gang Chief: Denies Chicago Church Was Used as an Arsenal," *New York Times*, June 25, 1968, 24; Fish, *Black Power/White Control*, 130, 158–159; John R. Fry, *Fire and Blackstone* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1969), 6, 43.

[81] *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, Part 12,* 2561.

[82] James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 46, 54; Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1978), 41.

[83] Albert J. Meehan, "The Organizational Career of Gang Statistics: The Politics of Policing Gangs," *Sociological Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 337–370; Robert J. Bursik Jr. and Harold G. Grasmick, "Defining and Researching Gangs," in *The Modern Gang Reader*, ed. Jody Miller, Cheryl L. Maxson, and Malcolm W. Klein, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Roxbury, 2001), 2–14; Ruth Horowitz, "Sociological Perspectives on Gangs: Conflicting Definitions and Concepts," in *Gangs in America*, ed. C. Ronald Huff (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990), 43.

[84] James Alan McPherson, "Chicago's Blackstone Rangers Part II," *The Atlantic Monthly*, June 1969, 100.

reliable data.[85] The police also knew they had a monopoly over crime statistics.

Beginning in 1930, the only available crime data came from the *Uniform Crime Reports,*

which the FBI generated from numbers reported by local police departments. This

monopoly wasn't challenged until 1973 when the federal government began publishing

the *National Criminal Victimization Survey* based on census data. Since police

departments exclusively controlled data gathering until the mid 1970s, they had

considerable power to shape perceptions of crime and the policies to address it.[86]

In the McClellan hearings, the GIU relied heavily on arrest rates and shooting

statistics from the local police precinct. According to the GIU, the year before the OEO

program began only 71 percent of the Blackstone Rangers had been arrested. During

federal funding, this number rose to 85 percent.[87] A large number of the arrests cited by

the police, however, were for minor charges (disturbing the peace, etc.), and a majority of

the charges were dropped because of lack of evidence.[88] Police also presented graphs

showing that there had been a 100 percent increase in juvenile shootings in the first 6

months of the OEO's program. Closer analysis of the data presented, however, shows that

the police either mistakenly or intentionally miscalculated the number of juvenile

shootings. The real increase was closer to only 38 percent.[89] Moreover, the GIU chose

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[85] Gilbert, *Cycle of Outrage*, 46, 54; Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, 41; J. David Truby, "When You Are Asked to Speak...," *Law and Order* 19, no. 6 (June 1971): 88; Dorothy Fagerstrom, "Reputation and Records," *Law and Order* 16, no. 5 (May 1968): 122.

[86] William B. Chambliss, "Marketing Crime: The Politics of Crime Statistics," in *Power, Politics, and Crime* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 32–59.

[87] *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, Part 10,* 1987.

[88] Calculations based on review of arrests listed in Ibid., 1987–1997.

[89] In the graph presented to Congress, the police compared January–June 1967 (six months before the program) to July–December 1967 (six months during the program). But the program actually started at the beginning of June, thus June should have been considered as part of the period *during* funding. June happened to be the month with the lowest number of shootings recorded that

not to present police department statistics of other crimes, which showed that overall

crime *dropped* 10 percent in the Stone's neighborhood while citywide crime *rose* 4

percent.[90] During the hearings, Senator McClellan challenged many of the OEO's

witnesses to contradict the police with statistics of their own, but none of them could

since the police had a monopoly on the records.[91] The committee's members and other

lawmakers took the GIU's statistics at face value and repeatedly emphasized that this

data proved the ineffectiveness of working with gang members.[92] Incarceration, the

police and their conservative congressional allies argued, was the only viable solution.

Throughout the hearings, police officers expressed anger at being undermined by

the OEO and stressed the importance of police expertise in fighting Chicago's gangs. Lt.

Edward Buckney, head of the GIU, reiterated many times why the CPD had devoted

itself to the Senate investigation: "It disturbs us [police officers] when the people who

may run into the hearing for 5 minutes or read an article in the newspaper can all of a

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year (only 1 person shot and 0 homicides in June, compared to an average of 9.6 persons shot and 1 homicide per month over the entire year). More importantly, the GIU's numbers would surprise any scholar of gang violence because the data shows that the summer of 1967 was the quietest period in Woodlawn: there were no homicides for the entire summer and only six persons shot on average per month. Normally, summer is the height of gang season for Northern cities. When correctly calculated and contextualized, the GIU's statistics actually show that the program may have worked for the summer of 1967. Ibid., 1961, 2106; *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, Part 12,* 2562; For a discussion of normal gang violence cycles, see Malcolm W. Klein, "Street Gang Cycles," in *Crime*, ed. James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia (San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies Press, 1995), 222.

[90] The drop was primarily due to a dramatic decrease in aggravated assaults, robberies, and burglaries in Blackstone Ranger territory. After federal funding ended in late 1968, crime rates in the neighborhood fell back in line with the rest of the city. Calculations based on CPD Research and Development, "Index Crime by Type—Offenses by District and Area," 1967, 8; CPD Research and Development, "Index Crime by Type—Offenses by District and Area," 1968, 11; CPD Research and Development, "Index Crime by Type—Offenses by District and Area," 1969, 9.

[91] *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, Part 9,* 1809; *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorder, Part 10,* 2108, *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, Part 12,* 2562.

[92] 90 Cong. Rec., 25931 (1968) (statement of Sen. Harry F. Byrd Jr.).

sudden become overnight authorities on the gang problem."[93] While the police department may not have all the answers, Buckney conceded, police officers had extensively studied gangs and knew best how to control gang violence. Conservative senators at the hearing readily accepted police officers' claims to expertise[94] while repeatedly questioning the expertise of individuals involved in the OEO's program.[95] Senator McClellan even described the program as "the blind leading the blind."[96] Giving credence to this argument, many antipoverty workers readily admitted that they were not experts in gang prevention.[97] Their denial of expertise is not surprising given the War on Poverty's philosophy of "maximum feasible participation" of the poor, which dictated that programs should be managed by non-professionals in the communities they hoped to help.[98] But these denials—when deftly juxtaposed in the hearings with police knowledge—strengthened attacks on liberal crime control and emphasized police officers' claims to professional authority.

By the end of the hearings, the police department had convinced Congress that law enforcement's definition of gang members as "unredeemable," "hardcore criminals" was more accurate than the definitions developed by community activists and gang

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[93] *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, Part 12,* 2485.

[94] Ibid., 2476; *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, Part 10,* 2111.

[95] *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, Part 10,* 1982.

[96] *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, Part 9*, 1867.

[97] *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, Part 13*, 2720, 2716.

[98] Daniel P. Moynihan, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty* (New York: Free Press, 1969); Richard O. Brown, *Ideology and Community Action: The West Side Organization of Chicago, 1964–1967* (Chicago: Center for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1978); William Clayson, "'The Barrios and the Ghettos Have Organized!': Community Action, Political Acrimony, and the War on Poverty in San Antonio," *Journal of Urban History* 158, no. 28 (January 2002): 158–183.

members.[99] Shifting the definition meant that the only correct response to gang violence would be incarceration—not rehabilitation—a hallmark of the "law and order" movement.[100] In a final report for the OEO, a leading gang scholar admitted that the GIU had struck the fatal blow:

> The community force, probably more responsible than any other for directly hindering and destroying the project, was the Chicago Police Department. It's lack of commitment to objectives of the program, its gross failure to understand the complexity of the problem of gang delinquency in the Black Ghetto, its reluctance to cooperate with the Woodlawn Organization in the implementation of the program, and its punitive law enforcement attitudes and activities were elements in the systematic attack.[101]

Likewise, federal evaluators later determined that it was politics not the program's effectiveness that had labeled the Blackstone Ranger program as a failure.[102] Although the founding of the GIU and the activities it pursued originally appeared to be law enforcement's response to rising crime,[103] in actuality they were a political response to federal policy.

The CPD's efforts shaped gang prevention policies nationally. The OEO pulled personnel from the project in Chicago. Meanwhile conservative members of Congress pressured the OEO's new head, Bertrand Harding, to promise that the antipoverty office

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[99] Dawley, *Nation of Lords*, 121; *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders*, *Part 9,* 1806, 1878–1879, 1891; John L. McClellan regarding Chicago OEM [sic] & Gang Activities, interviewed by Ted Reuter, 1968, Senator John L. McClellan Collection [M244a], Riley-Hickingbottom Library Special Collection, Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, AR; "Guns and a Gang in a Church—What Congress Hears," *US News and World Report*, July 8, 1968, 36–37.

[100] Campbell, Sahid, and Stang, *Law and Order Reconsidered*, 290.

[101] Spergel, *Evaluation*, 215.

[102] "Final Report Contract OEO B89-4641, Volume I: Program Operation," 30 November 1967, box 10, OEO Office of Program Development Collection.

[103] *Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders*, *Part 12,* 2475.

would no longer fund gang programs.[104] In San Fernando Valley, California, a gang

project funded by federal money was suspended because of rumors that the police there

were prepared to mobilize against it.[105] The Departments of Labor, Housing and Urban

Development, and HEW cancelled their contracts with YOU after word came directly

from the White House to cut all gang programs for the remainder of President Johnson's

term.[106] And in the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and Control Act of 1968, Congress

forbade OEO involvement in any juvenile delinquency programs.[107] The hearings

affected private funding sources for the Conservative Vice Lords and the Real Great

Society, too.[108] As Cupid, a Conservative Vice Lord, lamented, "Once you be branded,

you can't take the brand off of you."[109]

Emboldened by their success, the CPD returned to Illinois and declared a "war on

street gangs" vowing "Chicago will lead the way in aggressive steps to stop crime."[110]

This was not an idle threat. The GIU sent letters to the parents of every suspected gang

member in the city. The attorney general's office pushed for maximum sentences and

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[104] "Antipoverty Office Drops Aid to Gangs Scored in Senate," *New York Times*, August 1, 1968, 48; Joseph A. Loftus, "Poverty Agency Rules Out Financing for Gangs," *New York Times*, September 4, 1968, 26; 90 Cong. Rec., 25598–25601 (1968).

[105] Joseph A. Loftus, "Antipoverty Office Suspends Coast Project for Rehabilitation of Youth Gangs," *New York Times*, September 28, 1967, 32.

[106] "The YOU Manifesto," 1969, p. 6, box 85, file "Youth Organizations Untied 1," DOJ Records; Patricia McBroom, "Gangs Turn to Business," *Science News*, August 24, 1968, 186–187.

[107] Heidi Matiyow Rosenberg, "Federal Policy Toward Delinquent Youth: Legislative and Programmatic Milestones from Kennedy to Ford, 1960–1976" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008), 225.

[108] "YOU Manifesto," 6; McBroom, "Gangs Turn to Business," 186–187; Luis Aponte-Parés, "Lessons from El Barrio—The East Harlem Real Great Society/Urban Planning Studio: A Puerto Rican Chapter in the Fight for Urban Self-Determination," *New Political Science* 20, no. 4 (December 1998): 417–418.

[109] R. Lincoln Keiser, *The Vice Lords: Warriors of the Streets* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), 78.

[110] "Daley Asks War on Street Gangs," *Chicago Tribune*, May 20, 1969, 3.

tried juveniles as adults.[111] The Chicago "war on gangs" inspired other police

departments. Philadelphia inaugurated its own gang unit, which testified before Congress

in hearings on street crime,[112] and both the New York and Los Angeles police

departments established specialized units to track gang activity and serve as expert

witnesses for state legislatures.[113]

Through the gang issue, police officers had turned their exclusive status into an

elite professionalism. By creating a dedicated unit and generating data, the CPD cast its

officers as a specialized group of experts on crime. Unlike the OEO and civil rights

activists, the police department was trained to make professional conclusions about gang

violence and how best to address it. Professional status gave police a voice in

policymaking and challenged liberal crime programs that had been the result of urban

activism.[114] Through this campaign, the police established their professional authority

and gained a sense of their own political power. Even gang members recognized the

benefits of this tactic. "The G.I.U.," claimed one Blackstone Ranger, "uses the Rangers

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[111] "Parents to Get Gang Letters," *Chicago Tribune*, November 22, 1969, N3; Powers, "Profit Keeps Gangs Going," C2.

[112] Barry Krisberg, *The Gang and the Community* (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1975), 61.

[113] The New York Police Department's Youth Squad had kept centralized files on gangs and gang crime since at least 1958, but only in the early 1970s did the department create a specialized unit to monitor gang activity exclusively. Mary Breasted, "Youth Gangs and Their Crimes Are on the Rise," *New York Times*, July 2, 1973, 29; Harrison E. Salisbury, "Notes on Interview with Captain Ludwig," 1958, box 572, file 25, Salisbury Collection; New York State Assembly Subcommittee on the Family Court, "The Resurgence of Youth Gangs in New York City: Study Report No. 1," July 1974, New York City Hall Library; New York State Assembly Subcommittee on the Family Court, "Armies of the Streets: A Report on the Structure, Membership and Activities of Youth Gangs in the City of New York: Study Report No. 2," October 1974, New York City Hall Library; Erwin Baker, "Crackdown Ordered on Southwest Area Gangs," *Los Angeles Times*, February 19, 1972, B1.

[114] Mark F. Gross to Warren V. Gilmore, 17 February 1971, box 85, file "Youth Organizations United 2," DOJ Records.

and the rivalry between us and the D[isciples]'s to make their work more important to the system."[115]

Not So Silent Majority: Police and the American Voter

Police critiques of the War on Poverty's gang program found support among the public. One woman in Indiana wrote her congressional representative that all these gangs do is "terrorize their neighborhoods….It would be more sensible to hire the Cosa Nostra [Mafia] to run the A[tomic] E[nergy] C[omission]."[116] One North Carolina resident called the Blackstone Ranger center "ridiculous and disgusting" while another in California claimed that the program "will only convince them that Crime Does Pay."[117] A voter from Georgia reflected the majority of letters that poured into Washington after the McClellan hearings when he wrote, "It is with a sense of disgust and urgency that I am writing….This is the most absurd idea one could possibly conceive….A gang leader is not my idea of a contributing member to this or any society."[118] These voters' represented a group of conservative Americans who, like the police, had watched with skepticism the transformation of gangs through urban politics and federal support. Though their voices had been drowned out by the changes of the early and mid 1960s, they had not disappeared entirely. For example, in 1963 California State University sociologist Lewis

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[115] McPherson, "Chicago's Blackstone Rangers Part II," 93.

[116] From Mrs. R. M. Freel to Senator Hartke, 14 August 1967, box 22, file "CAP Chicago July 1967–Dec 1967," OEO Office of Inspection Collection.

[117] Wesley T. Brown to B. Everette Jordan, 13 August 1967, box 22, file "CAP Chicago July 1967–Dec 1967," OEO Office of Inspection Collection; Harriet W. Hubbard to Senator George Murphy, 12 August 1967, box 22, file "CAP Chicago July 1967–Dec 1967," OEO Office of Inspection Collection. Emphasis in original.

[118] Wayne Peacock to John Davis, 16 August 1967, box 22, file "CAP Chicago July 1967–Dec 1967," OEO Office of Inspection Collection.

Yablonsky published a controversial study, *The Violent Gang,* on New York gangs. He

had spent four years in the mid 1950s doing fieldwork with two gangs in Manhattan, one

of which was the gang tried for the murder of Michael Farmer. In *The Violent Gang*,

Yablonsky argued that gang members were "asocialized individuals" with psychotic

fantasies of grandeur and violence. As such, gangs could not be negotiated with; a gang

was "a pathological entity requiring elimination."[119] Although other gang experts have

never found evidence of gangs that fit the pathological description in Yablonsky's work,

Yablonsky's ideas found ready support among police officers and other Americans who

questioned gangs' constructive transformations and argued that gangs were

irredeemable.[120] These voters became allies of the police in law enforcement's attempt to

gain the upper hand in crime politics. Meanwhile, conservative politicians aligned

themselves with cops by relying on police officers' votes and by supporting law

enforcement's political mobilization.

As the Blackstone Ranger hearings wrapped up in September 1968, politicians

entered the final sprint to the November elections. Republican strategists, in particular,

had watched the hearings closely to determine how police testimony could benefit the

party. Strategists understood that crime and the "law and order issue" would be central to

the election.[121] In a pamphlet on crime policy, the Republican National Committee

(RNC) had already advised candidates to emphasize the Johnson administration's

"gimicky [sic]" use of experimental grants, such as the Blackstone Rangers' program,

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[119] Lewis Yablonsky, *The Violent Gang* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1963), x, 263.
[120] Malcolm W. Klein, *Street Gangs and Street Workers* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971), 70.
[121] Research Division, RNC, *Crime and Delinquency: Fact Book for 1968 Republican Candidates* (Washington, DC: RNC, 1968), 1–2, 20; Mason, *Richard Nixon*, 31, 98.

which had "proven a miserable failure."[122] In July 1968, while the GIU publicly

castigated the OEO and the Stones, a private memo circulated at Richard Nixon's

campaign headquarters advocating that he hit the crime issue hard and link it to the War

on Poverty. The memo's author argued that the Blackstone Ranger grant specifically left

Democrats vulnerable: "It just doesn't take much sophistication to see that subsidizing

gangs is not going to help the ghettos."[123] The Nixon campaign took this advice and used

police officers' testimony to discredit liberal Democrats. Stumping before a crowd in

New Jersey a month before the election, vice presidential candidate Spiro T. Agnew

harangued the OEO for the Stones' grant. It was "supposedly [meant] to do something

constructive," Agnew jeered. When he asked the crowd if they were "going to put up

with that," the audience yelled a resounding "No!"[124]

By putting crime front and center, Republicans attempted to attract what Richard

Nixon's campaign team called the "unblack, unyoung, and unpoor"[125] or what scholars

have called the Silent Majority. This group, made up of primarily white working- and

middle-class Americans, was a powerful bloc of voters threatened by the changes of the

1960s. They believed that Johnson's liberal programs had undermined conservative white

ideas about work, wealth, and security. Thus, they were prime targets for Republican

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[122] Research Division, RNC, *Crime and Delinquency*, 30.

[123] "Memo from Bell Regarding the Gallup Poll," 13 July 1968, box 33, file 13, White House Special Files Collection, Richard Nixon Presidential Library—Virtual Library, Yorba Linda, CA, http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/whsfreturned/whsf_box_33/whsf33-13.pdf.

[124] Thomas A. Johnson, "3,000 in Jersey Cheer Agnew as He Berates Campus Rebels," *New York Times*, October 15, 1968, 34.

[125] "Memo from Bell," 1.

campaigners.[126] Given their own demographics and traditional beliefs, cops found a

comfortable home within the Silent Majority, and Republican strategists were eager to

welcome them.[127] To corral the police vote, Nixon and the Republicans proposed

improvements to officers' pay and disability benefits.[128] Nixon also symbolically

endorsed law enforcement by using the CPD's congressional testimony to emphasize the

failures of the War on Poverty and to craft the types of legislation cops believed were

necessary to combat crime.[129] Although Democrats also tried to capture police officers'

votes, Republicans were much more successful.[130] Atlanta police chief Herbert T. Jenkins

recalled that Nixon's "tough stand in favor of law enforcement was well received" by

police officers and that many cops went to the polls for Republican candidates.[131]

With Nixon and his party counting on police votes, officers came to see their

ballots as a weapon in the "law and order" fight. After 1968, police officers publically

endorsed politicians on the local, state, and federal level with increasingly regularity.[132]

When Nixon campaigned for reelection in 1972, police organizations across the country

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[126] Jonathan Rieder, "The Rise of the 'Silent Majority'," in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930–1980*, ed. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 243–268; Mason, *Richard Nixon*.

[127] Sylvan Fox, "Leary Says Police Reflect Community in a Swing to Right," *New York Times*, September 11, 1968, 1; Campbell, Sahid, and Stang, *Law and Order Reconsidered*, 60–61, 68–69, chap. 14; Westley, *Violence and the Police*, xiii.

[128] Research Division, RNC, *Crime and Delinquency*, 34; Richard M. Nixon, *Toward Freedom from Fear* (New York: Nixon/Agnew Campaign Committee, 1968), 18–20.

[129] "Memo from Bell."

[130] Quinn Tamm, "Law Enforcement Platform Planks," *Police Chief* 35, no. 9 (September 1968): 8; Mason, *Richard Nixon*; Flamm, *Law and Order*; Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008); Beckett, *Making Crime Pay*; Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters," 726–732.

[131] Herbert T. Jenkins and James Jenkins, *Presidents, Politics, and Policing: Oral History Interviews on Law Enforcement and a Career in Public Live Spanning Fifty Years* (Atlanta, GA: Center for Research in Social Change, 1980), 55.

[132] For examples, see "ICPA Endorses Nixon Re-Election," *Minnesota Police Journal* 44, no. 5 (October 1972): 15; "Lederer, McDermott Appointed to Nixon Committees," *Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association Bulletin* 41, no. 4 (Fall 1972): 27; Shultz, "Police Vote Power," 16.

supported him loudly and proudly. The IACP for the first time in its history publically

endorsed a presidential candidate, and many state-level organizations followed.[133] On the

local level, police officers held fundraising dinners to support pro-police legislators,

governors, and mayors.[134] They used letter-writing campaigns to remind lawmakers that

those who supported police-backed bills could count on officers at the polls. An editorial

in *Law and Order* rallied policemen to the cause: "Please realize there are almost 3/4

million law enforcement men—each man has one vote (plus a family who generally

thinks his way)? [sic] This is great power. Express your views. Such a loud voice cannot

be ignored."[135]

Although three-quarters of a million votes was a substantial number, it was not

enough to single-handedly win any election for a "law and order" candidate. Realizing

this shortcoming, law enforcement tried to win the support of what Detroit's police

commissioner called "the man who speaks their language," reaching out to likeminded

white, working- and middle-class Americans.[136] For example, Boston's Police

Patrolman's Association launched a campaign in 1969 to attract the support of "Mr.

Middle America…the guy why pays his bills and watches television with a six-pack" by

speaking out against urban unrest, student protests, and liberal reform programs. The

campaign called on average Americans—defined in terms similar to the Silent

Majority—to campaign for more police and tougher laws.[137] In another example, the

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[133] "ICPA Endorses Nixon Re-Election," 15.
[134] Skolnick, *Politics of Protest*, 281–282, 286.
[135] L.E. Lawder, "'As a Citizen...'," *Law and Order* 18, no. 10 (October 1970): 112.
[136] "Embattled Police Taking the Offensive," *Washington Post*, December 15, 1968, B1.
[137] Bopp, "Patrolmen in Boston," 181.

CPD launched a media campaign to turn public opinion against gangs.[138] By the end of 1970, the GIU could claim proudly, "There has been a sharp upturn in the willingness of the public to help us."[139] This vote of confidence was especially important to officers given media and congressional scrutiny of the department after police violence during the Democratic National Convention in 1968 and the GIU's murder of Black Panther Fred Hampton. The public support garnered by the "War on Gangs" was a welcome morale booster for the battered department.

Law enforcement's tactics appeared to work. The *Washington Post* noticed the mutual respect that had blossomed between the Silent Majority and the police. The paper commented that "law and order" voters embraced police politics and were willing to vote for any policy that protected law enforcement interests.[140] These efforts not only solidified the "law and order" movement, they also made law enforcement feel less alienated from the public. A police journal gushed in 1971 that the average police officer "can give thanks to the great 'silent majority' of law abiding citizens who stand behind his integrity in doing his job."[141] This is not to say that everyone was convinced that police politicization was a good thing. Some Americans saw police officers merely as part of the corrupt politics that caused the crime problem in the first place, and a number of scholars worried that law enforcement's political activity could bring the United States

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[138] "Parents to Get Gang Letters," N3; Powers, "Profit Keeps Gangs Going," C2.
[139] William Jones, "Black P Stone Nation Empire Totters," *Chicago Tribune*, December 27, 1970, B16.
[140] "Embattled Police Taking the Offensive," B1.
[141] L.E. Lawder, "On the Thanksgiving Theme," *Law and Order* 19, no. 11 (November 1971): 4.

closer to a police state.[142] These fears, however, were limited and only further underscored officers' growing importance in national politics.

White police officers were not the only cops who used Silent Majority rhetoric and criticized constructive gangs. Many members of Chicago's GIU were African Americans, including the unit's leader, and black officers in other cities supported the GIU's attack on the Stone's and the OEO.[143] "I say let's not reward marauding gangs with a palliative of clubhouses," one black New York cop told reporters. "We worked two and three jobs to pay for our homes. Let's not give away what is ours. If we have to have a cop on every corner, let's have it….We want our community back."[144] While historians and political scientists generally agree that the Silent Majority and its "law and order" component was largely a home for white voters,[145] evidence from black police officers shows that a small number of African Americans shared some of the Silent Majority's views, thus complicating our understanding of the movement. It seems that for some African Americans, their role as police officers and their middle-class status trumped their racial identification. Indeed, the RNC itself recognized the potential of attracting black voters as party lines and ideologies shifted in 1968. According to RNC statistics, black Americans in all regions of the country were under-registered and under-represented at the polls. If African Americans could be motivated (or allowed in some

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[142] Campbell, Sahid, and Stang, *Law and Order Reconsidered*, 68–69, 295; Westley, *Violence and the Police*; William J. Bopp, ed., *The Police Rebellion: A Quest for Blue Power* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1971); William C. Kronholm, "The Threat of the Militant Policeman," *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science* 63, no. 2 (June 1972): 294–299; Reichley, "Way to Cool," 109–111.

[143] McPherson, "Chicago's Blackstone Rangers Part I," 83–84.

[144] George Vecsey, "Precarious Truce Remains after Rampage in St. Albans," *New York Times*, February 21, 1974, 37.

[145] Flamm, *Law and Order*, 5–7; Beckett, *Making Crime Pay*, 47.

cases) to register and to vote, then they might be turned to the Republican cause. As part of this strategy, the RNC encouraged candidates to emphasize the large number of Republican Congress members who had voted for civil rights measures. [146] The RNC stressed that crime especially could be the issue that turned black voters back to the Republican Party. In its strategy manual on how to use crime and delinquency for the 1968 election, the RNC noted that nearly 53 percent of black respondents to surveys had reported that they had been victims of crime while only 7 percent of whites had. If anti-crime initiatives were to be a cornerstone of the conservative resurgence, blacks who experienced crime first-hand could be a potential constituency.[147] While it might take years for African Americans to entirely embrace the Republican Party or "law and order,"[148] the RNC might have felt some promise seeing black police officers mobilizing for and helping to craft conservative rhetoric around the "law and order" issue. At the very least, these developments in 1968 suggested that national politicians recognized the powerful role that minority voters played and would continue to play in shaping crime politics.

Cops as Candidates: Frank Rizzo and Philadelphia's "Return of the Rumble"

Police officers further tested voter confidence in law enforcement by running for office themselves. One of the most famous cop-candidates of the period was Frank Rizzo

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[146] Research Division, RNC, *America's Urban Problems and Related Domestic Issues: Fact Book for 1968 Republican Candidates* (Washington, DC: RNC, 1968), 73, 67.
[147] Research Division, RNC, *Crime and Delinquency*, 18.
[148] Hahn, *Urban America and Its Police*, 111–112, 124.

of Philadelphia known as the "Toughest Cop in America."[149] Rizzo, a twenty-seven-year

veteran of the force and a former police commissioner, ran for mayor in 1972 on a

platform that promised to address gang violence in The City of Brotherly Love.[150] The

gang problem in Philadelphia had unexpectedly spiked in 1968 when reported gang

killings jumped 150 percent and continued to rise throughout the early 1970s. According

to the press, most of those killed were young black men who made up 90 percent of

Philadelphia's gang members.[151] *Newsweek* heralded it as "The Return of the Rumble,"

and Philly gained the designation as gang-murder capital of the country.[152]

The problem grew so worrisome that the state's Crime Commission held a special

inquiry in 1969. "There is no doubt," wrote the commission, "that for many residents of

the inner city, gang life has brought such disorder and fear that life is unbearable. When

children cannot go to school, when playgrounds are empty out of fear, when storekeepers

are afraid to stay open, when mothers fear to walk the streets, when brawny men refuse to

leave the house after dark, life has indeed become intolerable for scores of thousands of

Philadelphians." A parade of more than fifty witnesses, including community members,

judges, and gang members argued that "neighborhood-oriented, neighborhood-staffed

and neighborhood-directed" programs would be the best solution to the violence. In many

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[149] Lenora E. Berson, "'The Toughest Cop in America' Campaigns for Mayor of Philadelphia," *New York Times*, May 16, 1971, SM30.
[150] "Rizzo Takes Post in Philadelphia," *New York Times*, January 4, 1972, 14.
[151] Donald Janson, "Gangs Face Drive in Philadelphia," *New York Times*, February 13, 1972, 30.
[152] The rise of gang murders and a reignited gang panic in Philadelphia during the late 1960s and early 1970s modifies the arguments made by Eric Schneider and Andrew Diamond that gangs largely disappeared in the 1970s. Both scholars' focus on individual cities (New York and Chicago respectively), which probably accounts for their interpretation. Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*; Diamond, *Mean Streets*; "Return of the Rumble," *Newsweek*, September 8, 1969, 51; Stephen Isaacs, "Philadelphia," *Washington Post*, October 31, 1971, 49; 91 Cong. Rec., 17390 (1969).

ways, these witnesses sounded like the community activists and liberal reformers of the first half of the decade. [153] However, "neighborhood-directed" no longer meant "gang-directed" as it had before the Blackstone Ranger hearings. Instead, the commission underscored the need to pull gangs apart and to stop recognizing gangs as legitimate organizations.

For the most part, liberal approaches to gang violence dominated the testimony, but there were hints of change in police officers' testimony. In particular, then-police commissioner Rizzo pushed for a law enforcement solution to the problem. Rizzo and other cops argued that although community programs helped, the primary responsibility lay with the police. Rizzo warned, "The juveniles roaming our streets today are the criminals of tomorrow. We must stem this tide with a policy of punishment to fit the crime." To fulfill this duty the city needed to increase the size of the Philadelphia Police Department threefold because, according to Rizzo, it was severely undermanned in "every underprivileged area of the city" where gang violence was a problem. [154] Like other cops, he also targeted lenient judges who allowed young gang members to return to the streets. "Pure and simple," Rizzo opined, "this is a deadly game of Russian roulette, with the citizens of Philadelphia as the potential victims." [155]

Rizzo's testimony augured the gang policies he would champion two years later on the campaign trail when he ran for mayor. Rizzo's campaign promised to cut taxes, quash civil unrest, and stem the rising tide of gang violence. He demanded more aid for

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[153] Pennsylvania Crime Commission, Department of Justice, *A Report on the Inquiry into Gang Violence in Philadelphia,* July 31, 1969, 23, 27.
[154] Ibid., 39, 23.
[155] 91 Cong. Rec., 17390 (1969).

the police department's gang unit, championed mass arrests of all suspected gang members, and proposed plans "to violate [gang members'] rights and sweep the streets."[156] He also promised a massive increase of police presence in minority neighborhoods by increasing the police force by eight hundred officers.[157] Rizzo's pledge to run a "law and order" administration rested primarily on his credentials as a police officer and high-ranking law enforcement official. Voters felt that they could trust him because overall crime rates—as reported by the police department to the FBI—had fallen during his tenure as commissioner. Although three years later, an investigation by the federal government uncovered evidence that the crime rate reported by the police department under Rizzo woefully underreported major crimes, voters at the time had confidence in Rizzo's expertise.[158]

Rizzo's campaign specifically targeted the white, middle- and working-class Philadelphians who adamantly believed in the "law and order" movement and were afraid of the social changes of the decade.[159] Rizzo's tough-on-gangs message resonated with these voters, especially as statistics and media reports highlighted the preponderance of black youth among Philadelphia's gangs. Furthermore, Rizzo benefited from his history of violent crackdowns on civil right organizations and urban unrest. One Philadelphian

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[156] Krisberg, *Gang and the Community*, 1; "The Nightstick and Brotherly Love," *Washington Post*, May 22, 1971, A18; Donald Janson, "Rizzo Campaign Gains Momentum," *New York Times*, November 29, 1970, 50; James T. Wooten, "Charges against Rizzo Police," *New York Times*, April 19, 1974, 74.

[157] Ruchelman, *Police Politics*, 51–55; "Rizzo Takes Post," 14.

[158] The federal government's Law Enforcement Assistance Administration found that the city's major crime rate was actually five times higher than Rizzo's police department had claimed. Janson, "Rizzo Campaign Gains Momentum"; 90 Cong. Rec., 10931 (1968); Stephen J. Sansweet, "Philadelphia's Law-and-Order Candidate," *Wall Street Journal*, April 21, 1971, 22; Berson, "'The Toughest Cop," SM30; Wooten, "Charges against Rizzo Police," 74.

[159] Robert C. Maynard, "Primary Unites Philadelphia Blacks," *Washington Post*, April 11, 1971, C3; "Nightstick and Brotherly Love," A18.

remembered years later, "It finally got to the point that most whites in the city felt it was

them and the cops against the blacks….Rizzo was the highly visible personification of the

policeman....He had a built-in constituency."[160] Rizzo himself had been one of these

Philadelphians and worked diligently to portray himself as working-class. The son of a

the first Italian cop in the Philadelphia Police Department, Rizzo spoke in plain,

straightforward words and approached politics in the same way.[161] "We understand the

[vast majority of people] and they understand us," he recalled after his campaign. "We

will continue to speak the language of the working men and women of this city."[162] The

workingmen of the city included Philly's police. Known reverently as "The General"

among the city's cops, the tall, burly Rizzo had a reputation for haranguing liberal

leniency, protecting his men, and trumpeting the power of law enforcement to solve

rising crime. As the *New York Times* noted, the city's police officers felt that in the "war

on cops" Rizzo was their ultimate ally. "They know he will not let their problems go

unarticulated."[163] On Election Day and in the weeks before, the city's cops let their

support for Rizzo be known. With "law and order" rallying police officers and other

working-class whites, Rizzo won a resounding victory over his opponents.

Nixon's and Rizzo's elections uncover how police officers further integrated

themselves into politics and policymaking in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Nixon used

police testimony on Johnson's gang intervention program to garner votes among both the

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[160] Wooten, "Charges against Rizzo Police," 74.

[161] Fred Hamilton, *Rizzo* (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), 14, 26; Joseph R. Daughen and Peter Binzen, *The Cop Who Would Be King: Mayor Frank Rizzo* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1977), 7–8.

[162] James T. Wooten, "Rizzo Is Silent at 2d Inaugural on Holding Tax Line," *New York Times*, January 6, 1976, 32.

[163] Bernard McCormick, "The War of the Cops," *New York Times*, October 18, 1970, SM12.

police and the Silent Majority. He also depended on police officers' support to win the

presidency. Like Nixon, Rizzo relied on police votes, but his campaigned signaled a shift

in police activism: police officers themselves went after government positions. Rizzo was

not the only former cop to choose this route. Across the country, a number of police

officers won high profile office. For example, Charles Stenvig of Minneapolis, Tom

Bradley of Los Angeles, and Roman Gribbs of Detroit all were elected mayors of their

respective cities. In all of these cases, their past experiences as law enforcement officials

played a significant role in their campaigns and wins. There were also numerous cops-

turned-politicians who won seats in city councils, states legislatures, and Congress.[164]

From these positions of power, former cops could directly shape policy.

"Just Hoods, Robbin'": Changing Perceptions and Policies

At his inauguration in front of a wildly cheering group of largely "law and order"

voters, Rizzo pledged, "I will not tolerate gang rule or anarchy in the streets."[165] He

moved swiftly to make his promise a reality. Sitting behind his rococo desk in city hall,

Mayor Rizzo declared a citywide crackdown on street gangs. He offered gang members a

two-week window in which to turn in their weapons without prosecution or interrogation.

After the window expired, police officers were green-lighted to search anyone on the

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[164] For additional examples, see Guy Halverson, "Gribbs Wins Detroit Law-Order Issue," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 6, 1969, 5; "Three Ramsey Police Win Elections," *Minnesota Police Journal* 43, no. 1 (February 1971): 21; "Detective Becomes City Councilman," *Minnesota Police Journal* 43, no. 4 (August 1971): 59; "Police Blocked as Candidates," *Minnesota Police Journal* 44, no. 5 (October 1972): 25; "Contagion in Minneapolis," *Time*, June 20, 1969, 24; Gunther, *Cops in Politics*, 62; Jeffrey T. Manuel and Andrew Urban, "'You Can't Legislate the Heart': Minneapolis Mayor Charles Stenvig and the Politics of Law and Order," *American Studies* 49, no. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 2008): 195–219.
[165] "Rizzo Takes Post," 14.

streets whom they suspected of carrying a weapon.[166] He also increased police hiring and

met with Nixon at the White House to solicit federal funds to pay for the growing police

force.[167] As Rizzo's top aide at city hall put it "This city is looking very seriously at gang

activities….It's not going to accept them any longer." Characteristically more blunt,

Rizzo proclaimed, "If [gangs] want to fight hand-to-hand, we'll take them on. That's a

challenge."[168]

Like Rizzo, Nixon took steps towards more punitive approaches to gang violence,

although he did allow a small amount of room for rehabilitative programs. One of the

administration's first changes was to restrict the OEO's ability to work with individuals

who had criminal records, which meant that the OEO could no longer cooperate with

many current or former gang members.[169] Next, the new administration ordered a full

investigation of the Blackstone Ranger program, which led to criminal indictments

against a handful of the gang's leaders.[170] Nixon also favored the GIU's "war on gangs,"

thus giving presidential support to greater police surveillance of gangs nationally.

Midway through his first term, however, Nixon did take a step back from his hard stance.

The administration quietly authorized a $500,000 grant for YOU in 1971, and the

Mission Rebels received an additional grant from the Department of Education.[171]

Nixon's conflicting approach to gang intervention supports political scientist Marie

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[166] Janson, "Gangs Face Drive," 30.

[167] Donald Janson, "Rizzo's First Year," *New York Times*, January 7, 1973, 56.

[168] Janson, "Gangs Face Drive," 30.

[169] "OEO Rationale Re Involvement of Persons with Criminal Records," 29 January 1969, box 5, file "White House—Urban Affairs Council," OEO Office of Deputy Director Records.

[170] Gerson M. Green to Jack Huffner, 12 September 1969, box 12, file "OEO Contract No. B89-4641-Urban Systems, Inc.," OEO Office of Program Development Collection.

[171] "Youth Organizations United (YOU) Nine Months Report," 8 March 1971, box 85, file "Youth Organizations United 2," DOJ Records; Don DeNevi, "The Mission Rebels as Trainers of Teachers," *Peabody Journal of Education* 47, no. 5 (March 1970): 286–289.

Gottschalk's argument that although Nixon appeared in his campaigns to be a hard-line "law and order" candidate, once in office his administration's policies reflected a more flexible approach to crime issues.[172] However, the Nixon administration's public attacks on the OEO and vocal support for Rizzo in Philadelphia sent the message that gangs were to be punished not assisted.

In cities across the country, police departments increased their presence in gang prone neighborhoods. In New York, personnel and weapons allocated in the 1960s for riots were redeployed by the NYPD to control gang violence.[173] Abraham Beame won the mayoral election in New York by pushing a crime program that included more undercover officers to arrest and prosecute youth gangs.[174] In Detroit, after gangs attacked audience members at a concert, the city clamped down by imposing curfews on minors, re-hiring nearly five hundred laid-off police officers to arrest "the thugs," and bringing in state troopers to patrol city streets.[175] Mayor Coleman Young, the city's first black mayor, put the Detroit Police Department in complete control of the city's response to the problem. The city council passed an ordinance allowing law enforcement to arrest anyone who refused to identify themselves to police on the street. Meanwhile, civic leaders called for the reinstatement of the controversial police STRESS unit that had targeted minority neighborhoods a few years earlier.[176]

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[172] Marie Gottschalk, *The Prison and the Gallows: The Politics of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 6–10.

[173] Breasted, "Youth Gangs," 29.

[174] Rudy Johnson, "Beame Calls for TV to Guard Subways," *New York Times*, October 4, 1973, 36.

[175] Reginald Stuart, "Detroit Recalling Police in Crime Wave," *New York Times*, August 17, 1976, 65; "State Troopers Help Detroit Officers," *New York Times*, August 29, 1976, 18.

[176] STRESS (Stop the Robberies, Enjoy Safe Streets) was an undercover police operation established under sheriff-turned-mayor Roman Gribbs. STRESS came under scrutiny for the

As police departments and city governments applied pressure to street gangs, the gangs fought back. In New York where gang violence resurged after 1972, gangs targeted the police. One gang on the Lower East Side bombed the local police precinct with a fragmentation grenade.[177] In Chicago, two years after the Blackstone Ranger hearings concluded, a detective was murdered in an ambush. Although the police were never able to prove that the gang had been involved, the CPD believed the Stones were responsible. The cops also blamed gang programs and those who supported them. "To the street gang apologists," declared a police department spokesman in the shooting's aftermath, "we damn you." To antagonize the GIU and to protest increasing police harassment, the Stones began and continue to celebrate the day of the officer's death as a gang holiday every year.[178] The Blackstone Rangers also fought back by collecting information on police corruption throughout the 1970s and in an extreme move in the 1980s contracted with Muammar Gaddafi in Libya to carry out a terrorist attack against the Sears Tower.[179] This type of retaliation only further supported conservative police arguments that gangs were irredeemable.

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deaths of a number of black and Latino citizens and was disbanded by Coleman Young who had promised in his mayoral campaign to fight the unit. Agis Salpukas, "Detroit Police Chief Told to Stop Gangs," *New York Times*, August 19, 1976, 60; Sandra Salmans and Richard Manning, "Wild in the Streets," *Newsweek*, August 30, 1976, 48–49; Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 80–82; Elizabeth Kai Hinton, "From Social Welfare to Social Control: Federal War in American Cities, 1965–1988" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2012), chap. 3.

[177] Breasted, "Youth Gangs, " 29.

[178] John Kifner, "Chicago Gang Leader Hunted as Detective Dies," *New York Times*, August 18, 1970, 22; "7 Chicago Negroes Acquitted in Killing of Gang Detective," *New York Times*, January 18, 1971, 20; *Gangland: Stone to the Bone* (A&E Home Video, 2007), DVD.

[179] Sale, *Blackstone Rangers*, 130; "5 Are Convicted in Terror Scheme," *New York Times*, November 25, 1987, A16; "Chicago to Kaddafi: Let's Get Together," *Newsweek*, November 10, 1986, 31.

In the end, the police won the battle against programs that had refashioned gangs as community development organizations. By tapping into the image of police expertise and the concept of the Silent Majority, law enforcement gained the power to shape perceptions of gangs and moved gang intervention strategies towards punishment. Through this process, former police officers became the architects, not merely the tools, of the postwar carceral state. Their mobilization in this pivotal period broke down the traditional wall between policing and politics. The public came to accept and the government now expected law enforcement's participation in policymaking and elections, an idea that would have been unthinkable before police struggles in the 1960s. Additionally, the politics and policies of the period erased the image of gangs as a potentially positive force in their communities and refashioned gang members as evil predators. Law enforcement's efforts were partly responsible for many Americans' growing belief that policing, instead of social reform, was the answer to crime generally and gang violence specifically.[180] Consequently, tough-on-crime programs managed by law enforcement would define future attempts to address gangs. As one radio DJ in Chicago insisted, by 1970 gangs were no longer "Robin Hoods….They are just hoods, robbin'."[181]

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[180] For changing public opinion, compare *Harris Survey*, June 1966, iPOLL Databank (USHARRIS.070366.R2) and *Gallup Poll*, October 1970, iPOLL Databank (USGALLUP.815.Q10).
[181] Quoted in "Ambushes in Chicago," *Time*, August 24, 1970, 17.

Chapter 5

"This Wrong Being Done to My People": Gangs and Minority Activists, 1970–1990

I believe that these bad gangs have killed more Black people than the KKK ever did….I am just a mechanic and I am not good with letter (writing) or words, but I am willing to march or fight to stop this wrong that is being done to my people. – Los Angeles Sentinel *reader*[1]

Frances Sandoval sat on the floor of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary's rectory. She laid out a stack of papers in front of her, slowly spreading out the sheets. Crime statistics, homicide data, images of gang identifiers, photos of graffiti, and maps of her Chicago neighborhood covered the floor. It was only the second meeting she had called, but already their numbers were growing. Last week only four women had come, but today there were seven mothers and a father, all of them residents of Chicago's Near Southwest Side, all of them Latino, all of them parents of dead children. Sandoval herself had lost her fifteen-year-old son Arthur two years before when he was stabbed near his younger sister's school by a local gang member. After the 1984 murder, Sandoval had offered a $1,000 reward when the police could find no leads; once the gang member was apprehended, she attended every session of the trial. Daily, she visited the schoolyard where her son was killed and painted over gang graffiti that kept appearing. She pressured lawmakers in the state capitol to pass the Safe School Zones Act, which targeted gangs by automatically trying juveniles as adults when accused of crimes at school.[2] Tonight's meeting was the next step. By the end of the evening, these nine

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[1] MLJS, "Readers Comment on Issues," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, November 10, 1983, A6.

[2] William Marovitz, "Gov. Signs Marovitz/Sangemeister Gang Crime Package," 24 September 1985, box 104, file "Gang Programs," Augustus F. Hawkins Papers Collection 1642, Special Collections, University of California Los Angeles (hereafter cited as Hawkins Papers).

parents had a plan to take on gangs in their neighborhood. Like Sandoval, they would

lobby politicians, they would pressure the CPD for more patrols, they would cover

graffiti, they would educate victims of their rights, and they would stand with those

victims in court. It was at this meeting that Mothers Against Gangs was born.[3]

Mothers Against Gangs spread across the country, and other parent organizations

soon followed. As one mother in Los Angeles explained, "We, the mothers, are sick of

the drive-by shootings and innocent people being killed."[4] Sandoval and the other parents

were responding to what they considered to be a major shift in gang violence that had

begun in the late 1970s. In the first half of the 1970s, gangs appeared to go through a

quiet period. Politicians, police, and a number of sociologists assumed gang violence was

on the decline. As a result, gangs attracted little national attention and most Americans

who lived outside of the neighborhoods where gangs still existed largely forgot about the

issue. Yet during this decade, this chapter argues, those who lived in gang turfs noted that

there appeared to be major shifts underway. By the time the gang issue hit the national

radar again in the 1980s, those who lived with and studied gangs had became

increasingly worried about gangs' involvement in the drug trade, growing numbers of

minority youth involved in gang activity, and gang members' use of guns. As a result, the

way that actors framed the gang problem in the 1980s would be distinctly different from

that of previous periods. The response of urban residents would be different as well.

The following chapter analyzes how individuals in African, Latino, and Asian

American communities where gang violence occurred rallied against the violence in a

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[3] Hattie Clark, "Mothers Against Gangs," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 28, 1986, 31.
[4] Roxana Kopetman, "Mothers Organize in Attempt to Stop Gang Violence," *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 1988, LB1.

variety of ways. Some argued that gang violence threatened the safety of the entire

neighborhood or was a form of racial suicide. Others mobilized using their status as

parents of dead or endangered children to demand a solution, an approach that was

entirely new to crime politics. In their fight, these minority activists also proposed

solutions to gang violence in their neighborhoods. Although Latino and African

Americans continued to advocate social services for gang-prone youth, by the 1980s none

of these minority groups would favor the cooperative gang programs that had been

popular during the 1960s. More importantly for national crime politics, these individuals

began to embrace a more punitive approach to addressing urban gangs. They supported

increasing police presence in gang turfs, incarcerating hardcore gang members, and more

funding for police departments. Although these minority activists' new stance would

appear to support tough-on-crime politics, it was actually a call for fairer policing and

safer communities.

"Little Dudes Don't Learn to Gangbang That Way Anymore"

Histories of American gangs often cite the early to mid 1970s as a quiet period, a

belief that many contemporaries shared. At the time, theories abounded as to why gangs

seemed to have melted away. Some believed that an influx of heroin and rising drug use

by gang members in the 1960s had squelched the violence. Addiction often tore gangs

apart as members put drug use before gang loyalty. New York gangs in particular were

hard hit by addiction and atrophy.[5] Others pointed to law enforcement crackdowns during

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[5] Eric C. Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings: Youth Gangs in Postwar New York* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 217–236; New York State Assembly

the "law and order" movement. Increased surveillance and incarceration of gang

members, some argued, had taken enough of the gangs off the street to stem the

violence.[6] Still others believed that continued civil rights agitation and gang reform

movements were responsible. Although the activism of police officers had largely shut

down federal funding for reformed gangs by the early 1970s, a number of gangs

continued to advocate constructive efforts and take part in civil rights protests.[7] For

example, in New York fifty-one gangs created the Inner City Roundtable of Youth, a

coordinating council that enlisted gang members for rallies, neighborhood patrols, and

community service. Although federal funding was not an option, limited private support

from philanthropists and local political leaders was still available for such efforts.[8]

This lull was punctuated by sporadic news reports warning that gangs had

returned to their old ways, but these fears had no lasting impact at the national level. In

1972, the New York newspapers worried about a sudden increase in gang-related

violence in the Bronx, and two years later the New York State Assembly held hearings to

determine the extent of the problem.[9] In Los Angeles, police reports that the number of

gangs had doubled from 1952 to 1972 raised concern, and a spike in reported gang

Subcommittee on the Family Court, "The Resurgence of Youth Gangs in New York City: Study Report No. 1," July 1974, p. 2, New York City Hall Library.

[6] Martin Tolchin, "Gangs Spread Terror in the South Bronx," *New York Times*, January 16, 1973, 81.

[7] "2 Buffalo Youths Seized in Killing," *New York Times*, November 24, 1972, 41; "2 Warring Gangs Seek to Revitalize a Section of Detroit," *New York Times*, December 31, 1973, 35; Grace Lichtenstein, "500, at City Hall, Protest Reese Slaying," *New York Times*, September 26, 1974, 33; Joseph P. Fried, "Gang Turning Slum Housing into Co-op," *New York Times*, January 25, 1974, 37.

[8] "Youth Gangs Are Trying an About-Face," *New York Times*, February 9, 1977, 61.

[9] Gene Weingarten, "East Bronx Story-Return of the Street Gang," *New York Magazine*, March 27, 1972, 31–37; New York State Assembly Subcommittee on the Family Court, "Resurgence of Youth Gangs"; Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*, 236–245.

violence in predominantly black neighborhoods in 1972 attracted the city's attention.[10]

That same year the *Washington Post* cautioned that youth gangs were back nationwide.[11]

But in all of these cases, the violence quickly fizzled and no sustained national discussion

developed. The sense of panic endemic in the late 1950s and 1960s had disappeared, and

politicians and many crime experts thought that the gang problem itself had as well.

Criminologists later argued that the apparent disappearance of gangs was actually

a result of perception. Noted gang scholars Malcolm Klein, Cheryl L. Maxson, and

Walter Miller all agree that a close look at national statistics actually showed a steady

increase of gang development during the 1970s. In one study, Miller found that of the

twelve largest American cities, six reported high levels of gang violence in the 1970s.[12]

Klein and Maxson discovered that at the end of the 1960s only 100 cities and towns had

reported the presence of gangs, but by 1979 this number rose to 180.[13] The perception of

a gang lull stemmed from scholars' and journalists' changing attention to the issue. The

number of social science studies devoted to gang violence dropped nearly 60 percent in

the 1970s.[14] Meanwhile, journalists—who had focused on New York during the first

wave of gang panic—erroneously assumed that the drug addiction process that happened

there was underway in other cities as well. However, gang violence statistics actually

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[10] Robert A. Wright, "Rise in Youth Gang Killing Alarms Police in 3 Cities," *New York Times*, November 27, 1972, 73; Jerry Cohen, "Black Youth Gangs: Is Threat Overestimated?," *Los Angeles Times*, March 19, 1972, F1.

[11] Linda Backstein, "Return of Youth Gangs," *Washington Post*, May 21, 1972, K5.

[12] Walter B. Miller, *Violence by Youth Gangs and Youth Groups as a Crime Problem in Major American Cities* (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, DOJ, 1975), 11.

[13] Malcolm W. Klein, "Street Gang Cycles," in *Crime*, ed. James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia (San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies Press, 1995), 226.

[14] Malcolm W. Klein and Cheryl L. Maxson, "Street Gang Violence," in *Violent Crime, Violent Criminals*, ed. Neil Alan Weiner and Marvin E. Wolfgang (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1989), 199.

peaked during the 1970s in a number of places, such as Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia.[15] These peaks were not interpreted by the larger society as a national trend, and thus gang violence declined as a salient issue during the decade.[16]

While the image of gang hibernation shaped the opinions of outsiders, sporadic and often ignored reports from urban neighborhoods suggested that gangs were undergoing fundamental changes unnoticed by the larger society. Some of these claims came from testimony by residents in neighborhoods with gang violence, sociological studies, and interviews of gang members. But many of these reports were based on police-generated statistics. In light of crime statistics' malleability, these police-generated numbers cannot be considered a picture of reality on the streets. Gang-related data reflected the different viewpoints, biases, and focus of each police force in every city. Despite these flaws, the statistics became the foundation for how groups thought about gangs and gang violence after 1970. These perceptions would shape the ways in which Americans of all kinds responded to what they believed was an increasingly dangerous and pressing problem in the 1980s and 1990s.

The first shift that seemed to be underway in urban gangs was the introduction of the drug trade. Gangs had always been involved in various forms of illegal activity, but during the 1970s these acts increasingly included income-generating forms, one of the most common of which was narcotics sales.[17] Early gangs in the 1950s and 1960s often eschewed the use of hard drugs that made it difficult to fight in rumbles, and these early

[15] Miller, *Violence by Youth Gangs*, 1–2; James C. Howell, "Recent Gang Research: Program and Policy Implications," *Crime and Delinquency* 40, no. 4 (October 1994): 496–500.
[16] Klein, "Street Gang Cycles."
[17] Brenda C. Coughlin and Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, "The Urban Street Gang after 1970," *Annual Review of Sociology* 29 (2003): 43; Calvin Toy, "A Short History of Asian Gangs in San Francisco," *Justice Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (December 1992): 659–600.

gangs were almost never involved in drug sales.[18] Mexican gangs in Los Angeles were a

rare exception. Law enforcement and criminology experts believed that Mexican gang

members had been responsible for introducing heroin, barbiturates, and other drugs into

Latino communities. However, even then, gang involvement in the actual sale of these

substances was limited.[19] In the late 1960s and early 1970s there were gangs in Chicago

and New York who tried to rid their turfs of hard drugs. They attacked addicts, shot and

killed drug dealers, and formed alliances with other gangs to keep their areas drug-free.

Gang members and experts at the time averred that these efforts, especially in New York,

grew out of gangs' antipathy for heroin, which had decimated the gang scene.[20] But

beginning in the early 1970s, new reports surfaced of gang involvement in the actual sale

and distribution of drugs in cities nationwide. Gary, Indiana and St. Louis police officers

noted rising violence between black gangs over control of drug dealing.[21] Federal law

enforcement warned that African American gangs on the east coast had adopted the

"sophistication" of organized crime for drug trafficking.[22] Urban ethnographers reported

that gangs in Asian, Latino, and white communities were also selling drugs, particularly

cocaine.[23]

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[18] Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*, 229–231.

[19] Joan W. Moore et al., *Homeboys: Gangs, Drugs, and Prison in the Barrios of Los Angeles* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978).

[20] Thomas A. Johnson, "Who Killed the 10 Drug Pushers?," *New York Times*, January 23, 1972, 55; John Darnton, "New Problems Encountered by Resurgent Street Gangs," *New York Times*, February 21, 1972, 53.

[21] Andrew H. Malcolm, "17 Slayings Spur a Drive on Heroin Traffic in Gary," *New York Times*, August 13, 1972, 22; "St. Louis Gangs Wage Lethal War to Control Drug Market," *New York Times*, September 3, 1972, 20.

[22] Eric Pace, "Body Found in Car at Airport May Be Linked to a Drug War," *New York Times*, August 10, 1972, 40.

[23] Philippe Bourgois, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Martín Sánchez Jankowski, *Islands in the Street: Gangs and American*

Although historians and criminologist now believe that gang involvement in drug sales grew in the 1970s and 1980s, few experts agree on the extent of this trend.[24] Some studies in Los Angeles and Chicago found that gang members were *less* likely than their peers—especially in the 1970s—to be arrested for drug sales, indicating that the documented rise of gang-related drug sales may actually have been a result of increased drug economy participation by youths in general. However, studies in other cities, such as Denver, Miami, New York, and Cleveland found that gang youth were much more likely to sell drugs than non-gang youths.[25] In many places, the number of reported gang members involved in drug sales jumped substantially in the 1980s. But even in Los Angeles, the supposed epicenter of gang-drug empires, only a minority of gang members admitted to or were arrested for involvement in drug sales.[26] Moreover, gang experts studying police reports in South Central Los Angeles found that gang-related homicides were less likely to involve drug motives than non-gang homicides, further weakening the

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Urban Society (Berkley: University of California Press, 1991), 120–121; Steven D. Levitt and Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, "An Economic Analysis of a Drug-Selling Gang's Finances," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 115, no. 3 (August 2000): 755–789; Lee-jan Jan, "Asian Gang Problems and Social Policy Solutions: A Discussion and Review," *Gang Journal* 1, no. 4 (1993): 39-40.

[24] John M. Hagedorn, "Gang Violence in the Postindustrial Era," *Crime and Justice* 24, Youth Violence Issue (1998): 380–383.

[25] C. Ronald Huff, "Comparing the Criminal Behavior of Youth Gangs and At-Risk Youths," *National Institute of Justice: Research in Brief* (October 1998): 4; Walter B. Miller, *Crime by Youth Gangs and Groups in the United States* (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, DOJ, 1982), 95–96.

[26] Estimates from Los Angeles ranged from 25 to 50 percent of gang members having sold drugs at least once. Only 14 percent of gang members could be considered regular dealers (having sold drugs three times or more in a year). Howell, "Recent Gang Research," 507–509; Klein, "Street Gang Cycles," 226–227; Ira Reiner, *Gangs, Crime and Violence in Los Angeles: Findings and Proposals from the District Attorney's Office* (Los Angeles: Office of the District Attorney County of Los Angeles, May 1992), 60; Cheryl L. Maxson and Malcolm W. Klein, "Defining Gang Homicide: An Updated Look at Member and Motive Approaches," in *The Modern Gang Reader*, ed. Jody Miller, Cheryl L. Maxson, and Malcolm W. Klein, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Roxbury, 2001), 182.

drug-gang link.[27] Many gang members also disputed the conflation of gang membership

and drug dealing. As Li'l Monster, a member of a Los Angeles gang explained, "I want

to set the record straight. People think gangs and drugs go hand in hand, but they don't. If

I sell drugs, does that make me a gangbanger? No. If I gangbang, does that make me sell

drugs? No."[28] In most cases, when a gang member did sell drugs it was as a side

operation independent of the gang, mostly meant to support a personal drug habit or an

individual member's family.[29] This atomized approach to drug sales likely developed

because the drug economy and gang culture often were at odds. Gang warfare made it

difficult to maintain the high levels of organization, communication, and stability

necessary for successful drug operations.[30] In the rare cases when an entire gang was

involved, drug sales were considered secondary to the gang's identity and its goal of

neighborhood protection.[31]

Reported data on gang members' demographics also changed during this period.

These new data recast the racial and age composition of American street gangs. In the

mid 1970s, for the first time, the DOJ published nationwide statistics from police files

that measured gang membership by race, and the numbers strengthened the perception

[27] Maxson and Klein, "Defining Gang Homicide," 180–181.
[28] Quoted in "When You're a Crip (or a Blood)," *Harper's Magazine*, March 1989, 59.
[29] William Sanders, *Gangbangs and Drive-bys: Grounded Culture and Juvenile Gang Violence* (New York: Aldine De Guyter, 1994), 135.
[30] A 1996 national survey of police departments to determine the pervasiveness of the drug-gang link, the first of its kind, reported that 57 percent of gangs nationwide were not involved in drug sales, 20 percent were involved at a low level of involvement, 11 percent at a medium level, and 12 percent at a high level. James C. Howell and Debra K. Gleason, "Youth Gangs Drug Trafficking," *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Juvenile Justice Bulletin* (December 1999): 3; Irving A. Spergel, "Youth Gangs: Continuity and Change," *Crime and Justice* 12 (1990): 197.
[31] Reiner, *Gangs, Crime and Violence*, 62–66; Coughlin and Venkatesh, "Urban Street Gang," 44; Carolyn Rebecca Block and Richard Block, "Street Gang Crime in Chicago," *National Institute of Justice: Research in Brief* (December 1993): 4.

that gangs had become mostly nonwhite. In 1975, nearly 84 percent of all DOJ-reported

gang members in the United States were black or Latino; by 1990 the number had risen to

90 percent.[32] Police departments in Chicago and Los Angeles also claimed that homicide

statistics from their cities showed that black and Latino men were disproportionately

dying from gang violence.[33] For example, a study in 1986 found that CPD homicide

reports noted "gang violence" as the most common cause of death in cases involving

Latino men.[34] Across the country in Los Angeles, police statistics categorized over 93

percent of all gang homicide victims in the 1980s as black or Latino.[35] After Latinos and

African Americans, the DOJ's reports noted that Asian Americans represented the next

largest group of gang members at 6 percent of the national total, a major change given the

fact that Asian youth gangs had been almost non-existent in the 1950s and 1960s panic.[36]

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[32] For perspective, the racial breakdown of the entire American population in 1990 was as follows: White 76 percent, Black 12 percent, Latino 4 percent, Asian 3 percent. The racial breakdown of populations living in central cities was as follows: White 59 percent, Black 22 percent, Latino 7 percent, and Asian 4 percent. Miller, *Violence by Youth Gangs*, 26; G. David Curry et al., *National Assessment of Law Enforcement Anti-Gang Information Resources* (National Institute of Justice, DOJ, 1993), 57; US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1990 Census of Population* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1992), 3, 7; Youth Services Bureau Street Gang Detail of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, "Street Gangs," May 1979, p. 5, box 48, file 36, Herman Baca Papers MSS 649, Mandeville Special Collections Library, University of California San Diego (herafter cited as Baca Papers).

[33] Irving A. Spergel, "Violent Gangs in Chicago: In Search of Social Policy," *Social Service Review* 58, no. 2 (June 1984): 210.

[34] Laurie Abraham, "Study Links Gangs, Killings of Hispanics," *Chicago Sun-Times*, July 28, 1986.

[35] H.R. Hutson et al., "The Epidemic of Gang-Related Homicides in Los Angeles County from 1979 through 1994," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 274, no. 13 (October 1995): 1032; Bob Baker, "Chicano Gangs: A History of Violence," *Los Angeles Times*, December 11, 1988, 4; Pamela Irving Jackson, "Crime, Youth Gangs, and Urban Transition: The Social Dislocations of Postindustrial Economic Development," *Justice Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (September 1991): 379–397.

[36] Curry et al., *National Assessment*, 57; Kenneth A. Abbott and Elizabeth Lee Abbott, "Juvenile Delinquency in San Francisco's Chinese-American Community, 1961–1966," in *Asian-Americans: Psychological Perspectives*, ed. Stanley Sue and Nathaniel N. Wagner (Ben Lomond, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1973), 171–180; Toy, "Short History"; Ko-lin Chin,

Like any crime statistics, these numbers do need to be contextualized. In most cases, an individual was counted as a gang member if the local police had entered his/her name in gang tracking files based simply on police suspicion of gang involvement. Black and Latino young men were certainly overrepresented in these files because police departments in the 1980s routinely used racial profiling to address the gang problem.[37] Despite these problems, the data became the foundation for perceptions about gangs and their composition.

Sociologists assumed that immigration shifts were a vital reason for the changing face of gang demographics.[38] In 1965, Congress passed reforms that removed restrictions on immigration from non-European countries. In particular, these measures radically affected Asian American communities. After the Immigration Act of 1965, more than four times as many Asian immigrants entered the United States in twenty years than had in the entire century before, a large number of which were young men and children. At first, many of these immigrants came from China and Hong Kong, but Southeast Asian

Chinatown Gangs: Extortion, Enterprise, and Ethnicity (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3–11.

[37] In some cases, white gangs were considered a "different" phenomenon by police departments. For a discussion of the role of individual officers, precincts, and departments in deciding what qualifies as a gang see Albert J. Meehan, "The Organizational Career of Gang Statistics: The Politics of Policing Gangs," *Sociological Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 337–370; Youth Services Bureau, "Street Gangs," 5; Irving A. Spergel, *The Youth Gang Problem: A Community Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 12–13; John M. Hagedorn, "Race Not Space: A Revisionist History of Gangs in Chicago," *Journal of African American History* 91, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 194–208; David A. Harris, "The Stories, the Statistics, and the Law: Why 'Driving While Black' Matters," in *Race, Ethnicity, and Policing: New and Essential Readings*, ed. Stephen K. Rice and Michael D. White (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 50; Carl Werthman and Irving Piliavin, "Gang Members and the Police," in *The Police: Six Sociological Essays*, ed. David J. Bordua (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1969); John Huey-Long Song, John Dombrick, and Gilbert Geis, "Lost in the Melting Pot: Asian Youth Gangs in the United States," *Gang Journal* 1, no. 1 (1992): 7–8; G. David Curry, Richard A. Ball, and Scott H. Decker, "Estimating the National Scope of Gang Crime from Law Enforcement Data," in *Gangs in America*, ed. C. Ronald Huff, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 32–34.

[38] Spergel, *Youth Gang Problem*, 8.

immigrants, such as Vietnamese, Lao, Cambodian, and Hmong, entered the United States in greater numbers in the 1980s, thus increasing numbers of Southeast Asian gangs began to dominate some areas. Many cities, like San Francisco and New York, were unprepared for this influx, and the government failed to create the housing, schools, English language instruction, and jobs that these youths needed.[39] Disillusioned by racism and lack of services, many of these young men eventually formed the core of Asian gangs.[40] Immigration changes were also assumed to be at work in Latino communities. Immigration from Mexico, Central America, and South America rose steadily after 1965, hitting its fastest pace of growth in the 1980s.[41] Like Asian youth, Latinos struggled in a society that often excluded them. Compounding the situation was the multi-generational gang tradition in many Latino communities that both embraced new members from this immigrant pool and caused more violence as swelling populations forced battles along the borders between gang turfs. Together, a larger pool of youth, fewer opportunities, and a consistently strong gang culture, experts argued, had helped fuel the growth of Latino gangs.[42]

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[39] Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1998), 418–422; Sanders, *Gangbangs and Drive-bys*, 156–157.
[40] Paul Takagi and Tony Platt, "Behind the Gilded Ghetto: An Analysis of Race, Class and Crime in Chinatown," *Crime and Social Justice* 9 (Spring/Summer 1978): 2–25; Toy, "Short History"; James Diego Vigil and Steve Chong Yun, "Vietnamese Youth Gangs in Southern California," in *Gangs in America*, ed. C. Ronald Huff (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990), 148–156.
[41] US Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, *2008 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* (Washington, DC: US Department of Homeland Security, 2009), 12–13.
[42] Joan W. Moore, *Going Down to the Barrio: Homeboys and Homegirls in Change* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 6, 17, 76, 79; James Diego Vigil, *Barrio Gangs: Street Life and Identity in Southern California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 16–19, 34–42, 56–63; Reiner, *Gangs, Crime and Violence in Los Angeles*, 90–91.

Gang experts and a number of minority activists maintained that poverty and unemployment also explained racial disparities in gang demographics.[43] During the 1970s and 1980s young minority men faced dramatically limited options for economic advancement and far harsher unemployment rates than did whites.[44] This trend was especially true for African American men between the ages of 16 and 19, the peak years of gang involvement (Figure 3), but unemployment and poverty during the recessions of the 1970s and 1980s were also problems for Latino youth. Many gang experts used this data, in conjunction with sociologist William Julius Wilson's conception of the economic isolation and perpetual unemployment of the urban "underclass,"[45] to explain the rise of gangs in this period.[46] In short, unable to find jobs, many turned to gang membership for status and economic options.[47]

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[43] Jackson, "Crime, Youth Gangs," 392; Greg Krikorian, "Study Ranks Joblessness Top Factor in Gang Toll," *Los Angeles Times*, October 28, 1997.

[44] Tom Joe, "Economic Inequality: The Picture in Black and White," *Crime and Delinquency* 33, no. 2 (April 1987): 282–299; Philip J. Bowman, "Joblessness," in *Life in Black America*, ed. James S. Jackson (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1991), 156–178.

[45] For a discussion of the underclass and debates surrounding underclass theory, see William J. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Michael B. Katz, ed., *The Underclass Debate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[46] According to Walter B. Miller, the pervasive use of the underclass concept by gang experts was similar to their use of Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin's "blocked opportunity" theories in the 1960s. For a small sample of these types of gang studies, see Walter B. Miller, "Why the United States Has Failed to Solve Its Youth Gang Problem," in Huff, *Gangs in America*, 278–280; C. Ronald Huff, "Two Generations of Gang Research," in Huff, *Gangs in America*, 24–36; Scott Cummings and Daniel J. Monti, "Public Policy and Gangs: Social Science and the Urban Underclass," in *Gangs: The Origins and Impact of Contemporary Youth Gangs in the United States*, ed. Scott Cummings and Daniel J. Monti (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 305–320; Joan W. Moore, "Isolation and Stigmatization in the Development of an Underclass: The Case of Chicano Gangs in East Los Angeles," *Social Problems* 33, no. 1 (October 1985): 1–12; Vigil, *Barrio Gangs*; Perry Macon and John M. Hagedorn, *People and Folks: Gangs, Crime, and the Underclass in a Rustbelt City*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1998); Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, "The Gang in the Community," in Huff, *Gangs in America*, 2nd ed., 241–256.
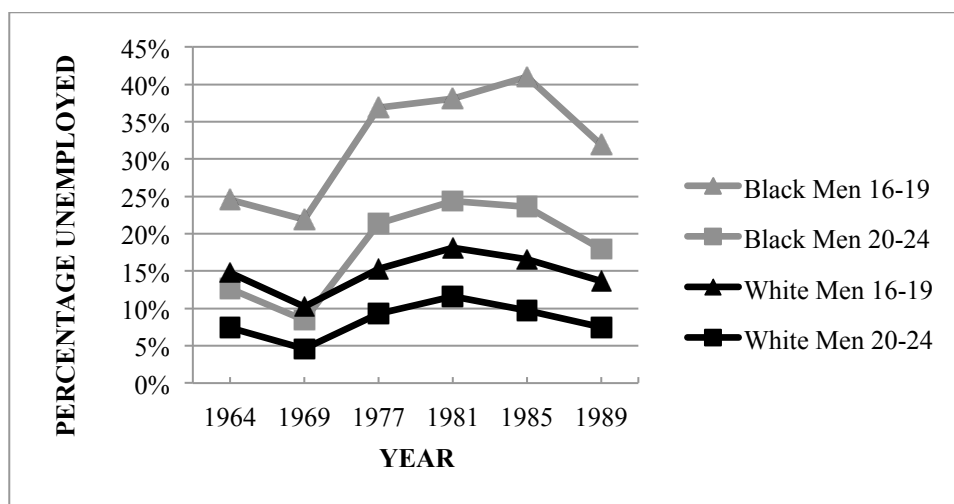
[47] Vigil, *Barrio Gangs*, 24–33.

Figure 3. Nationwide percentage of male unemployment by race and age, 1966–1989. Source: Richard B. Freeman and Harry J. Holzer, *The Black Youth Employment Crisis: Summary Findings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 7; US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1987*, (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1987), 378; US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1991* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1991) 392.

Gang experts warned that the age of gang members was also changing. According to police reports and sociologists, in the 1950s and 1960s gang membership tended to cluster tightly between the ages of fourteen and twenty, but by the 1970s this range expanded. Journalists focused heavily on the larger number of gang members under the age of thirteen, a pattern that mostly occurred in "emerging gang cities" or places where gangs were appearing for the first time.[48] Yet membership statistics from police departments showed that the truly dramatic change occurred at the other end as older members continued to stay involved in the gang lifestyle further into adulthood.[49] Sociologists and gang members at the time argued that the reason for this "aging up" was

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[48] Curry et al., *National Assessment*, v.
[49] Klein and Maxson, "Street Gang Violence," 213.

directly tied to economic issues.[50] Employment and military service had traditionally

been avenues for "aging out" of the gangs, but recessions in the 1970s and 1980s closed

off employment opportunities for young men while deindustrialization denied those who

could find jobs the high wages that had existed for blue collar work in previous

decades.[51] Moreover, after Vietnam, the military stopped drafting young men and

increasingly focused recruitment on a more limited pool of high school and college

graduates who could fight in the highly-technical, small-scale wars of the era. Young

men with juvenile records from the streets were no longer needed in large numbers.[52]

Finally, cuts to job programs and federal aid in the 1980s further limited the options for

members as they approached their adult years.[53] The most significant impact of "aging

up," gang experts and police officers argued was that older gangs translated into greater

violence; police data indicated that most homicides and assaults came at the hands of

these older members.[54]

All observers, including police officers, academic experts, gang members, and

residents in gang turf, noted that of all the changes that appeared to be underway in the

gang world, gun use was the single most important change during this period.[55] In the

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[50] Coughlin and Venkatesh, "Urban Street Gang," 45; Macon and Hagedorn, *People and Folks*.

[51] Troy Duster, "Crime, Youth Unemployment, and the Black Urban Underclass," *Crime and Delinquency* 33, no. 2 (April 1987): 300–315; "Growing up Wild," *New York Times*, August 19, 1976, 34; C. Ronald Huff, "Youth Gangs and Public Policy," *Crime and Delinquency* 35, no. 4 (October 1989): 527; Michael A. Stoll, "When Jobs Move, Do Black and Latino Men Lose?: The Effect of Growth in Job Decentralisation on Young Men's Jobless Incidence and Duration," *Urban Studies* 35, no. 12 (December 1998): 2221–2239; Cummings and Monti, "Public Policy and Gangs," 310–314.

[52] Huff, "Youth Gangs and Public Policy," 527.

[53] Iver Peterson, "Young Seen Facing Dim Prospect on Summer Jobs," *New York Times*, June 5, 1982, 9.

[54] Spergel, "Youth Gangs," 218.

[55] Miller, *Violence by Youth Gangs*, 41; Klein and Maxson, "Street Gang Violence," 219.

1950s and 1960s, firearms were a rare commodity among gang youth, but by the 1970s gang members owned an increasing numbers of handguns. In a national study, gang expert Walter Miller found that by 1979 in a typical gang of about forty members, twenty owned firearms; in the past, the number had been fewer than three.[56] By 1990, surveys showed that the number jumped to over thirty.[57] "Humbugging [fighting] use to be more fun," a member of the Gaylords in Chicago recounted. "I remember when we'd go down on another club [gang] carrying nothing but belt buckles. But little dudes don't learn to gangbang that way any more. It's so easy to buy a piece [gun]."[58] The proliferation of guns among gang members reflected the wider availability of firearms in American society. From 1968 to 1988, the number of guns in America nearly doubled from an estimated 80 million to 150 million.[59] It also reflected changes in gang membership. In the 1970s, returning veterans from Vietnam reportedly became involved with urban gangs, bringing both guns and expertise back to the streets.[60] Police and sociologists assumed that as gang members got older and as individual members earned money from drug sales, guns became easier to purchase.[61] Gang members interviewed for a number of

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[56] Miller, *Violence by Youth Gangs*, 41.
[57] Joseph F. Sheley and James D. Wright, *In the Line of Fire: Youths, Guns, and Violence in Urban America* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 100–101.
[58] Quoted in Lynn Emmerman, "North Side Story: Gang Tales from Three Turfs," *Chicago*, October 1977, 212.
[59] There is no regulated or centralized system for determining the exact number of guns owned in America thus these numbers are merely estimates, however, a definite and dramatic increase is widely acknowledge given a rise in gun manufacturing, which is heavily regulated and tabulated. Albert J. Reiss Jr. and Jeffrey A. Roth, *Understanding and Preventing Violence* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1993), 256.
[60] New York State Assembly Subcommittee on the Family Court, "Resurgence of Youth Gangs," B-18; Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*, 241–242.
[61] Even if gang members themselves weren't involved in narcotics sales, studies have shown that in communities where drug economies are vibrant guns tend to spread as first dealers and then others in the environment arm themselves. Alfred Blumstein, "Youth Violence, Guns, and the

academic studies told researchers that the sheer presence of guns actually fueled a positive feedback loop: when more guns entered the streets, more gang members felt the need to arm themselves for protection.[62] As one gang member admitted to *US News and World Report,* "Guns are more important than women. You cherish your guns; that's what keeps you alive."[63]

The greater availability of guns seemed to translate into more shootings. By the 1980s, more than 80 percent of homicides categorized by the LAPD as gang-related involved a gun, as did more than 96 percent in Chicago.[64] Residents in gang communities and minority leaders across the country became particularly concerned beginning in 1983 when the rate at which young men were both victims and perpetrators of gun violence rose precipitously.[65] Meanwhile, the national news media, the police, and Americans who lived outside of gang communities worried about the spread of semiautomatic and automatic weapons. There were numerous police reports of AK-47's, Uzi's, and machine guns used in gang shootings.[66] One criminologists' survey of gang members in

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Illicit-Drug Industry," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 86, no. 1 (Fall 1995): 10–36; Reiner, *Gangs, Crime and Violence,* 86–87.

[62] Joseph F. Sheley and James D. Wright, "Gun Acquisition and Possession in Selected Juvenile Samples," *National Institute of Justice: Research in Brief* (December 1993): 7–8; Sheley and Wright, *In the Line of Fire*, 101–113; Beth Bjerregaard and Alan J. Lizotte, "Gun Ownership and Gang Membership," in Miller, Maxson, and Klein, *Modern Gang Reader*, 213–227; Stanley Tookie Williams, *Blue Rage, Black Redemption: A Memoir* (New York: Touchstone, 2007), 94.

[63] Quoted in Jack Seamonds, "Ethnic Gangs and Organized Crime," *US News and World Report*, January 18, 1988, 35.

[64] Cheryl L. Maxson and Malcolm W. Klein, "Street Gang Violence: Twice as Great, or Half as Great?," in Huff, *Gangs in America*, 92, 96; Block and Block, "Street Gang Crime in Chicago," 193.

[65] Blumstein, "Youth Violence, Guns," 16–20, 24–26; Sheley and Wright, *In the Line of Fire*, 4–6.

[66] George Hackett and Michael A. Lerner, "LA Law: Gangs and Crack," *Newsweek*, April 24, 1987, 35; Luis J. Rodriguez, *Always Running: La Vida Loca, Gang Days in LA* (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1993), 207; Sanyika Shakur, *Monster: The Autobiography of an LA Gang Member* (New York: Atlantic Monthly, 1993), 366–367.

California, Illinois, Louisiana, and New Jersey conservatively estimated that at least a quarter of gang members in these states carried automatic or semiautomatic firearms.[67] But gang members maintained, like Tee Rodgers in Los Angeles, "everybody ain't got a motherfuckin' bazooka—or an Uzi."[68] Seconding Rodgers claim, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that in Los Angeles—the city that news reports described as having the worst semiautomatic problem—fewer than 10 percent of gang-related homicides involved a semiautomatic weapon from 1979 through 1987, but this percentage spiked to nearly 30 percent by 1990.[69] Despite this statistical change and the attention it received from news outlets and the police, handguns still remained the weapon of choice in a majority of gang homicides nationwide.[70]

According to gang members and gang experts, the introduction of large numbers of guns into gang culture reshaped gang warfare. Gone were the days of large rumbles. It was now safer for small groups of one or two gang members to shoot rival targets unannounced and with greater speed.[71] One of the most iconic tactics was the drive-by: shooting from a moving vehicle or jumping briefly from a car to shoot at rivals. Although the term first appeared in Los Angeles in the late 1970s, gangs had been using this technique since the early 1960s in cities such as San Antonio, Chicago, New York, and

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[67] Sheley and Wright, *In the Line of Fire*, 100–101.
[68] Quoted in "When You're a Crip," 52.
[69] A similar trend occurred in Chicago. Block and Block, "Street Gang Crime in Chicago," 7.
[70] Hutson et al., "Epidemic of Gang-Related Homicides," 1034.
[71] Drive-bys were almost exclusively used by gang members at the time. Maxson and Klein, "Street Gang Violence," 92, 96; Gary Hoenig, "Execution in the Bronx," *New York Times*, June 17, 1973, 180; "Heavy Weaponry Now Being Used by Youth Gangs," *Washington Post*, November 19, 1975, F2; Emmerman, "North Side Story," 212.

Kansas City.[72] But drive-bys never became very popular because of East Coast cities'

narrow streets, dense populations, high rises, and gridlock traffic, which made such

tactics less effective. West Coast cities, on the other hand, seemed to be built for the

drive-by. With widely dispersed single-family homes that made it easy to target

individual gang members and long, wide streets that allowed a quick getaway, Southern

California became the center of drive-by activity.[73] By the 1980s, the drive-by became a

national symbol of gang violence and an integral part of gang mythology.[74] Surprisingly,

gangs didn't automatically embrace the drive-by. At first, many gangs thought drive-bys

were cowardly and damaged the gang's reputation. In addition, drive-by shootings often

led to the death of innocent civilians[75]—in one study nearly one-quarter of all victims

killed by drive-bys were bystanders—bringing increased pressure from law enforcement

and from the community.[76] But as guns became more prolific, drive-bys became more

popular as an effective way to instill fear in rivals without the exposure of a direct fight.[77]

Both guns and drive-by shootings made gang violence increasingly dangerous both for

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[72] "Ya Son 5 Heridos en la Guerra de Pandillas," *El Continental* (El Paso, TX), January 18, 1960, 1; "Cops Consider New Ways to Battle Gangs," *Chicago Tribune*, August 4, 1966, B8; "Girl and Boy Are Wounded in West Side Gang Attack," *New York Times*, November 29, 1962, 32; "Negro Girl in Kansas City Wounded in Gang Warfare," *New York Times*, October 4, 1963, 19.

[73] Sanders, *Gangbangs and Drive-bys*, 65–84; Attorney General's Youth Gang Task Force, *Report on Youth Gang Violence in California* (Sacramento, CA: State of California Department of Justice, 1981), 4.

[74] The first use of the term in nationally circulated magazines occurred in John S. DeMott and Jon D. Hull, "Have Gang, Will Travel," *Time*, December 9, 1985, 34.

[75] In a Los Angeles study—the only study of drive-by fatality rates—researchers found that only 5 percent of drive-by shooting fatally wounded gang members; 63 percent resulted in nonfatal wounds. Hutson et al., "Epidemic of Gang-Related Homicides," 1034–1035.

[76] Mike Sager, "Death in Venice," *Rolling Stone*, September 22, 1988, 71; Tito Cortinaz, interview by Robert Medrano, [1990], box 2, file 1, Richard Griswold del Castillo Papers, Chicano Studies Research Center, University of California Los Angeles.

[77] Reymundo Sanchez, *Once a King, Always a King: The Unmaking of a Latin King* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2003), 31.

gang members and the communities in which they lived. And as danger rose, community demands for a solution did, too.

The Rhetoric of Community Organizing: Peril, Pride, and Parents

Residents in minority communities dealing with gangs on a regular basis were the first to craft a solution.[78] Gang expert Martín Sánchez Jankowski spent over a decade studying the relationship between gangs and their neighbors and found that community members were the central component shaping the prevalence and power of various gangs. Often community members tolerated gangs until violence hit a tipping point where the level of violence was no longer acceptable to the community at large. Reaching this limit, community members turned against the gang, mobilizing protests, working with police, and using other forms of everyday resistance. According to Sánchez Jankowski, it was the community's mobilization—more than any other group's—that could affect gang membership and strength.[79] Beginning in the mid 1970s, a number of minority news outlets, leaders, and residents all expressed growing concern about rising violence and its effects on their neighborhoods. As early as 1972 *Ebony* lamented that there were more black men in the gangs of Chicago than there were members of all of the civil rights organizations in the country.[80] The problem grew substantially worse, and by 1988 the same magazine warned that black teenagers were "the most vulnerable generation of our

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[78] Concerns about gang crime have generally been strongest among those communities who actually have an identifiable problem with street gangs. Jodi Lane and James W. Meeker, "Social Disorganization Perceptions, Fear of Gang Crime, and Behavioral Precautions among Whites, Latinos, and Vietnamese," *Journal of Criminal Justice* 32, no. 1 (February 2004): 49–62.

[79] Sánchez Jankowski, *Islands in the Street*, 32–33, 179, 201–203.

[80] Monroe Anderson, "The Young Black Male," *Ebony*, August 1972, 129.

time" because of the growing threat of gangs and the menace of drive-by shootings.[81]

Some Asian Americans openly discussed their gang fears as well. A few residents of

New York's Chinatown remembered the 1970s and 1980s as a particularly dangerous

time for teenage boys who faced gang assaults on the streets and for merchants who dealt

with extortion threats from the same gangs.[82] In San Francisco, one popular Chinatown

newspaper *East/West* warned as early as 1972 that the gang problem was the single most

important issue facing Chinese Americans, an observation made all the more pressing

after five innocent bystanders died in a gang shootout at the Golden Dragon restaurant in

1978.[83] Similar concerns permeated Latino communities. Although there had a been a

long tradition of community support or at least tolerance of gangs in Latino

neighborhoods, in the late 1970s and early 1980s some Latino communities began to turn

against the gangs in their midst. As one gang member told researchers "they [Latino

neighbors] can't stand [gang members]….'Troublemaker,' they label you, you know

what I mean; bad influence person."[84] A nationwide survey in 1977 and 1978 found that

61 percent of blacks and 53 percent of Latinos considered gangs a problem in their

neighborhoods, a substantial increase since the late 1960s and one that continued to

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[81] Charles Whitaker, "A Generation in Peril," *Ebony*, August 1988, 33–36.
[82] Reminiscences of David Yat, 5 March 2004, pp. 5–10 in CUCOHC; Reminiscences of Steven Wong, 29 March 2004, pp. 6–7 in CUCOHC; Reminiscences of Shui Mak Ka, 13 March 2003, p. 14 in CUCOHC.
[83] "Twin Specters," *East/West*, March 15, 1972, 2; Raul Ramirez, "Chinatown Probe: The Secret Key," *San Francisco Examiner*, April 20, 1978; Raul Ramirez and Baron Muller, "Police View of Chinatown Suspect's Role," *San Francisco Examiner*, March 26, 1978; Max Millard, "Remembering the Golden Dragon Incident: Effects of Tragedy Still Felt after 10 Years," *East/West*, August 27, 1987, 1, 8; Bill Lee, *Chinese Playground: A Memoir* (San Francisco: Rhapsody Press, 1999), 143–173.
[84] Moore, *Going Down*, 69–73.

develop in the 1980s.[85] The first survey of Asian American opinions in 1993 showed that

Asian Americans actually were more concerned about gangs than Latinos and African

Americans.[86]

Outspoken resident of these communities believed that the government largely

chose to overlook the gang problem in the 1970s and early 1980s because those most

often threatened were nonwhites or immigrants. "I guess these minorities don't count,"

one Latino resident of Los Angeles wrote his state senator. "Why else is this social

problem ignored?"[87] In response to the silence at the top, many minority groups on the

ground built their own campaigns to address gangs and violence. These activists relied on

three different frameworks to craft their campaigns. The first and most pervasive rhetoric

was the need for security in their own neighborhoods. An Indianapolis study found that

instead of being desensitized to gang violence, residents of gang-prone communities were

more "alert and alarmed" to the problem. In particular, victims and friends of victims

feared the effects of gangs in their neighborhoods more than other residents and often

mobilized to act.[88] Although this study was limited to one city, later studies and anecdotal

evidence from communities across the country demonstrated the pervasiveness of this

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[85] Only 38 percent of whites surveyed reported the same concern. Michael J. Hindelang, Michael R. Gottfredson, and Timothy J. Flanagan, eds., *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1980* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1981), 177; Michael J. Jamieson and Timothy J. Flanagan, eds., *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1988* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1989), 183.

[86] Kathleen Maguire and Ann L. Pastore, eds., *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1993* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1994), 155.

[87] Tom Rodriguez to Diane Watson, 23 January 1989, box 48, file "Issue Files," David A. Roberti Collection [CSLA-1], Leavey Center, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA (hereafter cited as Roberti Collection).

[88] Douglas W. Pryor, "Public Perceptions of Youth Gang Crime: An Exploratory Analysis," *Youth and Society* 24, no. 4 (June 1993): 414–415.

trend. Many residents in Los Angeles gang turfs talked of being "prisoners" in their

homes and reported that security of their property and lives was a primary concern.[89]

Although demands for safety were common across all minority groups, Asian

Americans were the only such activists to rely solely on the rhetoric of safety in their

fight against gangs. In New York's and San Francisco's Chinatowns, merchants often

discussed their fear of gang extortion and violent retaliation when they failed to pay

extortion demands.[90] In one poignant example, Asian American business owners in New

York marched to city hall to demand protection from the violence and intimidation.[91]

Other Asian American groups worried about their children being beaten by gang

members and about bystanders shot in gang fights,[92] especially after the Golden Dragon

shooting in San Francisco and a similar shooting in a New York restaurant in 1982.[93]

Later in the 1980s, Southeast Asian leaders on the West Coast who were angry about

what they saw as increased violence in their neighborhoods also based their activism on

demands for safety.[94]

While these Asian Americans relied solely on the rhetoric of safety, many Latinos

and African Americans mobilized using a second rhetorical framework: race pride.

Latino organizations, which had based their gang outreach work in the 1960s on the

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[89] Lane and Meeker, "Social Disorganization Perceptions"; Ottri B. Chaney, "Letter to the Editor," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 21, 1976, A6.

[90] "The Gangs of Chinatown," *Newsweek*, July 2, 1973, 22.

[91] Frank Ching, "Street Crime Casts a Pall of Fear over Chinatown," *New York Times*, January 19, 1974, 16.

[92] Reminiscences of Steven Wong, 6.

[93] "Twin Specters," 2; Wallace Turner, "13 Slain at Club in Seattle's Chinatown," *New York Times*, February 20, 1983, 26.

[94] Kenneth Burt, "New Legislation Targets Southeast Asian and Korean Gangs," *Asianweek* (San Francisco, CA), April 27, 1990; David Reyes, "Vietnamese Gang Trend Has Orange County Worried," *Los Angeles Times*, April 4, 1988.

concept of *la raza* or race pride, continued this tradition through the 1970s and 1980s.

Urban murals, an integral part of many urban Latino communities, celebrated elements of

Latino culture. These murals conveyed a message of cooperation between gangs and an

ending of hostility based on a shared, regal past. As one mural artist and former gang

member Manuel Cruz explained, "I want the wall to speak out and let them [warring

Latino gangs] know, no matter what group they are in, that we are all descendants from

the same Aztec forefathers. We are one race. We have enough problems without killing

each other."[95] Latino newspapers agreed that the killing of fellow gang members

amounted to a crime against the Latino people.[96]

Ancestral pride was also at play in some of the African American campaigns

against gang-related warfare. One reader of *Ebony* from North Carolina argued that

young black Americans were the decedents of "peaceful, proud and beautiful [African]

kings and queens," a heritage that was undermined by the current violence.[97] The black-

owned *Los Angeles Sentinel* echoed this sentiment, arguing that their forefathers had not

survived the horrors of slavery only to have the current generation kill one another.[98]

Black organizers repeatedly compared the high death toll among young men in gang-

related violence to the atrocious history of the Klu Klux Klan's violence.[99] In Chicago,

Ida B. Wells's great grandson published a series of political cartoons entitled "Disciples

of Black Destruction." In one, hooded Klansmen watch as black gang members beat each

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[95] Quoted in Leonard Nadel, "Walls of Barrios Are Brought to Life by Street Gang Art," *Smithsonian*, October 1978, 107; Rodriguez, *Always Running*, 200–201.

[96] "Chicanos y Chicanas: Where Are You from?," *El Chicano* (San Bernardino, CA), August 19, 1976, 5.

[97] Willi A. Booker, "Letters," *Ebony*, March 1988, 13.

[98] "Stop Killing," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, November 16, 1972, A6.

[99] Clarence Page, "Why We're Losing War on Gangs," *Chicago Tribune*, August 17, 1986, D3.

other with pipes and bats. One of the Klansmen encourages the gang fight shouting

"These Black gangs treat their people worse than animals…that's the best way to Keep

Black folks down! 'RIGHT ON!'"[100] To fix the problem, many black activists argued that

the African Americans had to tap into the race pride that had brought an end to gang

warfare in the late 1960s, to teach young men the history of their communities and

struggles, and to stress that gang warfare was racial suicide.[101]

African Americans' black pride rhetoric framed calls for self-sufficiency to deal

with the problem. Black newspapers, leaders, and residents often argued that if the white

majority refused to deal with gangs, then it was up to African Americans to save their

own.[102] "If it isn't solved by blacks," warned the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, "it won't be

solved at all."[103] For example, the National Urban League argued that the criminologists

and policymakers who studied gang violence were almost always white and had no real

understanding of the problems faced by black youth and their neighborhoods. Only by

tapping into the leaders of the "Harlems" not the "Harvards" of America could the

problem be solved.[104] In a similar vein, some African Americans called for the adoption

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[100] Cimply Complex Communications Cystems Corp., "Disciples of Black Destruction," 1982, box 3, file 26, Health Evaluation and Referral Service Records, Special Collections, University of Illinois at Chicago (hereafter cited as HERS Records).

[101] "Stop Killing," A6; Marvin Moore Summit, "Letters," *Ebony*, March 1988, 13; Jane Birnbaum, "Makers of Anti-Gang Poster Hope Life Imitates Art," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, January 21, 1989.

[102] "Turning against the Gangs," *Time*, July 27, 1970, 15; Charlayne Hunter, "Blacks Are Developing Programs to Fight Crime in Communities," *New York Times*, February 23, 1976, 14.

[103] "The Christmas Scene," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 21, 1972, A6.

[104] Judith Cummings, "Funds to End Youth-Gang Violence Termed Misspent," *New York Times*, October 29, 1976, 92.

of block clubs to patrol their own neighborhoods[105] while others celebrated residents who

armed themselves and fought back.[106] Black neighborhoods organized marches and

demonstrations to show gang members that they would not allow the violence to continue

and that they were not afraid of the gangs.[107] When negotiating truces between gangs,

gang members heavily depended on the idea of racial suicide and the trope of black-on-

black violence to convince gang members to put down their weapons. Most famously,

Crip founder Stanley Tookie Williams repudiated the role of his organization in

perpetuating this type of violence. "I earned [respect] for oppressing other blacks,"

Williams wrote from death row years later. "There is no bigger fool on earth than a man

who destroys his own people."[108]

Thirdly, groups that mobilized against gang violence tapped into a growing trend

in criminal justice reform that centered on victim advocacy. Groups that used this rhetoric

called for services for victims and for their families and demanded that the victim's voice

be incorporated into criminal justice proceedings. Victim-centered advocacy first grew

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[105] "A Crime Answer," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 18, 1973, A6; Timothy J. Flanagan and Matthew McLeod, eds., *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1982* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1983), 218.

[106] Michael J. McGarrell and Timothy J. Flanagan, eds., *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1984* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1985), 204; "Urban Warriors," *Jet*, November 7, 1983, 13; "Member of LA Family Embroiled in Gang Feud to Stand Trial for Murder," *Jet*, September 3, 1984, 27.

[107] Robert Reinhold, "In the Middle of LA's Gang Warfare," *New York Times*, May 22, 1988, 249.

[108] The phrase "black-on-black crime," a product of the 1980s, has had a contentious history in the black community. Some, such as Williams, used it to evoke black pride and frame a discussion of interracial crime based on racial suicide rhetoric. Others argued that it perpetuated stereotypes about African American criminality, obscured the economic and institutional causes of crime, precluded policy discussions to address these roots, and favored police enforcement to control black communities. Williams, *Blue Rage, Black Redemption*, 140; Robert L. Bing III, "Politicizing Black-on-Black Crime: A Critique of Terminological Preference," in *Black on Black Crime: Finding Facts, Challenging Fictions*, ed. P. Ray Kedia (Bristol, IN: Wyndham Hall Press, 1994), 244–257; David Wilson, *Inventing Black-on-Black Violence: Discourse, Space, and Representation* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005).

out of the postwar feminist movement's battle for better treatment of rape victims and more domestic violence centers but quickly expanded to include other types of crimes and victims.[109] One branch of this movement was the parent-as-advocate trend, in which the parents of deceased youth created organizations to fight the crimes that had taken their loved ones. Scholars often point to Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) as the archetype. Started in 1980 by Candy Lightner, the mother of a thirteen-year-old killed by a drunk driver, MADD "catapulted heartbroken moms into a debate-driving, law-changing force to be reckoned with."[110] MADD used the rhetoric of grieving parents to establish the authenticity of its demands and to heighten the emotional resonance of its campaigns. It marshaled the universal desire of parents to protect their children as the central element of its work, arguing that without the state's help in preventing and punishing drunk driving, parents could not protect the well-being of their children.[111]

The scholarly focus on MADD obscures earlier moments in which parents used such rhetoric to change policy. During the 1960s, African Americans had used similar tactics to fight racial violence. The most famous instance was the work of Emmett Till's

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[109] Marie Gottschalk, *The Prison and the Gallows: The Politics of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 77–114; Kelly Richards, "Taking Victims Seriously?: The Role of Victims' Rights Movements in the Emergence of Restorative Justice," *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* 21, no. 2 (November 2009): 302–320; Irvin Waller, *Rights for Victims of Crimes: Rebalancing Justice* (Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 4–6; Ted Gest, *Crime and Politics: Big Government's Erratic Campaign for Law and Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 50–52.

[110] Laurie Davies, "25 Years of Saving Lives," *Driven*, Fall 2005, 11; Gottschalk, *Prison and the Gallows*, 89–91.

[111] Mothers Against Drunk Driving, "Secrets to Success," *Driven*, Fall 2005, 22–25; John D. McCarthy, "Activists, Authorities, and Media Framing of Drunk Driving," in *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*, ed. Enrique Laraña, Hank Johnston, and Josef R. Gusfield (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 133–167.

mother after he was murdered in 1955 by a group of white men in Mississippi.[112] This tradition also blossomed a decade late around gang violence. In the early 1970s as some black Philadelphia neighborhoods struggled with gangs, local mothers organized against them. Known as the North Philadelphia Mothers, the group held weekly marches to city hall to demand that the state provide services for their children and incarcerate those who threatened them. These mothers also attended social events, patrolled recreational areas, created "safe corridors" through gang turfs to chaperone children to school, and even faced down gang members in the street with baseball bats. It was largely due to these mothers' efforts that the city finally embraced a gang abatement program that brought gang violence down 93 percent from 1973 to 1976.[113]

By the end of the 1980s, parent advocacy groups were organizing across the country. In Chicago, members of the Latino community rallied around Frances Sandoval's Mothers Against Gangs. In Omaha, Nebraska, John Foster, whose son had been beaten to death by a gang, founded Men Against Destruction—Defending Against Drugs and Social Disorder (MAD DADS). MAD DADS was primarily made up of black men from the area who tried to "promote and demonstrate positive images of fathers" protecting their neighborhoods and their families. They patrolled the streets, organized

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[112] Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 86–110; Mamie Till-Mobley, *The Face of Emmett Till* (Woodstock, IL: Dramatic Publishing, 2006).

[113] Kendall Wilson, "Community Started Battle against Gang Violence," *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 29, 1980, 8; Donald G. Galloway, "Philadelphia Gang Project," 28 August 1980, box 273, file "Community Development-Gang Violence," Yvonne Brathwaite Burke Papers, Special Collections Library, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA (hereafter cited as Burke Papers); Robert Kotzbauer, "Phila. Turns the Corner," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, June 3, 1976, 1; Miller, *Violence by Youth Gangs*, 62; US Congress, Senate, Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, *Our Nation's Schools—A Report Card: "A" In School Violence and Vandalism*, 94th Cong., 1st sess., April 1975, 18.

gang outreach activities, and worked with police to report and prosecute gang-related crimes. MAD DADS later spread to other cities in the Midwest and was instrumental in pushing anti-gang legislation.[114] Meanwhile in Detroit, Clementine Barfield organized Save Our Sons and Daughters (SO SAD) after her son was killed.[115] And in South Central Los Angeles, Lorna Hawkins who lost two of her sons to gangs and guns started a popular cable television talk show *Drive-by Agony* on which she and other parents publicly discussed the rise of gang violence in their neighborhoods.[116] The mobilization of black and Latino parents was a distinctly new development in this second period of gang panic. Their efforts added an emotional weight to the discussion and humanized the victims of gang violence in a way that had not happened in the 1950s and 1960s. Eventually many of these mothers and fathers used this platform to push for solutions to the gang problem that in some ways looked like the past but in other ways were a new departure.

The Solutions of Community Organizers: Careers, Cooperation, and Cops

As concern mounted in the 1970s and 1980s, these minority activists proposed three different solutions: providing social services for youth, working with gangs, and strengthening law enforcement. The first two were carryovers from the 1960s and were adapted to the current problem. Demands for policing, however, were a new development among minority activists. Since the beginning of organized police forces, black, Latino,

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[114] James C. Howell and G. David Curry, "Mobilizing Communities to Address Gang Problems," *National Youth Gang Center Bulletin* no. 4 (January 2009): 5–6.
[115] Alex Poinsett, "Why Our Children Are Killing One Another," *Ebony*, December 1987, 88–89.
[116] *From Pain to Power: Crime Victims Take Action* (Washington, DC: Office for Victims of Crime, Department of Justice, 1998), 15.

and Asian Americans had suffered discrimination, poor protection, racial profiling, brutality and even murder at the hands of all-white police departments. During the 1950s and 1960s, minority Americans protested this long history of oppressive policing. They fought to integrate police departments and in many cases demanded that cities use resources to strengthen rehabilitation services instead of increasing police power and presence in their neighborhoods. However, by the 1970s and 1980s, some minority leaders and activists started to embrace the idea of stricter policing and more cops to address gang violence. This reversal sprang from concerns about the evolution of gang violence as well as changes within the communities themselves.

The most popular solution among these minority advocates was private and government-run youth employment programs, which ranged from job training to directly employing young men. Other social service efforts, such as counseling, youth centers, and after-school activities, came hand-in-hand with these employment projects, but unlike social programs in the 1950s, employment not recreation took center stage. Activists' focus on employment reflected their belief that gang violence had roots in the economic changes of the 1970s. It also grew out of the aging up of gangs; with members in their twenties and thirties, gangs were not interested in baseball, playgrounds, and after-school homework help. One adult gang member in Chicago succinctly captured the problem: "What are [recreation programs] gonna give me? Shit, I got a family, I got investments."[117] Employment and social service programs were extremely popular among

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[117] Quoted in Venkatesh, "Gang in the Community," 248.

black and Latino Americans surveyed nationwide and were especially favored by
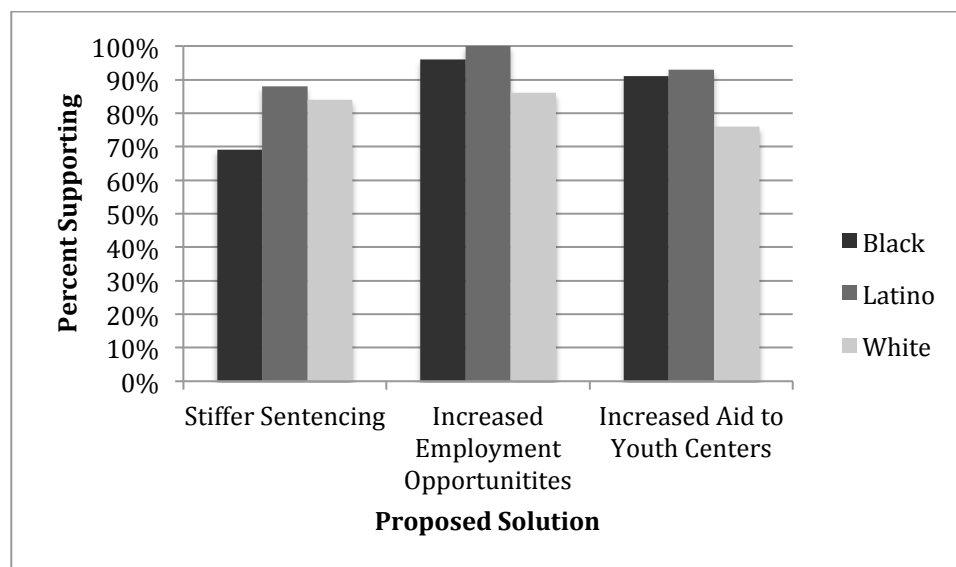
residents who lived in gang-prone areas (Figure 4).[118]

Figure 4. Nationwide support for prosed solutions to gang violence by race of respondent, 1995. Source: Ruth Triplett, "The Growing Threat: Gangs and Juvenile Offenders," Timothy J. Flanagan and Dennis R. Longmire, eds. *Americans View Crime and Justice: A National Public Opinion Survey* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 148–149.

Summing up the general consensus, an editorial from a black newspaper in Memphis

argued, "the same hands that pull triggers, wield knives and maneuver other weapons in

gang wars—could—with proper guidance, motivation and training—perform brain

surgery, build homes, highways, bridges and the like, deliver babies, repair electronic

equipment and perform a myriad of other positive, wholesome activities."[119]

Two case studies—one of Philadelphia in the late 1970s and another of Los

Angeles in the early 1980s—demonstrate the popularity of such measures. In

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[118] Roger Wilkins, "The Motor-City Blues," *New York Times*, August 20, 1976, 20; McGarrell and Flanagan, *Sourcebook, 1984*, 196; Kathleen Maguire and Timothy J. Flanagan, eds., *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1990* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1991), 174–175; Moore et al., *Homeboys*, 163.

[119] "Human Waste," *Tri-State Defender* (Memphis, TN), May 11, 1988, 6.

Philadelphia, the House of Umoja and the Crisis Intervention Network (CIN) drew

national recognition as programs both with community support and stellar track records.

The House of Umoja in West Philadelphia began as a private, small-scale effort by Sister

Falaka and David Fattah who were worried about their son's association with a

neighborhood gang. They opened their home to area youth, provided classes on black

history and Swahili, and offered job training. By the 1980s, the House of Umoja had

helped over five hundred gang members, received federal and state aid, and was heralded

by lawmakers President Ronald Reagan and Senator Arlen Spector (Republican) as a

promising model for gang prevention.[120] While the Fattahs toiled at the House of Umoja,

other black Philadelphians protested in the streets demanding that the government

provide more community centers, hotlines for reporting gang wars, and additional street

workers who could meet with gangs and enroll them in job training programs.[121] In

response, the city and the community eventually established CIN, which employed a two-

step approach: provide services for urban youth and intervene in gang wars. Community

residents, city officials, gang outreach workers, and former gang members were all

involved in coordinating the program.[122] The results in Philadelphia were so impressive

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[120] David Fattah, "The House of Umoja as a Case Study for Social Change," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 494, no. 1 (November 1987): 37–41; Walter Leavy, "A Mother's Love Stops Gang Killings," *Ebony*, March 1982, 59–64; Howell Raines, "A President Is Firm on Welfare Cuts," *New York Times*, October 6, 1981, A28.
[121] Wayne King, "In West Philadelphia, Gang Wars Are a Way of Death," *New York Times*, June 11, 1973, 30.
[122] Howell and Curry, "Mobilizing Communities," 3.

that other cities soon followed; a second House of Umoja opened in Wilmington,

Delaware, and CIN was adopted in Chicago.[123]

CIN ultimately made its way to Los Angeles but only because of the mobilization

of a bloc of Latino voters in that city. In the early 1980s, one of the strongest and most

well organized grassroots groups in Los Angeles was the United Neighborhoods

Organization (UNO). Founded and trained in confrontational politics by Saul Alinksy in

1977, UNO was primarily composed of working-class Latino residents in East Los

Angeles.[124] After taking on various employment and community issues, UNO turned its

attention to gang violence in 1980. UNO had heard about the success of CIN in

Philadelphia and met with members of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and

Mayor Tom Bradley to press for a similar program in Los Angeles.[125] As their campaign

gained traction, UNO representatives protested outside the governor's and state attorney

general's offices.[126] They packed the chambers when the Board of Supervisors met to

debate the program, and they mobilized media outlets to address what UNO's president

[123] "Ex-Inmates Bringing Hope to Wilmington Streets," *New York Times*, June 28, 1987, 36; Citizens Committee on the Juvenile Court of Cook County, "Gangs, What Has Been Done?," 7 March 1986, p. 9, Chicago Historical Society.

[124] Ruben Castenada, "Community Organizers Bring New Clout to Urban Poor," *California Journal*, January 1988, 21–25; UNO, "First Annual Convention," 14 October 1979, pp. 23–24, box 7, file 3, Church of the Epiphany Chicano Civil Rights Archive, 1960–1994, Chicano Studies Research Center, University of California Los Angeles (hereafter cited as Church of the Epiphany Archive); "Citizen-Action Group Gives Latinos Clout on the Issues," *Los Angeles Times*, February 25, 1982, 6; Harris Scott, "Community Crusaders," *Los Angeles Times*, December 6, 1987, B10.

[125] UNO, "1981 Convention," 5 April 1981, pp. 8–9, box 7, file, 3, Church of the Epiphany Archive.

[126] UNO, "Strategy Committee," 14 October 1980, box 7, file 3, Church of the Epiphany Archive; "East LA Group Protests Gang Policy," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, October 24, 1980.

called "a time of crisis" in Latino neighborhoods.[127] Faced with such activism, the city

eventually established Community Youth Gang Services (CYGS) in 1980 to fund job

training, social services, and street workers.[128]

Central to the successes of House of Umoja, CIN, and CYGS were gang truce

meetings, in which community leaders brought together gang leaders to negotiate peace

contracts. Such meetings were consistently used across all cities and ethnic groups and

harkened back to efforts of the 1950s.[129] In a small number of cases, gang outreach

moved beyond simple truces by organizing gangs for the constructive work that had been

tried in the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, Latino community groups chose this path

more often than did others. For example, Los Angeles gangs and community workers in

1972 founded the Federación de Barrios Unidos, and in southern California the

Committee on Chicano Rights and La Raza Unida Party established the Concilio de los

Barrios Unidos in 1977. [130] In San Bernardino, the Mexican American Legal Defense and

Educational Fund (MALDEF) helped local gangs secure a peace treaty in 1978 and

created the San Bernardino Youth Concilio to train gang members to become leaders in

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[127] "Motion by Supervisor Edmund D. Edleman," 27 October 1980, box 90, file "Probation-Gang Violence," Burke Papers; Claire Spiegel, "City Council Awards $560,000 to County Anti-Gang Program," *Los Angeles Times*, August 19, 1981, 1.
[128] "Community Youth Gang Services," nd, p. 1, box 104, file "VF/Crime/Gang Hearings," Hawkins Papers; Reiner, *Gangs, Crime and Violence*, 225–232.
[129] "Philadelphia Youth Gangs Call Truce, Turn in Weapons," *Jet*, March 9, 1972, 30; "Keeping the Peace," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 21, 1976, A6; Pamela G. Hollie, "Gang Fights Transform Hollywood Boulevard into a War Zone," *New York Times*, July 18, 1981, 6; Sánchez Jankowski, *Islands in the Street*, 260–263.
[130] State of California Department of the Youth Authority, "Gang Violence Reduction Project: First Evaluation Report, November 1976–September 1977," August 1978, pp. 9–10, 28–32, Science, Industry and Business Library, New York Public Library, New York, NY; Armondo Navarro, interview by Carlos Vasquez, tape IV, side 2, December 21, 1989, Center for Oral History Research, University of Los Angeles Library.

municipal politics.[131] Latino community groups also reached out to gangs to decorate community buildings with anti-gang and pro-Latino messages.[132] The propensity of Latinos to continue the civil rights era work likely grew out of the close relationship between gangs and the Latino community, a relationship that ran much later into the 1980s than in other minority communities. Ethnographic work in the 1970s and 1980s reveals that Latino gangs continued to be integral members of their neighborhoods even during this later period of increased violence and guns.[133] In the words of one father in Los Angeles, "I don't like the shooting that goes on with gangs today….but I am proud of my sons being members of the [gang] because it keeps a family tradition alive….It also keeps a community tradition going."[134] While the 1970s were a high point for Latino cooperation with gang members, when the 1980s brought changes to some Latino communities and their gangs, these groups would increasingly abandon this approach.

African Americans, however, had by the 1990s abandoned the mobilization tactics that had been central to black anti-gang efforts during the civil rights movement. Instead of involving the gang in the community, many of the public campaigns run by black leaders vowed to "take back the community from the gang."[135] The national civil rights organizations that had led the charge in the 1960s to politicize gang members, largely stayed away from the issue of gang violence in the 1970s and 1980s. Most of

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[131] "Option," 1978, box 33, file 5, Records of Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, 1968–1983, Record Group 6, Special Collections, Stanford University; Kathy Rebello-Rees, "Young Chicanos Put Peace on Paper," *San Bernardino County Sun-Telegram*, March 26, 1978, B1.
[132] Nadel, "Walls of Barrios," 105–111.
[133] Moore, *Going Down*; Vigil, *Barrio Gangs*; Ruth Horowitz, "Community Tolerance of Gang Violence," *Social Problems* 34, no. 5 (December 1987): 439.
[134] Quoted in Sánchez Jankowski, *Islands in the Street*, 181.
[135] "Changing the Guard," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, November 17, 1988, A6.

these groups simply lamented the problems gangs caused in black communities and called for more police.[136] On the local level, there is some evidence that individual black neighborhoods did occasionally work with gang members. Sociologist Sudhir Venkatesh found that many adults in Chicago's largest black public housing complexes depended on gang-run illegal markets for drugs and goods. At times, adults also relied on gang members to provide protection and security for the community when local police shirked their duty.[137] Other researchers found the same patterns in a handful of black communities in Los Angeles, Boston, and New York.[138] But even on this micro-level, such cooperation was hesitant and fraught with tension. It looked very little like the welcome gangs received in the earlier decade, and it was neither celebrated by African American national organizations nor publicized by those who engaged in it. The change among black thinkers at large was partially an effect of disillusionment with the assumed failures of 1960s gang work such as the Blackstone Ranger program. It also sprung from the new way in which many of these African American activists and community residents thought about gang members. No longer were gang members just kids in fistfights; they were young men with guns.[139] But even more importantly, it came from an evolving understanding among a number of these black activists of where blame lay. In this new larger vision, gang members were not the evil. True responsibility lay with law enforcement, criminal justice, and political leaders who failed to take the protection of black urban neighborhoods seriously.

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[136] Reinhold, "In the Middle of LA's Gang Warfare"; Frank S. Washington and Jay Carney, "Sunbelt Import: Youth Gangs Plague the South," *Time*, August 18, 1986, 76.
[137] Venkatesh, "Gang in the Community," 251–252.
[138] Sánchez Jankowski, *Islands in the Street*, 32–33, 184, 186, 193.
[139] John A. Davis, "Gang Violence in Los Angeles: Any Solution?," *Los Angeles Times*, December 15, 1974, G5; Miller, *Violence by Youth Gangs*, 61–62.

African Americans were not the only ones to assign blame in this way. As violence and fear increased, demands for stronger police and stiffer criminal justice grew more common among all three minority groups. Asian America leaders were the first and most willing to politically mobilize for law enforcement solutions. A small group of Asian New Yorkers spearheaded demands for new punitive measures that would fine and punish parents for their children's crimes, and they demanded that arresting officers be allowed to deal with juvenile gang members more harshly, both through corporal punishment and jail time. In 1974, believing that the city and the police department did not take their victimization seriously, local merchants in New York's Chinatown threatened to shutter all businesses if the city continued to ignore the gang problem. With the strike looming, Mayor Abraham Beame, Senator Jacob Javtiz, and the city's police commissioner met with Chinatown residents and promised more patrolmen for the area.[140] Two years later, as the gang problem and crime generally appeared to worsen, Asian Americans pressured the NYPD to appoint "a tougher cop" to command the precinct in Chinatown.[141] In response, the police department established the Chinese Youth Gang Task Force to track and arrest Asian gang members, while top-level brass developed a community relations campaign to encourage local residents to report gang intimidation.[142]

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[140] Chester Higgins, "New York City Gangs Terrorize Chinese Merchants," *Chinatown News*, February 3, 1977, 17–19; Ching, "Street Crime" 16.
[141] Robert E. Tomasson, "Chinatown Precinct Gets 'a Tougher Cop'," *New York Times*, December 11, 1976, 22.
[142] Joseph C. Hoffman to Edward Koch, 5 December 1978, box 229, file 4, Departmental Correspondence, Edward Koch Collection, New York City Municipal Archives; Reminiscences of David Yat, 10.

In San Francisco, many Asian residents both inside and outside of Chinatown

wanted greater police protection. Immediately after the 1978 Golden Dragon shooting,

the city's chief of police, Charles Gain, blamed Chinese American residents for the

incident, citing "an absolute abdication of responsibility" on the part of Chinese

immigrants to take care of their children and report crimes to the police. These

inflammatory remarks angered Asian American newspapers, voters, and leaders who

denounced the comments as "racial slurs" and blamed police indifference for

Chinatown's gangs.[143] Residents argued that the city's police force lacked bilingual

services that would strengthen law enforcement in the area, a claim supported by DOJ

findings that only thirteen officers on the city's police force were of Chinese-American

dissent, only four could speak halting Cantonese or Mandarin, and none could read or

write the languages. [144] As a result of this pressure, the San Francisco Police Department

created a new task force to track Asian gangs, established the first-ever bilingual

emergency phone line for Cantonese speakers, and provided more foot patrols in the

neighborhood.[145] As Tim Lee, the son of the Golden Dragon's owner later recalled,

"After that, whenever even a small event happened in Chinatown, the whole police

department would be looking into it."[146] In the late 1980s, other Asian groups in

California supported efforts to target gangs for special prosecution and imprisonment.

When the state finally passed legislation in 1990 to combat Southeast Asian gangs,

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[143] "San Francisco Ambush Called Chinese Gang Revenge," *New York Times*, September 12, 1977, 18; "Chief Gain's New Plea," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 24, 1977.
[144] "Bilingual Police Service," *East/West*, September 21, 1977, 8; "City in Jeopardy of Losing Funding Due to Lack of Services to Chinese," *East/West*, November 16, 1977, 1.
[145] Ramirez, "Chinatown Probe"; "Police Begins Bilingual Phone Service: 553-1111," *East/West*, September 21, 1977, 1; Max Millard, "The Golden Dragon Massacre: Ten Years Later, Chinatown Is Safer," *AsiAm*, September 1989.
[146] Quoted in Millard, "Remembering the Golden Dragon," 8.

Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, and Korean community groups all lent vocal

support.[147]

African American and Latino support for law enforcement was more nuanced

than that of Asian Americans, but demands for police among these groups rose as fear

did.[148] At the beginning of the 1970s, African Americans nationally were the most likely

voters to deplore "law and order" style responses to crime despite being more likely than

other ethnicities to live in high-crime areas.[149] But by the latter half of the decade, as

concerns about crimes such as gang violence that disproportionately victimized African

Americans grew, these same voters began to voice increasingly punitive opinions.[150] By

the 1980s, black survey respondents had moved closer to the conservative stance of

whites in regards to rights of the accused and the punitive, non-rehabilitative purpose of

prisons.[151] Several of the policies, traditionally ascribed to white "law and order"

advocates could be heard on the lips of some African Americans,[152] or as Robert

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[147] Burt, "New Legislation."

[148] Studies show that communities (across all racial groups) facing increased crime rates tend to embrace more policing and stricter courts. Timothy J. Flanagan, "Public Opinion on Crime and Justice: History, Development, and Trends," in *Americans View Crime and Justice: A National Public Opinion Survey*, ed. Timothy J. Flanagan and Dennis R. Longmire (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 13–14; Laura B. Myers, "Bringing the Offender to Heel: Views of the Criminal Courts," in Flanagan and Longmire, *Americans View Crime and Justice*, 60.

[149] Stephen Earl Bennett and Alfred J. Tuchfarber, "The Social-Structural Sources of Cleavage on Law and Order Policies," *American Journal of Political Science* 19, no. 3 (August 1975): 423–424.

[150] Timothy D. Schellhardt, "Law and Order," *Wall Street Journal*, June 24, 1976, 1; Vernon E. Jordan, "Blacks and the G.O.P.," *New York Times*, March 28, 1977, 33.

[151] Maguire and Flanagan, *Sourcebook, 1990*, 191; Jurg Berger and Simone Engelhardt-Greer, "Just and Painful: Attitudes toward Sentencing Criminals," in Flanagan and Longmire, *Americans View Crime and Justice*, 64.

[152] "Law Enforcement Is Not Our Enemy," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 6, 1984, A6; Mark A. Mitchell and Stacey Daniels, "Black-on-Black Homicide: Kansas City's Response," *Public Health Reports* 104, no. 6 (November 1989): 605–608; Katherine Tate, *What's Going On?: Political Incorporation and the Transformation of Black Public Opinion* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 65–72.

Woodson of the Urban League explained, "[Black] people are more afraid of crime in the streets than the racism of a [Frank] Rizzo."[153] These general changes directly affected black support for juvenile justice reform and gang control. Nearly three-quarters of African Americans nationally believed that the juvenile courts were too lenient in 1982 and argued that juvenile detention was the best solution to rising rates of violence among youth.[154] The black press often supported these opinions and urged readers to write their legislators to pass tougher juvenile sentencing laws.[155] Strikingly, a team of social scientists found that of all demographic groups in the country (white and black), the one most likely to accept tougher juvenile justice was black parents, an overwhelming majority of whom supported trying juveniles as adults and sending violent youth to adult prisons. Conversely, the survey found that African Americans without children were the least likely to support such measures. This latter group seemed most concerned with traditional fears of police brutality and racially discriminatory practices by officers. Black parents' responses reflected parents' increasing fear for their children's safety as crime and gang violence continued to rise in the 1980s. For them, the dangers of gang violence outweighed the danger of police racism.[156] The disparity in responses highlighted the complexity of African American opinion nationally.

Yet when it came specifically to strategies for gang intervention, many black Americans in large cities supported law enforcement measures. In New York, after a

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[153] Quoted in Hunter, "Blacks Are Developing Programs to Fight Crime in Communities," 14.
[154] McGarrell and Flanagan, *Sourcebook, 1984*, 192–194, 197.
[155] "Change the Law," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 25, 1984, A6; "Youth Street Gangs," *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 5, 1973, 13.
[156] Ira M. Schwartz, Shenyang Guo, and John J. Kerbs, "The Impact of Demographic Variables on Public Opinion Regarding Juvenile Justice: Implications for Public Policy," *Crime and Delinquency* 39, no. 1 (January 1993): 5–28.

series of violent gang wars erupted in black neighborhoods of Brooklyn, local residents

demanded that the NYPD pay closer attention to safety in the area. Denise Roker, a

resident of East Flatbush, complained that gang violence had been allowed to fester

because "Police do not patrol the community the way they used to when whites lived

here."[157] In Oakland, California, which experienced the same surge of violence and drive-

bys as other areas of the state, black residents marched outside police precincts and city

hall to press for a law enforcement response.[158] And in Atlanta, the Urban League called

for proactive investigations of suspected gang members to protect the black

neighborhoods from the violence that had hit other cities. At the heart of the Urban

League's demands was a belief that under-policing of African American neighborhoods

had been a primary cause of gang growth across the country.[159] When the police were

slow to respond or argued that black citizens wasn't doing their part to aid gang

investigators, some African Americans set out to prove the police wrong.[160] For example,

in Boston, local activists organized Drop-a-Dime, a group of area adults who tracked the

movements of gang members—especially those involved in drug sales—and

communicated intelligence to the police.[161]

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[157] Quoted in George Goodman Jr., "Attacks in an East Flatbush School Spur Demand for Police Protection," *New York Times*, November 27, 1973, 45; Nathaniel Sheppard Jr., "Police Assailed by Restaurateur," *New York Times*, February 17, 1974, 42.
[158] Robert Lindsey, "Oakland Fighting Back to End Drug Violence," *New York Times*, October 7, 1984, 26.
[159] Washington and Carney, "Sunbelt Import," 76.
[160] Anne Keegan, "Neighbors Confront Gang and Win Back Turf," *Chicago Tribune*, August 26, 1985, 1.
[161] Memorandum from Donnalyn Lynch Kahn to Bill Owens, "A Bill Creating a Commission to Establish and Administer Grant Funds and Job Banks for Gang Prevention Programs," 1989, State Library of Massachusetts, Boston, MA; "Taking on Drugs in Boston Streets," *New York Times*, June 29, 1986, A47; "Gangs Put $5,000 Bounty on Drug Activist's Life," *Jet*, January 15, 1990, 38.

Some African Americans in Los Angeles chose—at least for a time—to support tougher policing, too, after a new gang known as the Crips came to police attention in 1972. For almost a year, the Crips had been attacking other young black men in the area, slowly adding new members and forming alliances across the city.[162] In 1972, the LAPD erroneously accused the Crips of murdering a white man who entered Crip territory, and media attention soon followed. African American residents in Crip turf were livid that a white visitor's murder would capture so much attention when young black men had been dying for years. The local black press denounced the LAPD for ignoring the problem when victims had been black, and African American voters successfully pressured the city council to order the LAPD to create its first gang task force.[163] Despite these efforts, the police did not do much to address the issue of gang violence for the rest of the decade. In fact, the NAACP and local black leaders would later accuse the police of neglecting their responsibility to patrol gang-ridden areas, leaving the low-income, black neighborhoods "at the mercy of the gangs."[164] Meanwhile, black community members did not remain silent. Some residents argued that all juvenile gang members should be tried as adults, and the *Los Angeles Sentinel* called for "taking off the velvet glove."[165] When Compton's chief of police, Thomas W. Cochee—the first African American to hold the position—testified before the California Senate's gang task force in 1975, he reported, "My constituency is screaming for incarceration and isolation for hard-core

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[162] For a full history of the Crips, see Williams, *Blue Rage, Black Redemption*.

[163] Miller, *Violence by Youth Gangs*, 61; Cohen, "Black Youth Gangs," F1.

[164] E.M. David, "Readers Comment on Issues," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 3, 1982, A6; "Seek a Solution," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 13, 1984, A6; Marita Hernandez and Sandy Banks, "Supervisors Call for Tough New Laws to Stem Gang Violence," *Los Angeles Times*, October 17, 1984, V1.

[165] "The Time Has Come to Remove the Velvet Glove," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, November 7, 1974, A1.

vicious people….I see other hard-working black and brown people in my community who are sick and tired and fed up with the leniency by judges…it's got to a ridiculous state now, and decent black people are up in arms over this kind of response from the criminal justice system."[166]

When gang violence and drive-bys hit a peak in the late 1980s, black Angelinos' and civil rights organizations calls for police pressure grew louder. They demanded a curfew for juveniles and proposed laws to hold parents legally accountable for the violence of their gang-member children.[167] They charged that the LAPD used an antiquated system for officer deployment that assigned cops to neighborhoods according to the value of property loss not incidents of physical violence. Such systems ensured that rich neighborhoods received more policing than poorer areas where gang violence was pervasive. Angered by law enforcement's inadequacy, voters in South Central, a predominantly black neighborhood and one of the hardest hit by gang violence, chose an extreme route. In 1985 and 1986, Los Angeles held citywide referendums on raising taxes to pay for a larger police department. In both elections, South Central residents voted overwhelmingly in favor of such a measure, but white voters from neighborhoods without the same problems easily outvoted them. In response, city council representatives from South Central in 1987 ran a referendum just for South Central residents to vote on a "Police Tax." Under the plan, only South Central would face the increased tax, which would go to support the hiring of three hundred police officers for the area's gang

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[166] Even given such punitive rhetoric, his constituents replaced Cochee two years later because they considered his stance too lenient. California Senate Select Committee on Children and Youth, *Juvenile Gang Warfare* (Los Angeles, 1975), 13; Tom Gorman, "New Compton Chief of Police Puts House in Order," *Los Angeles Times*, December 5, 1976, SE1.

[167] "The Opening Salvo," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 3, 1987, A6; "LA Moves to Halt Gang Killing Spree in City," *Jet*, November 12, 1984, 30.

taskforce. The special election raised a firestorm of protest across the country. It was the

first time in the nation's history that only a portion of a major city's residents voted

specifically on provisions to tax themselves for policing. It also sparked a debate about

the injustice of requiring residents of low-income neighborhoods to pay for the same

measure of safety enjoyed by residents in other areas.[168] Even South Central voters were

divided. Many, including the powerful South Central Organizing Committee with its

78,000 members, balked at the "Police Tax" and canvassed vociferously against it.

However, their opposition was not to more police. They wanted the additional police

presence badly; they simply refused to be taxed unfairly for equal protection.[169] The furor

was so intense that the city of Los Angeles allocated funds to hire 250 more officers

shortly before the referendum. The decision made the vote unnecessary and gave pro-law

enforcement forces a decisive win.[170] But the vocal fight over the "Police Tax" had made

its point. Black residents facing gang violence wanted police officers and police

surveillance of gang members, but they also wanted law enforcement on equal terms.

    While several African American groups began to support law enforcement

solutions as early as 1972, the shift in the Latino community occurred almost a decade

later. A survey of Latinos in East Los Angeles in the mid 1970s found that only 11

percent agreed with lengthening jail terms for gang members and 2 percent of residents

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[168] "Cops for All. Taxes for Some?," *New York Times*, May 31, 1987, E28; Judith Cummings, "Los Angeles Area Is Voting on Police," *New York Times*, June 2, 1987, A24.

[169] Ted Vollmer, "Police Tax Plan Defeated," *Los Angeles Times*, June 3, 1987, SD3; Judith Cummings, "Voters Decline to Pay for Police in Inner-City Area of Los Angeles," *New York Times*, June 4, 1987, A24; David Freed, "Two Groups Urge Gates to Redeploy Patrol Force," *Los Angeles Times*, February 16, 1988, C1.

[170] Scott Harris, "Council Urges Defeat of Police Tax Initiative," *Los Angeles Times*, May 20, 1987, D3.

felt adding police patrols was the right response to gang violence.[171] Similarly, when

Phoenix, Arizona started battling a gang problem blamed on Mexican-American youth,

Latino legislators pushed back and argued that "an enforcement mentality" of more

arrests and more police surveillance was the wrong response.[172] It was this thinking that

had made possible the gang-community cooperative programs described above, but by

the mid 1980s, opinion in a many Latino neighborhoods changed. Nationally, Latino

voters began to support measures such as "stop and search" and longer prison sentences

for crime in general.[173] For gang violence specifically, the change was dramatic.[174] Fewer

Latino organizations in the 1980s would work with gangs, and the groups who had

championed social services as the primary government response turned to policing by the

end of the decade. UNO, which had spearheaded efforts for social services in the early

1980s, was one of the most outspoken. In 1985, just a few years after pushing for CYGS,

the organization developed a "combat-zone strategy" to deal with gangs in Los Angeles

that rested on police crackdowns and criminal justice changes.[175] Later UNO, in

conjunction with the African American South Central Organizing Committee, challenged

the LAPD, charging that the gang situation had exploded primarily because policing in

minority neighborhoods was insufficient.[176] Most tellingly, surveys by the early 1990s

found that the vast majority of Latinos nationwide felt that stiffer sentences were a vital

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[171] Moore et al., *Homeboys*, 163.

[172] Marjorie S. Zatz, "Chicano Youth Gangs and Crime: The Creation of a Moral Panic," *Contemporary Crises* 11, no. 2 (January 1987): 135.

[173] McGarrell and Flanagan, *Sourcebook, 1984*, 201; David L. Carter, "Hispanic Interaction with the Criminal Justice System in Texas: Experiences, Attitudes, and Perceptions," *Journal of Criminal Justice* 11, no. 2 (1983): 213–227.

[174] Moore, *Going Down*, 76.

[175] Timothy Carlson, "A People's Program to End Violence in LA Streets," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, October 27, 1984; "Ganging Up on Crime," *Los Angeles Times*, March 3, 1985, D4.

[176] Freed, "Two Groups Urge Gates," C1.

solution to gang proliferation. In fact, Latinos supporting such measures outpaced both whites and blacks (Figure 4).

The Latino shift was the result of a number of factors. In part, as gang violence increased, fear within Latino neighborhoods did as well, and greater fear led to more punitive opinions.[177] This anxiety was partially fueled by the rise of powerful Latino prison gangs, such as La Familia and the Mexican Mafia, who sought alliances with street gangs. As these alliances grew both behind bars and on the streets, concern grew as well. Second, there was a sharp increase of Latino immigration during the 1980s. Recent immigrants tended to see gangs as an Anglo tradition adopted and corrupted by second-generation Mexican and Puerto Rican youth. These immigrants often believed that gangs threatened to divide parents holding on to homeland culture and children hoping to assimilate. Recent immigrants also tended to be more conservative about crime issues. They supported longer sentences and prisons that focused on punishment over rehabilitation.[178] With higher percentages of new immigrants in many urban, Latino communities, the balance shifted against the gangs. Third, the revolutionary community activists who had challenged middle-class reformers for prominence in the 1960s Latino rights movement had lost their controlling hold on the movement by the 1980s. This change had little to do with the gang programs themselves. Rather it was because of larger shifts in minority politics during the 1970s. As the rights movements entered a new more conservative stage focused on running for office and becoming part of the

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[177] Alfred Mirandé, "The Chicano and the Law: An Analysis of Community-Police Conflict in an Urban Barrio," *Pacific Sociological Review* 24, no. 1 (January 1981): 65–86; Moore, *Going Down*, 76; Horowitz, "Community Tolerance of Gang Violence," 439.
[178] Carter, "Hispanic Interaction," 225; Rodriguez, *Always Running*, 240.

established political order in the late 1970s, middle-class Latino reformers and college-trained experts once again gained control of the movement. They replaced the militant activists, many of whom left the Latino rights movement disillusioned by the lack of revolutionary change in American society. With their departure, the revolutionary ideology that incorporated gangs left, too.[179] Finally, like Asian and African Americans, many Latino activists felt that they had received inadequate policing to stem the gang tide. The best answer to the problem was more and better law enforcement.

While Asian, African, and Latino Americans who were the most vocal about gang violence all more readily accepted law enforcement-based solutions by the 1980s, they did not blindly embrace what a black newspaper in Portland, Oregon called "the heavy hand of law."[180] Many still wanted a multidimensional approach of youth services and law enforcement, but with more emphasis on the latter.[181] There were differences from city to city, too. Minority groups most likely to support law enforcement solutions often came from larger cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York with entrenched gang traditions and violence. As the next chapter will show, these cities shaped national gang programs and the perception that minority Americans wanted these types of solutions nationwide. Asians, Latinos, and blacks also worried that more policing would result in

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[179] Moore, "Isolation and Stigmatization," 8–9; Rufus P. Browning, Dale Rogers Marshall, and David H. Tabb, *Protest Is Not Enough: The Struggle of Blacks and Hispanics for Equality in Urban Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[180] "Gang Problem Solutions Caught Flurry of Words," *Skanner* (Portland, OR), June 29, 1988, 3.

[181] For a sample, see "Gangs in Our City," *Columbus Times*, September 18, 1988, B1; State of California Department of the Youth Authority, "Gang Violence Reduction Project," 143; Davis, "Gang Violence in Los Angeles: Any Solution?," G5; "S.F. Girds for All-Out Gang War," *Sun Reporter* (San Francisco, CA), April 12, 1989, 1.

more harassment and profiling.[182] For example, heated community meetings in Chicago accused police officers of unprofessional conduct in the streets and in schools when officers patrolled against gang violence.[183] Young black men in Los Angeles complained that police unfairly labeled all of them gang members and that the police felt they had license to stop any African American youth.[184] Latino organizers in the San Francisco area warned young men and women that they were at risk. One particularly powerful poster warned, "RAZA BEWARE! Are you 10 to 20 years old do you wear: pendletons, khakis, t-shirts, counties, zoot suits. Do you live in a barrio do you hang-out with other homegirls and homeboys like yourself. If so you are being labeled as a gang member by police, city + state officials, schools + the public in general to them you are a criminal!! [sic]"[185] And when California's Attorney General John Van de Kamp called the Asian gang problem the most dangerous organized crime issue in 1987, Chinese for Affirmative Action called it "the 1980s version of the 'Yellow Peril.'" Asian Americans protested that such statements made young Asian men vulnerable to unconstitutional police practices, which ultimately undermined Asian demands for safety in their neighborhoods.[186] Additionally, there were specific concerns that more policing might open the door to

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[182] David Rosenzweig, "Gang Violence Linked to Desire for Notoriety," *Los Angeles Times*, December 24, 1972, B1; "Groups Protest Youth Gang Article," *Skanner* (Portland, OR), January 20, 1982, 1.

[183] "Statement of Percy L. Julian High School Parent's Council to Committee Meeting of Chicago Police Department Regarding the Problems of Juvenile Gangs," 5 April 1984, box 3, file 26, HERS Records.

[184] Arvie Carrol, "Letter to the Editor," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 9, 1985, A6.

[185] Artistas de Aztlán, "Raza Beware," 1982, Galeria de la Raza Archives, Special Collections Library, University of California Santa Barbara.

[186] Jack Viets, "Surge in Asian Gangs Called Serious Threat in Bay Area," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 9, 1987; "Asian American Community Response to State Attorney General John Van de Kamp's Public Statements on Asian Gangs and Report on Organized Crime in California," 16 July 1987, box 40, Roberti Collection.

police brutality, a problem all three groups had historically faced.[187] Even those

individuals who felt that the police might not physically abuse them did feel that the

police treated them with little professionalism and kindness.[188] Adding to these

perceptions were decades of complacency on the part of police departments who were

slow to reach out to minority residents through community meetings and bilingual

services.[189] This distrust did not simply evaporate as gang violence worsened. It merely

added qualifications to minority demands for law enforcement and enriched discussions

about the meaning of fair policing for minority neighborhoods. Oftentimes, scholars and

contemporaries have missed these layered demands, describing a landscape in which

minority groups had the choice between two mutually exclusive options: safe streets with

more police and brutality or safe constitutional rights with less policing and higher crime.

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[187] Chin, *Chinatown Gangs*, 5–11; Michael J. Jamieson and Timothy J. Flanagan, eds., *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1986* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1987), 86; Kathy L. Valadez, "Commentary: Barrio Gangs," *El Chicano* (San Bernardino, CA), April 3, 1975, 2.

[188] There is some debate as to whether the racial disparity in opinions about police is a function of race or class given that many Latino and African American respondents to surveys are from low-income communities. One study from Chicago in the 1990s found that class may be the more important component, but an overwhelming number of nationwide studies throughout the postwar period show that income does not appear to have a direct or predictive correlation with opinions about policing. Instead, race is the most salient demographic variable in attitudes towards the police. Robert J. Sampson and Dawn Jeglum Bartusch, "Legal Cynicism and (Subcultural?) Tolerance of Deviance: The Neighborhood Context of Racial Differences," *Law and Society Review* 32, no. 4 (1998): 777–804; Scott H. Decker, "Citizen Attitudes toward the Police: A Review of Past Findings and Suggestions for Future Policy," *Journal of Police Science and Administration* 9, no. 1 (March 1981): 80–87; Vincent J. Webb and Chris E. Marshall, "The Relative Importance of Race and Ethnicity on Citizen Attitudes toward the Police," *American Journal of Police* 14, no. 2 (1995): 45–66; Carter, "Hispanic Interaction," 213-227; W.S. Wilson Huang and Michael S. Vaughn, "Support and Confidence: Public Attitudes toward the Police," in Flanagan and Longmire, *Americans View Crime and Justice*, 32–33, 36, 47; Hindelang, Gottfredson, and Flanagan, *Sourcebook, 1981*, 189; Steven A. Tuch and Ronald Weitzer, "Racial Differences in Attitudes toward the Police," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 642–663; Kathleen Maguire, Timothy J. Flanagan, and Ann L. Pastore, eds., *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1992* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1993), 163.

[189] Paul Delaney, "Mayor Sees Hispanic Chiefs," *New York Times*, June 7, 1977, 18.

This dichotomy oversimplifies the desires of Latino, Asian, and African Americans and their demands on the state.[190] As debates over gang violence demonstrated, minority communities wanted safety and policing, but they wanted to be treated with respect and to receive the same protections that white communities enjoyed.

The perceived changes of the 1970s and 1980s were a watershed in the history of gangs. Many people believed that guns, drugs, immigration, and unemployment had remade the gang scene into one that was consistently more dangerous to both gang members and their neighbors. The lack of national attention to gang violence and rising concern among minority groups meant that the gang problem increasingly fell on the shoulders of black, Latino, and Asian communities. Left to address the issue and rising fear, minority groups attempted first to adopt the old intervention strategies but then began to push for measures normally considered pro-law-enforcement and pro-punishment. In many ways, the attitudes of these leaders and individuals grew closer in line with white attitudes throughout the 1970s and 1980s.[191] The solutions that had been eschewed by minority groups in the 1960s became by the end of the 1980s a central plank in the most vocal minority discussions about gang violence. All of these changes would shape the rise of conservative, national-level policies in the 1980s and 1990s as the country panicked about gangs once again. It would also provide law enforcement with an opportunity to further shape gang-intervention policies. As one LAPD gang unit officer

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[190] "Asian American Community Response," 64; Samuel Walker, Cassia Spohn, and Miriam DeLone, *The Color of Justice: Race, Ethnicity, and Crime in America* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2000), 94.
[191] McGarrell and Flanagan, *Sourcebook, 1984*, 226–227; Maguire and Flanagan, *Sourcebook, 1990*, 192–193.

explained the police view, "The community don't help that much, so you got to take what you can get while you can get it!...That's why when we know the community is behind us, we're going to be aggressive, break [gang members'] asses and put their butts in jail."[192]

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[192] Quoted in Sánchez Jankowski, *Islands in the Street*, 256.

Chapter 6

The Red (White) and Blue: National Politics in the Era of Bloods and Crips, 1980–1995

"Spend one Saturday night with the CRASH Unit of the LAPD and you'll wonder how people could ever romanticize street gangs. On screen they sing and dance in finger snapping formation, fighting chivalrously for love and honor. In today's Los Angeles they idle amid alcohol and urine on stoops and porches, pawing at their women and toying with their guns, waiting for the next petty rip-off or drive-by shooting....Enforcing the law in this part of town is like picking mercury off a floor. In a city of 3.3 million, the 8,253 cops can move crime around with sweeps and barricades, but they can't clean it up." – American Spectator[1]

It all started with a meeting outside Los Angeles's Washington High School in the spring of 1971. That afternoon two teenagers, Stanley "Tookie" Williams and Raymond Washington, brought their friends together to form a new gang. "It would have been a police photographer's Kodak moment to have captured all of us on film that day," Williams remembered decades later. "Standing and sitting around on the bleachers was the largest body of black pariahs ever assembled."[2] Williams, Washington, and their friends adopted the color blue to represent the gang and threw around names for the new group: Black Overlords, Assassins—even the Snoopies, after the cartoon character. Eventually, Washington suggested the Cribs. Over the next few weeks, Crib members during drunken parties mispronounced the name "Crips," and new Westside members mistakenly began tagging buildings with the mispronunciation. The name stuck.[3] The

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[1] J.P. Pinkerton, "East Side Story," *American Spectator*, August 1990, 24.

[2] Stanley Tookie Williams, *Blue Rage, Black Redemption: A Memoir* (New York: Touchstone, 2007), 89.

[3] There are different versions of this story. Some argue the name came from the Crips' way of walking or their use of canes as part of their gang wardrobe; others claimed it was because they crippled their enemies. The version recounted here comes directly from Stanley "Tookie" Williams, one of the founders. Ibid., 91–92, 96; US Congress, Senate, Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, *Our Nation's Schools—A Report Card: "A" In School*

Crips quickly took over territory and grew in a number of neighborhoods, but rival gangs

fought back. Soon, a number of the Crips' rivals banded together for protection, wearing

red and calling themselves Bloods. They challenged the Crips for dominance in Los

Angeles's South Central neighborhood, slowly bringing in other gangs through protective

alliances. By the early 1980s, the Bloods and Crips had carved a handful of Los

Angeles's black neighborhoods into blue and red territories.

No one could have guessed on that spring afternoon in 1971 that the Crips and

Bloods would rivet national attention and eventually define national politics. In the 1980s

and 1990s, the Bloods and Crips became household names in small towns and faraway

states largely due to national news coverage of what was happening in Los Angeles.[4]

News reports spread about the "senseless violence" by both gangs, such as innocent

youth being killed for wearing red jackets or blue sneakers.[5] Others reported urban

legends as fact. One of the most popular was the story that Blood and Crip initiations

involved driving cars without headlights through unsuspecting towns and shooting any

good Samaritan who attempted to warn the gang members that their lights were off.[6] Law

enforcement was integral to the construction of the Blood and Crip mythology. Police

reported a dramatic jump in gang homicides, from 275 in 1979 to 771 in 1991 in Los

Violence and Vandalism, 94th Cong., 1st sess., April 1975, 32; *Crips & Bloods: Made in America* directed by Stacy Peralta (Los Angeles: Verso Entertainment, 2008), DVD; Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 299; US General Accounting Office, *Nontraditional Organized Crime: Law Enforcement Officials' Perspectives on Five Criminal Groups* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1989), 48.
[4] Joel Best, *Random Violence: How We Talk about New Crimes and New Victims* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 73–79.
[5] For examples, see K. Rebelo, "'You See a Red Rag, Shoot'," *Sports Illustrated*, May 14, 1990, 46; Stephen J. Hedges, "When Drug Gangs Move to Nice Places," *US News and World Report*, June 5, 1989, 42.
[6] Best, *Random Violence*, 1.

Angeles alone. Such numbers made Los Angeles the undisputed gang capitol of the

world, and police continually cast the Bloods and Crips as the rulers.[7] At the federal

level, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) argued that the two gangs controlled nearly

30 percent of the national crack trade and had created a drug empire that stretched across

46 states.[8] This expansion became the most menacing element of the Bloods and Crips

narrative and was fueled by journalists' reports on the gangs "spread[ing] out along the

interstate system" hunting for new drug dealing territory and looking for innocent

communities to add to their turf.[9] By 1994, the police reported that there were more than

1100 gangs in 115 cities nationwide, representing tens of thousands of members, who

called themselves Bloods or Crips.[10] As one Crip member in *Harper's* warned the

national public "I think Crips will rule the world—that's what they trying to do."[11]

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[7] Criminologists have persuasively shown that the data coming from Los Angeles may have inflated the gang crisis by about 20 percent because Los Angeles law enforcement used one of the most expansive definitions of "gang-related homicide" in the country to tabulate crime data. Sometimes, a simple claim by one witness or police officer that a murder was "likely" gang-related was enough for the LAPD or Sheriff's Department to include an event in it's gang statistics. Cheryl L. Maxson and Malcolm W. Klein, "Defining Gang Homicide: An Updated Look at Member and Motive Approaches," in *The Modern Gang Reader*, ed. Jody Miller, Cheryl L. Maxson, and Malcolm W. Klein, 2nd ed (Los Angeles: Roxbury, 2001), 176–177; John Crust, "No Arresting LA's Gang Violence," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, January 14, 1989, A1; "Los Angeles County Gang-Related Homicides, 1979–1991," 1992, box 289, file "Gang Intervention Services" Burke Papers; "Gangs: Will Life Imitate a Movie?," *Newsweek*, April 25, 1988, 25; "To Deal and Die in LA," *Ebony*, August 1989, 106.
[8] Jerome Skolnick, *Gang Organization and Migration: Drugs, Gangs, and Law Enforcement* (Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, Center for the Study of Law and Society, 1990), 8–10; James C. Howell and Scott H. Decker, "The Youth Gangs, Drugs, and Violence Connection," *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Juvenile Justice Bulletin* (January 1999): 3.
[9] Hedges, "When Drug Gangs Move," 42; Jon D. Hull, "Life and Death with the Gangs," *Time*, August 24, 1987, 21–22; Bill Barich, "The Crazy Life," *New Yorker*, November 3, 1986, 103.
[10] Walter B. Miller, *The Growth of Youth Gang Problems in the United States: 1970–1998* (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, 2000), 44.
[11] Quoted in Leon Bing, "Reflections of a Gangbanger," *Harper's*, August 1988, 28.

The panic over the Bloods and Crips would lay the foundation for a second wave of panic over urban street gangs in the 1980s and 1990s. This chapter will explore how police officers and journalists fueled this panic by using their power to define the nature of the new gang menace and their ability to spread these ideas. Law enforcement, joined this time by prosecutors, continued to trumpet their expertise in understanding and dealing with urban gangs. They strengthened these claims in this later period by increasing their ability to track gangs and by building a professional network with one another. Through the new intelligence they gathered, law enforcement argued that gangs had become much more powerful in the late 1980s due to their expanding role in the drug economy and that these changes threatened police officers' ability to control gang-related violence. Journalists adopted this narrative and covered it extensively in the national press. This news coverage popularized police and prosecutors' stance that gangs were becoming too organized, too heavily armed, and too dangerous for local police to fight on their own. Only with the federal government's help would law enforcement stand a chance at ridding the streets of the new gang empires.

The public advocacy of police and prosecutors spurred the federal government to finally return to gang control beginning in 1988. The capstone of these efforts would become the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. Crafted by President Bill Clinton and other leading Democrats, the bill was a punitive assault on crime generally and gangs specifically. Democrats saw these efforts as a way to move their party towards the center of the political spectrum and recapture the crime issue from Republicans. These Democratic leaders focused specific provisions of the bill on gangs and gang-related violence to directly respond to the demands of law enforcement and

prosecutors. But Clinton also used perceptions about gang violence to frame his public campaign for the bill and ensure support among minority voters. While the police and prosecutors sided easily with Clinton, African American and Latino Congressional members faced a difficult decision in trying to balance their constituents' demands for fair crime control and their demands for safety in the face of what they perceived as rising violence. By focusing on gang violence, Democrats hoped to mitigate minority voters' and legislators' resistance to punishment. With the crime bill, Democrats signaled a rightward shift in their approach to gangs and gang members, embracing punishment as the primary federal approach. Scholars of the carceral state have noted this convergence of Democrats and Republicans but have often only noted it as an inevitable outcome of a rightward shift in American politics.[12] A closer look at the how Clinton and his advisors worked to incorporate all of the groups who had become active in crime politics, including police, prosecutors, minority leaders, and community activists, demonstrates that that the Democratic shift involved a complicated negotiation with each of these groups. Ultimately, it was the rhetoric and demands of these actors that created an opportunity for the Democrats to redefine their stance on gang-related crime and facilitated the growth of the carceral state.

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[12] For examples, see Marie Gottschalk, *The Prison and the Gallows: The Politics of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 79; David Garland, *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 13–14, 28, 55–71; Naomi Murakawa, "Electing to Punish: Congress, Race, and the American Criminal Justice State" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2005), 68, 127.

Police, Prosecutors, and Policymaking

By the dawn of the second gang panic, law enforcement agencies had wrested

power away from other groups to become the primary entity responsible for addressing

the gang issue.[13] This development was a direct outgrowth of the "law and order" era

when the police had cast themselves as experts in control of tracking and identifying

gangs. They had also successfully persuaded most Americans that appropriate and

efficient solutions to gang violence lay in law enforcement hands as opposed to those of

community groups and social scientists. The results of that earlier mobilization came to

full fruition in the 1980s and 1990s in the form of new policing apparatuses, increased

surveillance powers, and a growing law enforcement network. These elements made it

possible for the police to propose and lobby for tough-on-crime federal legislation with

unprecedented strength.

One of the most important powers of the police had become the ability to declare

when a city had developed a gang problem. In the 1950s and 1960s, social service

agencies, city leaders, and the police had jointly shared this responsibility because they

all had been involved in gathering data on crime and gang membership. But by the 1980s

data collection was solely a police function; police departments became the only arbiters

of defining and measuring street gangs.[14] They organized massive databases that listed all

known gang members with personalized profiles for each individual. They also created

catalogs on specific gangs that covered a gang's history, identifying colors, leaders, and

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[13] C. Ronald Huff, "Youth Gangs and Public Policy," *Crime and Delinquency* 35, no. 4 (October 1989): 525.

[14] Malcolm W. Klein and Cheryl L. Maxson, "Street Gang Violence," in *Violent Crime, Violent Criminals*, ed. Neil Alan Weiner and Marvin E. Wolfgang (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1989), 199–201, 225–226.

known turfs. As gang databases moved to computer systems in the 1980s and 1990s, law

enforcement's ability to monitor suspected gang members grew.[15] By the early 1990s

intelligence gathering became the most commonly used tactic by local police departments

to demonstrate that they were addressing gang violence. Through these tracking systems,

police were able to scrutinize citizens, particularly youth, at a much higher level than in

previous decades. Data collection also further entrenched law enforcement's control of

the gang story. Police departments declared that a city had "gone gang" or that there was

a new gang problem based on their ability to track gang incidents and members.

But the numbers were not always the only motivation behind law enforcement

declarations. For example, in Las Vegas, the police identified a gang problem in the

1980s with great fanfare. But social scientists and community members who lived in Las

Vegas felt that gang violence and membership were actually falling. Because of cops'

monopoly over statistics, however, they could not credibly challenge law enforcement.

Later research revealed that the police pronouncements coincided with threats to the

police department's budget due to city budget cuts. By claiming that an explosion of gang

warfare threatened the city's future, the police department was trying to justify continued

spending. This realization came too late, however. The police department received the

needed funds for a "war on gangs."[16] In other cases, police departments waited to identify

a problem even when police data suggested a significant rise in gang-related violence. In

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[15] G. David Curry et al., *National Assessment of Law Enforcement Anti-Gang Information Resources* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, US Department of Justice,1993), ii–iii, viii; Marjorie S. Zatz, "Chicano Youth Gangs and Crime: The Creation of a Moral Panic," *Contemporary Crises* 11, no. 2 (June 1987): 131.

[16] Richard C. McCorkle and Terance D. Miethe, "The Political and Organizational Response to Gangs: An Examination of a 'Moral Panic' in Nevada," *Justice Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (March 1998): 41–64.

cities such as Boston, Denver, and Columbus, Ohio, the police refused to acknowledge what other city residents believed was a gang crisis in hopes of diffusing criticism of the police department for not dealing effectively with crime. It wasn't until newspapers captured particularly shocking gang-related violence—in Columbus, gangs assaulted the mayor's son and the governor's daughter—that the police were forced by publicity and political pressure to declare a gang emergency.[17] Regardless of the reason, a police department's declaration that a city had "gone gang" was always a pivotal requirement in motivating legislative and punitive action in this later period.

Once a city had declared a gang problem, police departments were the central actors crafting gang-intervention approaches. As a result, suppression strategies intrinsic to policing—saturating gang turfs with officers, patrolling schools, and arresting gang members through large police "sweeps"—became the primary response to gang violence in the 1980s. In a 1989 national survey, every city with an identifiable gang problem used suppression strategies. Only a small handful of cities employed social or rehabilitative programs, such as counseling, recreation, or job training. Demonstrating the evolution of gang policy and police power over time, those that used only suppression tactics tended to be cities that first identified their gang problems after 1985.[18] The police officers most

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[17] Marcia I. Cohen et al., *National Evaluation of the Youth Gang Drug Prevention Program, Volume I: Final Report* (Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, 1994), 4.15; Klein and Maxson, "Street Gang Violence," 216–217; Huff, "Youth Gangs and Public Policy," 530–531.

[18] George E. Tita and Andrew Papachristos, "The Evolution of Gang Policy," in *Youth Gangs and Community Intervention: Research, Practice, and Evidence*, ed. Robert J. Chaskin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 24, 31; Irving A. Spergel and G. David Curry, "The National Youth Gang Survey: A Research and Development Process," in *The Gang Intervention Handbook*, ed. Ronald C. Huff and A. Goldstein (Champaign, IL: Research Press, 1993), 370–377; Cohen et al., *National Evaluation*, 4.16, 4.22–4.25; "LA in the Grips of Gang Crisis, Police Warn Commissioners," *Los Angeles Times*, November 30, 1973, B1.

often tasked with suppressing gangs were those who belonged to elite gang units. The

development of these specialized units was a new tactic in the late 1960s when law

enforcement sought to establish its professional reputation. The work of Chicago's GIU

was one such example. Although the GIU, and by extension the concept of gang units,

had gained notoriety through the Senate battle over the Blackstone Ranger program, it

wasn't until the 1980s and 1990s when law enforcement feared that gangs were gaining

the upper hand that gang units exploded across the country. In 1983, there were only 7

such units in the United States, but by the end of the 1990s, there were almost 360.[19]

Gang units became a site of contention and cooperation between the police and

the primarily nonwhite communities these units patrolled. In some cases, the community

members' demands discussed in Chapter 5 spurred government officials to fund

specialized gang task forces and to pressure police departments to form gang units.[20]

Once established, gang units often relied on community members' testimony to build

cases against gang members and on community support for patrols. In San Francisco,

police officers explained that their success only started when groups of black residents in

high-crime areas began "feeding [gang unit officers] information like mad" in the late

1980s.[21] In New York, one officer told a researcher, "When we get the community

support, we go with it…if the community is willing to help, well then me and the other

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[19] Jerome A. Needle and William Vaughan Stapleton, *Police Handling of Youth Gangs* (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, US Department of Justice, 1983), 20–26, 37.

[20] Charles M. Katz, "The Establishment of a Police Gang Unit: An Examination of Organizational and Environmental Factors," *Criminology* 39, no. 1 (February 2001): 55–54, 58.

[21] Rick DelVecchio, "S.F. Gang Violence Declines as Citizens Start Helping Cops," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 17, 1990, 2.

members of the force give a 100 percent effort."[22] Although these comments subtly

articulated the common misconception among police that minority residents' antagonism

towards law enforcement was primarily to blame when police tactics failed, the police

also recognized that cooperation made it easier for gang units to intensively track gang

youths and saturate gang turfs with police presence.

Despite these examples of cooperation, there were tensions. Minority leaders and

community members sometimes argued that gang units over-policed and stereotyped area

youth. One study in Los Angeles found that the gang databases complied by police

officers used broad definitions to identify gang members thus police often added innocent

youth to gang watch-lists; and once on the list, a young man or woman was never

removed.[23] In a few especially egregious cases, the police overstepped constitutional

limits. For example, in San Diego, the gang unit came under fire from Asian American

leaders for stopping all Asian youth to take their pictures for a database regardless of

whether or not the police department suspected an individual of gang involvement.[24]

Some gang units took these tensions seriously and tried to address concerns. In

Reno, Nevada, police worked closely with black and Latino residents to ensure fair

policing. When Reno's police department created a specialized gang unit, it also created

advisory groups made up of community residents and black and Latino city leaders.

These advisory groups worked with the police, discussing residents' concerns about both

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[22] Quoted in Martín Sánchez Jankowski, *Islands in the Street: Gangs and American Urban Society* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1991), 256.

[23] US Congress, House, Committee on the Judiciary, *Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms' Proposal for a Gang Information Network: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights*, 102nd Cong., 2nd sess., June 26, 1992, 44.

[24] H.G. Reza, "The San Diego Police File Upsets Asian Community," *Los Angeles Times*, December 1, 1985, C1.

gang violence and police practices. The primary goal of many advisory board members was to guarantee that the police gang unit focus only on hardcore gang members, which community members defined as the most violent gang members, leaving other youth to social service agencies. Black leaders demanded that the police regularly purge gang databases of youths who were incorrectly suspected of gang involvement or those who had left the gang. The police unit readily complied. In other instances, Reno's police met with the advisory groups before staging large-scale enforcement patrols in order to gain prior approval from minority leaders and residents. In return, Latino and African American groups lauded the Reno Police Department's gang unit and it tactics for removing gangs from the streets. The NAACP cited the Reno Police Department as a model for such units across the country.[25]

Most gang units, however, looked liked the LAPD's famous CRASH unit. Established in 1981, CRASH used millions in federal and state aid to create one of the largest and most notorious gang suppression forces in the country. CRASH managed an expansive gang-tracking database to monitor area youth. It equipped over two hundred specialized officers with extra training and powerful firearms to fight gangs on the ground.[26] CRASH also staged hundreds of sweeps of gang turfs—saturating an area with police officers, searching homes, arresting all suspected gang members—as part of its attack on gangs. These confrontational sweeps were the tangible manifestations of a

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[25] Jim Weston, "Community Policing: An Approach to Youth Gangs in a Medium-Sized City," in Miller, Maxson, and Klein, *Modern Gang Reader*, 315–319.

[26] "Appendix E," nd, p. 76, box 104, file "Gang Programs," Hawkins Papers; Davis, *City of Quartz*, 271–280; Karen Umemoto, *The Truce: Lessons from an LA Gang War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 64; Pamela G. Hollie, "Police in Los Angeles Seize 8 in Bid to Curb Gang Violence," *New York Times*, August 8, 1981, 43; Edwin Meese III and Bob Carrico, "Taking Back the Streets: Police Methods That Work," *Policy Review* 54 (Fall 1990): 22–30.

police unit that saw itself locked in combat with gang members and the communities where gang members lived. CRASH officers often talked about gang neighborhoods as the "war zones" where police waged a daily battle against crime. They saw CRASH as the leading battalion in that war, ready to fight using the violent tactics that the gangs used. "This is the continuing saga of us versus them," one CRASH officer explained, "and we've got a bigger gang than they do."[27]

At first, a number of black and Latino residents in Los Angeles welcomed the idea of a specialized gang task force. As discussed in Chapter 5, these same residents had been calling for increased police presence in order to guarantee the safety of their homes and their children. But CRASH's militant rhetoric and brutal treatment of residents was exactly the type of policing that these groups abhorred. It quickly became clear that the LAPD was not interested in coordinating its gang control program with the community as Reno's had. Residents in poor, nonwhite communities complained repeatedly about harsh treatment by CRASH officers. In a highly publicized case, CRASH officers beat up one of the LAPD's own black undercover officers whom they thought was a gang member. Suspected gang members often faced the most brutal treatment, but residents who were not gang members were also at risk. Carmen Lima, a mother and member of her neighborhood watch patrol, told the press that she had repeatedly seen LAPD officers line young boys up on their knees and hold guns to the boys' heads. At other times, officers

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[27] Quoted in "Los Angeles Police Net Suspected Drug Dealers," *New York Times*, November 5, 1984, A16.

stopped and questioned all residents regardless of gang suspicion. Such harassment quickly soured the relationship between CRASH and many black and Latino residents.[28]

Despite these problems, CRASH became a blueprint for other law enforcement agencies. Many in the law enforcement profession looked to the LAPD because CRASH was responsible for policing the Bloods and Crips who were garnering increased media attention and seemed to be spreading to other cities. But Los Angeles's gang suppression response also became a model because law enforcement groups were quickly building a national network to share information with one another. Officers shared tactics in law enforcement journals, and they swapped statistics by joining databases that covered gangs in multiple states. In fact, the LAPD and the Los Angeles Sherriff's Department spearheaded the first such regional database for the Southwest and West Coast.[29] Local gang units also organized regional alliances, such as the Southern California Gang Investigation Association and the Midwest Gang Investigators Association, which sponsored conferences and planned tactical operations that linked police departments across state and municipal boundaries.[30] Federal law enforcement in particular facilitated

[28] In the late 1990s, CRASH came under even more serious allegations during the Ramparts Scandal when officers at the Ramparts precinct were found guilty of drug dealing, bribery, murder, and robbery. Earl Shorris, "The Priest Who Loves Gangsters," *Nation*, December 18, 1989; National Lawyers Guild, *The Politics of Gangs*, 1989, National Lawyers Guild Records [TAM 191], Tamiment Library, New York University; "LAPD Blues," *Frontline* (Washington, DC: Public Broadcasting Service, May 15, 2001).

[29] Daryl F. Gates and Robert K. Jackson, "Gang Violence in LA," *Police Chief* 57, no. 11 (November 1990): 20–22; Richard F. Kensic, "Targeting a Los Angeles Street Gang," *Police Chief* 59, no. 3 (March 1992): 50–51; "Chicago's 'Flying Squad' Tackles Street Gangs," *Police Chief* 59, no. 10 (October 1992): 96–104; *Bureau of ATF Proposal*, 14, 19.

[30] Michael Bosc, Steve L. Hawkins, and George White, "Street Gangs No Longer Just a Big-City Problem," *US News and World Report*, July 16, 1984, 109; Michael L. Walker and Linda M. Schmidt, "Gang Reduction Efforts by the Task Force on Violent Crime in Cleveland, Ohio," in *Gangs in America*, ed. C. Ronald Huff, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996),

this process. The FBI, the DEA, the DOJ's Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) all set up task forces to investigate the role of street gangs in drug and gun sales nationwide.[31] These agencies for the first time served as advisers when local departments established gang units, and they hosted national workshops for municipal police officers. At these conferences, federal law enforcement taught local-level officers how to spot gangs, how to identify when their cities had "gone gang," and how to use suppression and prosecutorial tactics against gang members.[32] By the early 1990s, nearly 82 percent of local police departments regularly shared their gang intelligence with federal officials like the FBI.[33] This professionalized network helped to integrate federal and local law enforcement officials into a more centralized and coordinated system with gang units serving as the nodes in this network. It also helped perpetuate an image of gangs and the gang problem from police department to police department, unifying police tactics and painting a picture of a nationwide gang problem. And most importantly, it provided a strong foundation for political lobbying by police officers as disparate departments networked with one another, sharing grievances about inadequate resources and deficient laws for the war on gangs.

266; Malcolm W. Klein, "Street Gang Cycles," in *Crime*, ed. James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia (San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies Press, 1995), 230.

[31] Thomas A. Constantine, "DEA Response to the Violent Drug Trafficker Problem," *Police Chief* 61, no. 10 (October 1994): 8; Bruce J. Nichol, "The Violent Gang Task Force," *Police Chief* 61, no. 6 (June 1994): 30–35; *Bureau of ATF Proposal*, 2.

[32] Dan Bryant, *Communitywide Responses Crucial for Dealing with Youth Gangs* (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, US Department of Justice, 1989), 6; Weston, "Community Policing," 317; William S. Sessions to Edwin Meese III, 27 July 1988, box 179, file "Gang Task Force/FBI Gang Squad," DOJ Records; "Press Release: Los Angeles Street Gangs Drugs Trafficking Task Force Announced," 2 August 1988, box 179, file "Gang Task Force/FBI Gang Squad," DOJ Records; William S. Sessions, "Gang Violence and Organized Crime," *Police Chief* 57, no. 11 (November 1990): 17.

[33] Curry et al., *National Assessment*, vii.

Following law enforcement's example, prosecutorial offices in many cities

reorganized to enhance their ability to prosecute gang members. This reorganization had

a dramatic impact on the judicial pressure that gang members faced and was one of the

most profound changes to gang intervention approaches during the 1980s and 1990s.

Like the police, prosecutors created dedicated gang units that handled only gang cases.

This meant that prosecutors assigned to a gang case usually were experts on identifying

laws that could be used against gang members and were well versed in the gang world.

They were also intimately familiar with the unique challenges of gang cases. One such

challenge was that gangs most often commit their crimes as groups, yet the American

judicial system is constructed around adjudicating individuals. Another challenge lay in

the widening age-structure of street gangs. With both adult and juvenile members, gangs

were incredibly hard to prosecute in a country that divided criminal justice into two

separate systems for minors and adults. Testimony also presented an obstacle since gang

members adhering to the gang code rarely testified against one another and witnesses

often faced intimidation from a defendant's gang.[34]

To address these challenges, prosecutorial teams, like police gang units, shared

new tactics with one another. The first that spread nationally was the adoption of vertical

prosecution. In a normal criminal case, different prosecutors may handle a single

defendant at different phases in the prosecution timeline. Under vertical prosecution, an

technique pioneered by the Los Angeles District Attorney's (LADA) office in 1979, a

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[34] Brenda C. Coughlin and Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, "The Urban Street Gang after 1970," *Annual Review of Sociology* 29 (2003): 54; Claire Johnson, Barbara Webster, and Edward Connors, "Prosecuting Gangs: A National Assessment," *National Institute of Justice: Research in Brief* (February 1995): 4–5.

single prosecutor handled a case from beginning to end in order to ensure fewer mistakes and to maintain valuable relationships with intimidated witnesses. Calling its new approach Operation Hardcore, the LADA developed the idea from a similar federal program for repeat offenders used in the early 1970s. Operation Hardcore was extremely successful in the eyes of prosecutors because it resulted in a 98 percent conviction rate for gang crimes and in longer jail terms.[35]

The LADA's office in the 1980s pioneered another tactic that involved an inventive use of public nuisance laws through a process known as "civil abatement." Under this new approach, prosecutors petitioned a judge for an injunction against a gang that the police and the LADA believed posed a dangerous nuisance in a neighborhood. These injunctions prohibited gang members from partaking in activities normally considered legal. These included wearing certain colors, yelling gang names, and congregating in groups in both public and private. It also made it illegal for identified gang members to take part in activities that were known to facilitate violence and drug dealing, such as carrying beepers.[36] Civil abatement used the civil code, not the criminal code, which meant that prosecutors could act *before* a crime was committed and could do

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[35] Judith S. Dahmann, *An Evaluation of Operation Hardcore: A Prosecutorial Response to Violent Gang Criminality* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, US Department of Justice, September 1983), ix–xiv, 2.1–2.10, 5.2; "Motion by Supervisor Edmund D. Edleman," 27 October 1980, box 90, file "Probation—Gang Violence 1980," Burke Papers.

[36] LA City Attorney Gang Prosecution Section, "Civil Gang Abatement: A Community Based Policing Tool of the Office of the Los Angeles City Attorney," in Miller, Maxson, and Klein, *Modern Gang Reader*, 320–329; Edward Allan, *Civil Gang Abatement: The Effectiveness and Implications of Policing by Injunction* (New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing, 2004), 63–65; Max Shiner, *Civil Gang Injunctions: A Guide for Prosecutors* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Assistance, US Department of Justice, 2009); Glenn Barr, "Memo to File: Re City Attorney's Graffiti Removal Program," 8 February 1983, box D-1091, file "Gangs," Marvin Braude Collection, City of Los Angeles City Archives (hereafter cited as Braude Collection).

so with less regard for constitutional rights.[37] By limiting gang members' rights and increasing surveillance, civil abatement was a powerful mechanism for extending the carceral state's control over suspected gang members and their communities.

According to the LADA, the leadership of police and prosecutors was integral to civil abatement's success. Prosecutors insisted that civil abatement cases had to start with police on the ground collecting data that could prove to a judge that a gang posed a nuisance. Police were also responsible for monitoring the gang at all times to ensure compliance with the injunction. It was up to the prosecutors to coordinate the delivery of the injunction and work with law enforcement to prosecute any gang members who violated the court's order. Prosecutors also took control of city services in neighborhoods under civil abatement. In some cases, municipal agencies had stopped providing certain services to these communities, such as litter removal or road repairs, because gang-related violence posed a hazard to city workers. Once the prosecutor's office had removed gang members in these neighborhoods, it was up to the prosecutor to determine which services returned and when. Only the police and prosecutors, the LADA argued, had the expertise and connections to perfectly coordinate the timing and success of these measures.[38] By tightly controlling the entire civil abatement process, the LADA dramatically increased prosecutors' say in Los Angeles's approach to gang intervention and their control over the neighborhoods that the courts and the police defined as gang turf.

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[37] As criminologist Edward Allan has persuasively shown, the use of the civil code in this way became increasingly common in a post Warren-court legal system. Civil abatement's use against gangs was challenged in *People ex rel. Gallo v. Acuna,* 14 Cal. (1997), however, the courts upheld its constitutionality. Allan, *Civil Gang Abatement*, 2, 48–52, 68–72.

[38] LA City Attorney Gang Prosecution Section, "Civil Gang Abatement," 322–325.

The non-gang affiliated residents in communities where these abatement tactics were used largely supported prosecutors, calling civil abatement "most praiseworthy." These supporters believed that gang violence and drug dealing threatened residents' safety.[39] But a few residents fought the injunctions out of concern for the rights of area youth or because residents believed that a purely punitive response would not be enough to end gang violence in the long term. Prosecutors appeased most of these opponents by promising to add social programs and job training for targeted youths. However, to maintain their control, the LADA tightly regulated these programs. Prosecutors decided what form the social programs would take and which gang members would be eligible to participate.[40] The LADA's office considered civil abatement an impressive success. The police reported that rates of violence dropped in targeted neighborhoods and higher numbers of gang members were sent to jail under the program. The LADA's new strategies of vertical prosecution and civil abatement spread to other cities aided by publicity from the federal DOJ, which published a number of studies on Los Angeles's achievements.[41] As a result, almost all prosecutorial gang units in the country eventually adopted vertical prosecution and civil abatement spread across California, Texas, Ohio, Arizona, New Mexico, New York, and Oregon.[42]

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[39] Don Flowers to Marvin Braude, 22 November 1982, box D-1091, file "Gangs," Braude Collection.

[40] Allan, *Civil Gang Abatement*, 197–238.

[41] For examples, see Dahmann, *Evaluation of Operation Hardcore*; Johnson, Webster, and Connors, "Prosecuting Gangs"; Shiner, *Civil Gang Injunctions*.

[42] Johnson, Webster, and Connors, "Prosecuting Gangs," 8; William Sanders, *Gangbangs and Drive-bys: Grounded Culture and Juvenile Gang Violence* (New York: Aldine De Guyter, 1994), 177; Kirk Johnson, "Manhattan Squad Takes Big Cases," *New York Times*, August 3, 1986, 37; "DA Offers Plan to End Gang War, Drug Deals," *San Francisco Examiner*, April 20, 1989; Allan, *Civil Gang Abatement*, 3–4; Patrick Mazza, "At 'Gang Summit': Officials Endorse Social Solutions but Focus on Law Enforcement," *Skanner* (Portland, OR), July 27, 1988, 1.

When using old laws in new ways proved insufficient, police and prosecutors pushed lawmakers to accept changes to the penal code, oftentimes drafting legislation themselves. As in the 1970s, they did so by relying on their status as experts. Police periodicals in the 1980s continued to urge officers to stay connected to their legislative representatives. They argued that it was a "disservice" for the police not to lend their expertise to major crime policy debates because police acted "not only as individual patriotic citizens but as responsible community leaders as well."[43] Answering such calls, law enforcement continued to offer expert testimony at Congressional hearings on gang violence. For the first time, prosecutors in the late 1970s did as well, reflecting the expanding role of prosecutors in gang-related crime control.[44] Behind closed doors, police officials and prosecutors met with lawmakers to submit policy ideas and provide politicians with talking points for specific legislation.[45]

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[43] Jerald R. Vaughn, "Politics and the Police," *Police Chief* 55, no. 10 (October 1988): 8; Robert Butterworth, "Sheriffs and the Politics of Law Enforcement," *National Sheriff* 38, no. 5 (November 1987): 22–26.

[44] Based on an analysis of the following hearings: US Congress, House, *Crime in America— Youth Gang Warfare: Hearings before the Select Committee on Crime*, 91st Cong., 2nd sess., July 16–17, 1970; US Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, *Gang Violence and Control: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice*, 98th Cong., 1st sess., February 7 and 9, 1983; US Congress, House, Committee on the Judiciary, *Organized Criminal Activity by Youth Gangs: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice*, 100th Cong., 2nd sess., June 6 and August 8, 1988; US Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, *Youth Violence and Gangs: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice*, 102nd Cong., 1st sess., November 26, 1991; *ATF Proposal for Gang Information Network*; US Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, *The Gang Problem in America—Formulating an Effective Federal Response: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice*, 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., February 9, 1994.

[45] For example, compare "Gang Violence [Notes on Meeting with Mike Genelin]," 1992, box 198, Roberti Collection; David A. Roberti, "Senate Judiciary Statement," 31 March 1992, box 198, Roberti Collection; "Investigative Plan/Role of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to Address the 'Bloods' and 'Crips' Gangs," 29 July 1988, box 179, file "Gang Task Force/FBI Gang Squad," DOJ Records; "LA Efforts on Gang Project-Update Meeting," 28 July 1988, box 179, file "Gang Task Force/FBI Gang Squad," DOJ Records.

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These efforts were very successful at the local level, resulting in state and municipal laws that set standards for the rest of the country. Curfews for juveniles were a popular tactic. Between 1990 and 1994 nearly five hundred cities drafted new curfew laws.[46] Others passed drive-by shooting statutes that added years to a gang member's prison sentence if he/she committed a crime using drive-by tactics.[47] The Chicago City Council passed a highly controversial Gang Congregation Ordinance in 1992 with support from the upper brass of the police department. The ordinance allowed the police to arrest any group of people congregating in public whom the police suspected were gang members. Under the ordinance, the CPD made 42,000 arrests in just three years. The police heralded the ordinance a success when they released police-generated statistics showing a 25 percent drop in gang-related homicides. Although the law was eventually found unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, other cities followed Chicago's lead.[48] Police and prosecutors also supported laws mimicking the federal government's

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[46] Wesley R. Smith, "Don't Stand So Close to Me: Judges Are Giving Neighborhoods a Bum Rap," *Policy Review* 70 (Fall 1994): 52; William Ruefle and Kenneth Mike Reynolds, "Curfews and Delinquency in Major American Cities," *Crime and Delinquency* 41, no. 3 (July 1995): 347–363.

[47] Johnson, Webster, and Connors, "Prosecuting Gangs," 8–9; Patrick Jackson and Cary Rudman, "Moral Panic and Response to Gangs in California," in *Gangs: The Origins and Impact of Contemporary Youth Gangs in the United States*, ed. Scott Cummings and Daniel J. Monti (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 263–265.

[48] Some officers in the CPD questioned the law at first because they were not sure it would hold up in court and because they feared that it might overburden local jails. However, they agreed with both its intent and its necessity. Andrew Fegelman, "Gang Loitering Law Is Ruled Illegal," *Chicago Tribune*, December 19, 1995; Kim Strosnider, "Anti-Gang Ordinances after *City of Chicago v. Morales*: The Intersection of Race, Vagueness Doctrine, and Equal Protection in the Criminal Law," *American Criminal Law Review* 39, no. 101 (2002): 102, 112; Allan, *Civil Gang Abatement*, 47; Memorandum from Eleanor D. Acheson to Seth P. Waxman Regarding *City of Chicago v. Jesus Morales, et al.*, 21 May 1998, box 9, file 17, Elena Kagan Domestic Policy Council Collection William J. Clinton Presidential Library—Digital Archive, Little Rock, AR, http://www.clintonlibrary.gov/_previous/KAGAN%20DPC/DPC%205-17/DOMESTIC%20POLICY%20COUNCIL%20BOXES%205-30_Part88.pdf.

Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO).[49] Passed in 1970, RICO

made it possible for the federal government to press charges against entire groups that

committed organized crime and it allowed courts to try the leaders of such organizations

for ordering others to perform illegal acts. Originally intended to target the Mafia, state

and local prosecutors began to see RICO-type legislation as a promising addition to their

arsenal in suppressing street gangs. They lobbied for "little RICO's," state laws that

would allow similar prosecutions on the state and municipal levels.[50] The first was

California's Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Act (STEP) passed in 1989.

STEP made gang membership a punishable offense, provided for the adjudication of 16-

and 17-year-old gang members as adults, and added provisions to the penal code that

allowed the prosecution of parents who failed to stop their children from joining a gang.[51]

Los Angeles County's District Attorney, Ira Reiner, drafted the law and received support

from law enforcement and prosecutors across the state.[52] Speaking for the entire justice

community, State Attorney General John Van de Kamp called on law enforcement to

"strike while the iron is hot" and pressure the state legislature to pass the bill.[53] STEP was

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[49] Johnson, Webster, and Connors, "Prosecuting Gangs," 7.

[50] Coughlin and Venkatesh, "Urban Street Gang," 54; Sánchez Jankowski, *Islands in the Street*, 265–268.

[51] *Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Act, California Penal Code Section 186.21*, 1989; Jackson and Rudman, "Moral Panic and Response," 268; Lauren Dundes, "Punishing Parents to Deter Delinquency: A Realistic Remedy?," *American Journal of Police* 13, no. 4 (1994): 113–133.

[52] Edwin Chen and Bob Baker, "New Anti-Terrorism Law Used against LA Gangs," *Los Angeles Times*, April 21, 1989, 45; California State Legislature, *Proposals for Changing Little RICO: Hearing before the Joint Committee on Organized Crime and Gang Violence*, November 7, 1989.

[53] Jackson and Rudman, "Moral Panic and Response," 265–266.

a major legislative win for California's law enforcement, and it became a model that other state prosecutors and politicians soon followed.[54]

The growing authority of both police and prosecutors during the 1980s and 1990s was the result of changes begun during the "law and order" era of the 1960s and 1970s. By the early 1990s, the apparatus available for law enforcement and the criminal justice system had expanded greatly. Both police and prosecutors now had dedicated gang units with support from federal, state, and local sources, and these units had new local laws that allowed them to exert more control over public spaces and communities. The tools available to monitor gangs, from gang databases to civil injunctions, had grown dramatically, making it possible to scrutinize urban youth and minority Americans at unprecedented levels. At the same time, the various actors in law enforcement and criminal justice had solidified their relationships with one another. Police officers and district attorneys were working intimately together on a regular basis to prosecute gang cases. Meanwhile, another tightly knit network had evolved between federal and local law enforcement as both groups cooperated in tracking and addressing the growth of gangs nationwide. Finally, police and prosecutors had further entrenched themselves as the experts on gang violence and used this status to lobby in the halls of legislatures for punitive legislation. Once the federal government began to seriously address gang-related violence in 1988, these campaigns would ensure that federal officials embraced pro-punishment, suppression-oriented gang control.

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[54] McCorkle and Miethe, "Political and Organizational Response," 50–51; Allan, *Civil Gang Abatement*, 49.

News Coverage and New Perceptions of Gangs

In their fight to convince politicians and the voting public of the need for new laws, police officers and prosecutors relied heavily on newspapers, magazines, and television news programs. Police departments shared regular reports and data with journalists who then used this material to declare a resurgence of gangs nationwide in the 1980s and 1990s. News coverage of gangs became more common in this period, and these reports claimed that the new generation of gangs was more deadly and sophisticated than those that had come before. Three new characteristics, these reporters argued, set the new gangs apart: involvement in the narcotics trade, organized migration to new cities and states, and an unprecedented level of brutality and irrationality in their violence. When combined, these elements created the image of a new gang menace that was a formidable enemy for law enforcement and criminal justice experts; one that could not be fought on the local level.

Reporters primarily focused on police data and criminological studies that argued gangs were becoming central actors in the drug economy. As shown in Chapter 5, surveys of gang members and arrest statistics suggested that gang members were increasingly involved in narcotics sales after 1970, but that these types of activities were not synonymous with gang membership. Yet journalists often blended the two, arguing that gangs existed solely to peddle drugs in low-income neighborhoods. One of the most common media trends was sensational exposés on crack cocaine and the gangs who dealt it. A smokeable, cheap form of cocaine, crack became popular beginning in the mid 1980s. Politicians and news outlets described crack as the drug of choice in low-income, urban neighborhoods, especially among poor African Americans. They argued that it had

created a surge in crime rates in many of these areas as addicts stole to support their

habits and as dealers killed to protect their territories. "The Crack Epidemic," as reporters

dubbed it, was depicted as one of the most harrowing crime problems of the twentieth

century. While scholars have persuasively shown that crack was neither as pervasive nor

as dangerous as contemporaries believed, nor was its use confined to poor, minority

Americans, the myths surrounding crack cocaine were incredibly persuasive at the time.

Americans of all classes and races believed that crack had created an epidemic of

violence, crime, and brutality in America's inner cities. In fact, 97 percent of Americans

considered it a "big problem" for the nation.[55]

Media accounts often marked gang members as vital participants in the emerging

crack trade. Reporters interviewed police officers, DEA officials, and ATF

representatives who described young gang members selling crack on street corners and

older gang leaders running "rock houses" where users went to purchase and consume the

drug. The writers of these accounts argued that gang conflicts were no longer about

neighborhood turf and reputation. Gang fights were now over drug dealing territory, and

gangs were arming themselves with semiautomatic weapons to protect their market

shares. *Newsweek* quoted one ATF agent who suggested that the crack trade was the

entire rationale behind gangs in the 1980s: "The bigger that crack becomes, the bigger the

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[55] Craig Reinarman and Harry G. Levine, eds., *Crack in America: Demon Drugs and Social Justice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Beverly Xaviera Watkins and Mindy Thompson Fullilove, "Crack Cocaine and Harlem's Health," in *Dispatches from the Ebony Tower: Intellectuals Confront the African American Experience*, ed. Manning Marable (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 123–127; *Washington Post Poll*, June 1988, iPOLL Databank (USWASHP.887663.R46B); *Roper Report*, August 1986, iPOLL Databank (USROPER.86-8.R03B); *Roper Report*, August 1986, iPOLL Databank (USROPER.86-8.R02B); *Roper/US News and World Report/CNN Poll*, December 1986, iPOLL Databank (USROPER.744038.R10B); *Drug Crisis and Drug Policy Survey*, August 1989, iPOLL Databank (USGALLUP.89DRUG.R02A).

posses [gangs] get." This same article claimed that if left unchecked, street gangs would

consolidate and grow, much as the Mafia had done during Prohibition. The only

difference was that street gangs were more brutal and dangerous than the Mafia ever had

been.[56] Such pronouncements about the special danger of crack gangs were steeped in

racial stereotypes. Media coverage often portrayed the Crack Epidemic as a blight on

black communities. As such, these reports almost always focused on black gang members

who sold crack and fought over drug territory. For example, *Rolling Stone* quoted a

Latino gang member who explained that since "the rock cocaine has come in…the blacks

have taken over the gang thing."[57] These racial overtones tapped into longstanding fears

about black criminality and intensified the dangerous subtext of these reported changes.

By conflating gangs with crack cocaine—the most pressing crime problem at the time—

journalists and the law enforcement experts they quoted intensified voters' fears about

street gangs in America.

Drugs were also a crucial element in journalists' explanation of gang migration.

Police data showed that gangs were appearing to new areas, developing in the Midwest,

in the South, and in the Pacific Northwest by 1990. There was a substantial rise in

"emerging gang cities"—localities where police reported the presence of gangs for the

first time—most of which were small cities and towns.[58] From this data, media outlets

wove a narrative of "imperial gangs" "colonizing" better drug territory and of "mobile

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[56] Quoted in Tom Morgenthau, "The Drug Gangs," *Newsweek,* March 28, 1988, 20–27; George Hackett and Michael A. Lerner, "LA Law: Gangs and Crack," *Newsweek*, April 24, 1987, 35–36; Robert Reinhold, "In the Middle of LA's Gang Warfare," *New York Times*, May 22, 1988, 249; Selwyn Raab, "Links to 200 Murders in New York City Last Year," *New York Times*, March 20, 1988, 164.

[57] Quoted in Mike Sager, "Death in Venice," *Rolling Stone*, September 22, 1988, 114.

[58] Frank S. Washington and Jay Carney, "Sunbelt Import: Youth Gangs Plague the South," *Time*, August 18, 1986, 76; Bosc, Hawkins, and White, "Street Gangs," 108.

predators" spreading from state to state.[59] The most common story was that of a gang,

usually a Blood or Crip set from Los Angeles, sending scouts out to a small city to

establish a foothold from which to recruit local members and deal crack.[60] The

introduction of a new gang often attracted other gangs, thus, as *US News and World*

Reports quoted one police officer, a location could quickly go "from a virgin city to a real

whorehouse."[61] The drug economy was central to this narrative because it was drug

money that provided the plane tickets and cars for migration, and it was the saturation of

drug markets in big cities that motivated gangs to expand.[62] News reports also expressed

concern about the relationship between mobility and immigration. This was especially

true in depictions of Asian gangs whom the DEA and the press portrayed as using

immigrants' cross-border movement to supply wholesalers in the American drug market.

Specifically, officials warned that Asian gangs might be trafficking heroin from Asia.[63]

Panic increased further when magazines and newspaper reported that gangs had spread to

suburbs. Social commentators pointed an accusatory finger at rising divorce rates among

parents and the apathy of middle-class youth, but they also implied that suburban gangs

were the end product of some inner-city conspiracy.[64]

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[59] John S. DeMott and Jon D. Hull, "Have Gang, Will Travel," *Time*, December 9, 1985, 34.
[60] KCRW Los Angeles, "Which Way LA?: Gangs, and Will the Truce Hold?," transcript, 23 June 1992, p. 8, box 2, Which Way LA Collection [CLSA-20, Series 1] Leavey Center, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA.
[61] Hedges, "When Drug Gangs Move," 42.
[62] Morgenthau, "Drug Gangs," 20–27; Hackett and Lerner, "LA Law," 36; DeMott and Hull, "Have Gang, Will Travel," 34.
[63] Ko-lin Chin, *Chinatown Gangs: Extortion, Enterprise, and Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 10; Jack Seamonds, "Ethnic Gangs and Organized Crime," *US News and World Report*, January 18, 1988, 37.
[64] Randall Kennedy, "Leader of the Pack," *Rolling Stone*, August 28, 1986, 51–64, 81–84; C. Jack Friedman, Fredrica Mann, and Alfred S. Friedman, "A Profile of Juvenile Street Gang Members," *Adolescence* 10, no. 40 (Winter 1975): 563–607; Barich, "Crazy Life," 97–130;

Although the image of the organized, imperial gang was central to the media panic, scholarly studies of gang migration reveal a less menacing picture. These studies argued that the spread was much less organized and less common than the news media claimed. In the large majority of cases, migration occurred because a gang member's family chose to leave a given city and the gang member brought the traditions, name, and colors of his old gang to his new hometown. In almost 95 percent of cases where migration occurred, these sociologists argued, police data showed that the new hometown already had gangs and gang members. Sometimes the in-migration of new gang members created a spike in police-reported violence as the new gang upset the turf boundaries and balance of power already in place, but gang migration was not the large-scale conspiracy depicted by the media. In fact, these studies found that the news reports themselves were part of the problem. In some cases, gangs like the Bloods and Crips appeared in new towns because local youth emulated gangs they saw on television newscasts and in the movies.[65]

In addition to focusing on drugs and migration, news reporters painted a picture of gang violence that was both brutal and irrational by spotlighting the most sensational

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Judith Cummings, "Youth Gangs Rise in Suburbs in West," *New York Times*, November 3, 1986, 14; Robert Martin, "An Effective Juvenile Delinquency Model—Statements before the Federal Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention," 22 June 1988, box 104, file "VE/Crime/Gang Hearings," Hawkins Papers; Hedges, "When Drug Gangs Move," 42.
[65] Cheryl L. Maxson, "Gang Members on the Move," *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Juvenile Justice Bulletin* (October 1998): 1–11; John W. C. Johnstone, "Youth Gangs and Black Suburbs," *Pacific Sociological Review* 24, no. 3 (July 1981): 355–375; Huff, "Youth Gangs and Public Policy," 527; Woodrow W. Nichols Jr., "Community Safety and Criminal Activity in Black Suburbs," *Journal of Black Studies* 9, no. 3 (March 1979): 311–333; James C. Howell, "Recent Gang Research: Program and Policy Implications," *Crime and Delinquency* 40, no. 4 (October 1994): 506; Klein, "Street Gang Cycles," 230; Dan Waldorf, "When the Crips Invaded San Francisco: Gang Migration," *Journal of Gang Research* 1, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 11–17.

stories and images. For example, in a piece for *60 Minutes*, Dan Rather reported on

Mexican American gangs in Los Angeles locked in "a war no less bloody than WWII or

Vietnam." The televised report ended with a juvenile gang member accidentally shooting

himself in the stomach on camera during an interview.[66] Print news coverage contained

similar material. There were numerous stories like that in an issue of *Time* that described

how a 23-year-old gang member, "Baby Monster," killed a teenage girl on a street corner.

High on PCP and drunk on malt liquor, Baby Monster shot his victim six times in the

back "Just for kicks."[67] Other articles talked about gang violence as "combat stripped of

all the familiar rationales"[68] and of gang members as "a class of semisociopaths."[69] In

these journalistic portrayals, gang shooters thought nothing of consequence, strategy, or

their victims' humanity. As in the 1950s, newspapers, television programs, and

magazines portrayed gangs as an alien entity. There were glossaries attached to articles

on the gang world to demystify gang culture and argot.[70] As one New York reporter

described a typical televised documentary on gangs in 1986, "I felt that I was seeing a

colonial's film about the strange habits of the colonized."[71] Studies showed that

individuals who had little direct contact with gangs or who lived outside of gang

neighborhoods overestimated the prevalence of violence primarily because of this media

exaggeration. When compared to individuals who actually lived in gang-prone areas,

these outsiders had a much more sinister view of gangs as extremely violent, highly

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[66] "East LA Gangs," *60 Minutes* (New York: Columbia Broadcasting System, 1978).
[67] Quoted in Hull, "Life and Death," 21.
[68] A. Stanley and J. Nachtwey, "Child Warriors," *Time*, June 18, 1990, 52.
[69] George F. Will, "A 'West Coast Story'," *Newsweek*, March 28, 1988, 76.
[70] For examples, see Morgenthau, "Drug Gangs," 20–27; "When You're a Crip (or a Blood),"
Harper's, March 1989, 51–59.
[71] Quoted in Barich, "Crazy Life," 126.

organized, irrational killers set on dominating big cities and small towns, an image that

grew directly out of journalists' reports.[72]

News coverage and official pronouncements in the wake of the Los Angeles

uprising in 1992 further fueled such portrayals. Violence broke out on April 29, 1992, in

South Los Angeles after a jury found four white police officers not guilty in the beating

of African American resident Rodney King. Much of the violent protests occurred in

neighborhoods identified by police as home to a large number of gang members.[73]

Florence and Normandie Avenues, the intersection where the uprising first began, was

known as Eight Tray Gangster Crip turf, a fact that many news reporters emphasized.

National magazines and television broadcasts carried reports of gang members instigating

the rebellion, beating innocent bystanders, looting stores, and attempting to spread the

violence to other areas.[74] After the rebellion, newspapers claimed that nearly 17,000

firearms had gone missing from local gun shops. The police and officials quoted in these

stories worried that gang members would use these weapons in their own wars, thus

escalating the already brutal violence in America's gang capitol.[75]

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[72] McCorkle and Miethe, "Political and Organizational Response," 41–64; Susan R. Takata, "Divergent Perceptions of Group Delinquency in a Midwestern Community: Racine's Gang Problem," *Youth and Society* 21, no. 3 (March 1990): 282–305; Douglas W. Pryor, "Public Perceptions of Youth Gang Crime: An Exploratory Analysis," *Youth and Society* 24, no. 4 (June 1993): 399–418.

[73] Jordan Bonfante, Sylvester Monroe, and Richard Lacayo, "Unhealed Wounds," *Time*, April 19, 1993, 26–32; Melissa Hickman Barlow, "Race and the Problem of Crime in *Time* and *Newsweek* Cover Stories, 1946–1995," *Social Justice* 25, no. 2 (1998): 175.

[74] "Barr Cites Gangs' Role in LA Riots," *Washington Post*, May 18, 1992, A5; Sonia L. Nazario and Frederick Rose, "Earlier, Stronger Response by Police Might Have Averted Riots, Experts Say," *Wall Street Journal*, May 4, 1992, A6; Seth Mydans, "FBI Setting Sights on Street Gangs," *New York Times*, May 24, 1992, 16; "Police Arrest 22 in Gang Looting during LA Riots," *Washington Post*, June 3, 1992, A9.

[75] Lou Cannon and Leef Smith, "LA Curfew Lifted; Troops Stay on Patrol," *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 1992, A13; Bonfante, Monroe, and Lacayo, "Unhealed Wounds" 26–32.

The coverage of gang members' involvement in the beating of a white truck drive, Reginald Denny, during the riots was particularly inflammatory. Television crews had caught the beating on camera and had aired it live across national television. In the footage, four young black men pulled Denny from the cab of his truck, beating him unconscious with a brick and stolen medical equipment. Two of the attackers, Damian Williams and Antoine Miller, were known members of the Eight Tray Gangster Crips. During the attack, Williams threw gang signs towards the camera after throwing a brick at Denny's head. After Williams, Miller, and four others were arrested for the attack, Los Angeles County District Attorney Ira Reiner dismissed them as "gangsters" in public statements and the LAPD erroneously accused all six of being gang members.[76] The Denny beating became the most enduring image of the riot both as a counterpoint to footage of the Rodney King beating and as a symbol for the news media and many Americans of violent protest by young black men against the white establishment. Linking gangs with this searing moment, the news coverage of the rebellion suggested the centrality of gang members to the riot, much as coverage of rebellions in the 1960s had. By doing so, news outlets, and the city officials they echoed, reinforced the idea that gangs had become an increasingly unstable element in urban centers.

The new perception that street gangs had all become irrational, heavily-armed, imperial gangs was a boon to law enforcement in their fight for a punitive "war on

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[76] The four other defendants tried in the case were not actually affiliated with a street gang. Only Miller and Williams identified themselves as gang members. David Whitman, "The Untold Story of the LA Riot," *US News and World Report*, May 31, 1993, 34–48; "See the Sideshow," *Time*, May 25, 1992, 17–18; Tom Morganthau and Andrew Murr, "The Denny Trial: LA's Next Big Test," *Newsweek*, April 26, 1993, 28–33; Seth Mydans, "Bail Is Set for Defendants in Videotaped Riot Beating," *New York Times*, May 22, 1992, A20; Lou Cannon, "4 Gang Members Arrested in Beating of LA Trucker," *Los Angeles Times*, May 13, 1992, A14.

gangs." In the late 1980s and early 1990s, law enforcement continued to claim their

expert status on gang violence and crime much as they had in previous decades. But there

was one major shift in the expertise rhetoric. During the "law and order" era, police

officers had portrayed themselves as well-equipped and knowledgeable experts ready to

tackle the gang issue if only the public would entrust them with the job. By the mid

1980s, they had won that trust, thus it no longer served as a rallying cry. Instead, police

officers began to claim that although the police were the best-suited experts, they were

"outmanned, outgunned, and outspent" by predatory, entrepreneurial gangs.[77] The police

gave numerous interviews to the national press in which they lamented the declining

resources for local police departments in an era of state and municipal budget cuts. Yet,

using their own statistics, the police argued that the gangs were in a golden period,

spreading steadily with the help of drug money, expanding turf, and an influx of

semiautomatic weapons—an image they popularized through contact with reporters. The

police were careful, though, not to paint a picture of their own incompetence. They

argued that they were still the best answer to the problem and were winning singular

battles; they simply needed more resources in order to win the war.[78] "We're keeping a

lid on it," one officer told *Time*, "but that's about all."[79]

To correct this imbalance, police and prosecutors advocated specific policy

changes. They published regular reports on the prevalence of gang violence. These

reports recommended gun legislation to address the expanding use of heavy weaponry,

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[77] Morgenthau, "Drug Gangs," 27.

[78] For a sample, see "Turf Wars," *Scholastic Update*, November 17, 1989, 6; Hull, "Life and Death," 21–22; Montgomery Bower, "Gang Violence: Color It Real," *People*, May 2, 1988, 46; Morgenthau, "Drug Gangs," 20–27.

[79] Quoted in John Leo, Martin Casey, and Russell Woodbury, "'Parasites on Their Own People': Gangs Are Tougher, Better Armed and More Violent Than Ever.," *Time*, July 8, 1985, 76.

immigration laws to curtail Asian and Latino gangs, and bureaucratic reforms to create a

coordinated federal "strike force" for tracking and prosecuting gangs across state lines.

The police discussed these plans with journalists to be sure that their recommendations

received coverage in the news.[80] High-ranking police officials and prosecutors even

wrote their own editorials to convince voters. For example, such as Los Angeles

prosecutor James Hahn published an impassioned editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* that

advocated using civil abatement and other punitive approaches against gangs. "We

desperately need to rethink the balance between the constitutional rights of street gangs

and the compelling state interest in protecting the innocent victims of gang terrorism," he

wrote. "It is time for us to use the legal weapons necessary to reclaim the streets."[81] The

weapon that Hahn and his colleagues most wanted was a national response in favor of

harsher statutes. They also believed that federal money for punishment and surveillance

was essential. If the image of an organized, interstate gang system described by the police

and the press was real, only federal authorities could match the power and reach of the

gangs.

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[80] For examples, see Youth Services Bureau Street Gang Detail of the Los Angeles County
Sheriff's Department, "Street Gangs," May 1979, box 48, file 36, Baca Papers; Michael J. Ybarra
and Paul Lieberman, "US Labels LA a Center of Drug Trade, Violence," *Los Angeles Times*,
August 4, 1989, 1; Ronald J. Ostrow, "Asian Crime War Rages in LA Suburb," *Los Angeles
Times*, October 25, 1984, D1; US General Accounting Office, *Nontraditional Organized Crime*,
53–59; Ira Reiner, *Gangs, Crime and Violence in Los Angeles: Findings and Proposals from the
District Attorney's Office* (Los Angeles: Office of the District Attorney County of Los Angeles,
May 1992).
[81] For examples, compare "Gang Violence [Notes on Meeting with Mike Genelin]"; Roberti,
"Senate Judiciary Statement"; "Investigative Plan/Role of the FBI"; "LA Efforts on Gang
Project."

The 1994 Crime Bill: Federal Politics and Converging Rhetoric on Gang Violence

Action at the federal level had been slow in the 1970s and early 1980s.[82] In fact, a

1983 study found that there were only three programs in the entire federal government

that addressed urban gangs: two supplied funds for speedy prosecution of gang members

and a third supported the development of new guidelines for dealing with gang members

and delinquency.[83] Federal activity radically changed in 1988 due to a media firestorm

that gripped national attention. The number of news reports on gang violence had been

growing steadily for years, but attention rapidly accelerated after the murder of a young,

middle-class woman in Los Angeles. On January 30, 1988, graphic designer Karen

Toshima met a date for dinner in the upscale Westwood shopping district just outside of

UCLA's campus. As Toshima and her boyfriend walked along the crowded shops after

dinner, two factions of the Crips began fighting nearby. One member opened fire,

accidentally killing Toshima.[84] Immediately, the gang issue exploded citywide. The

LAPD organized a summit for law enforcement and drafted a strike plan against both the

Bloods and Crips. The police added patrols to Westwood and staged massive sweeps of

gang territory.[85] Known as Operation Hammer, these sweeps were one of the largest

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[82] The only exceptions to this silence were limited discussion about gangs' contribution to school violence in a 1975 Congressional hearing and gang involvement in Asian organized crime in hearings from 1984 through 1986. US Congress, Senate, Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, *Our Nation's Schools—A Report Card,* 10–11, 17–19, 32; Calvin Toy, "A Short History of Asian Gangs in San Francisco," *Justice Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (December 1992): 648; William L. Chaze, "Asian Gangs Stake Out Turf in US," *US News and World Report*, November 5, 1984, 82.

[83] Bosc, Hawkins, and White, "Street Gangs," 109.

[84] John Mitchell and John Kendall, "Toshima's Slayer Gets 27 Years to Life in Prison," *Los Angeles Times*, December 2, 1989, B1.

[85] The LAPD had established Operation Hammer a few months before the Toshima murder, but most of the sweeps occurred in response to this shooting. "Caught in the Crossfire," *Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 1988, D6.

police operations in American history and received national news coverage. During a sweep in April, the LAPD arrested nearly 1500 residents—half of them suspected gang members—in just two days.[86] By the end of the year, the LAPD and the city government had used over $6 million in emergency funding and added almost 700 officers to the force just to address gang violence.[87]

Black and Latino residents who had already been active in the discussion of gang intervention gained a stronger platform in the aftermath of Toshima's death. Some decried the injustice of a press that would give so much attention to the death of one rich woman while hundreds of men of color had been dying for decades. Many welcomed the attention the city was finally paying to the problem and used it to demand more law enforcement for their own neighborhoods. "Westwood deserves no more protection than Watts," warned the *Los Angeles Sentinel*. "Our taxes pay the salaries of police officers just as much as any other group's taxes and we are not going to allow our services to be any less....One thing is certain, either you do something about the deployment of troops or you will be forced to answer the wrath of an angry and disappointed community."[88] These minority voices, however, continued to demand that this policing be fair.[89] When police statistics showed that the LAPD raids netted thousands of young black and Latino men but that only 7 percent were ever charged with crimes as a result, even the

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[86] Jay Mathews, "More Than 600 Arrested in Anti-Gang Sweep by Los Angeles Police," *Washington Post*, April 10, 1988, 3; Bob Pool, "Police Call Gang Sweep a Success," *Los Angeles Times*, April 12, 1988, D1.

[87] Sandy Banks, "The Legacy of a Slaying," *Los Angeles Times*, September 11, 1989, A1; Davis, *City of Quartz*, 271–277.

[88] "What Next Chief Gates?," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 11, 1988, A6.

[89] "To Control Gangs: Attention, Prevention, Detention," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, February 12, 1988; Stephen Braun, "The Politics of a Murder," *Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 1988, D1; Stephen Braun, "Leaders Agree on Gangs but Split on Police Deployment," *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 1988, A3.

staunchest supporters of the suppression approach argued that policing may have gone too far.[90] Toshima's death intensified already rumbling discontent within Los Angeles's black and Latino neighborhoods about daily violence and unequal policing. It became in the words of the NAACP a "watershed moment" for the issues of gang violence and crime policy for nonwhite voters across the country. As a result of the debate surrounding the LAPD's response, many black and Latino leaders in Washington began to seriously consider a federal response to gang violence.[91]

The Westwood shooting also brought intense media attention to the gang problem nationally and stressed that no one, not even middle-class Americans like Toshima, were safe.[92] The national press kept Toshima's murder in the front pages and used it as a jumping off point for a number of pieces investigating gang life. *48 Hours* spent two days documenting "a scary America most of us don't know" on Los Angeles's gang-torn streets and featured stories of gang members that one interviewee described as not even "animal[s], they are mutations."[93] *Newsweek* ran a harrowing and much talked about cover story on the dangers that gangs posed to the country. Filled with pictures of black and Latino gang members, the article described the losing battle cops waged against increasingly mobile, armed, drug-dealing street gangs. The article quoted police officers at length about their frustrations with the lack of coordination and resources from state and federal authorities. These officers only stood a chance if government did

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[90] "Year of the Dead," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, January 11, 1989; "Be Careful Out There," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, April 21, 1988, A6.
[91] Banks, "The Legacy," A1; Davis, *City of Quartz*, 270–271; Joan W. Moore, *Going Down to the Barrio: Homeboys and Homegirls in Change* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 3.
[92] Margaret Carlson, "The Price of Life in Los Angeles," *Time*, February 22, 1988, 31; Robert Reinhold, "Gang Violence Shocks Los Angeles," *New York Times*, February 8, 1988, A10; Mathews, "More Than 600 Arrested," 3.
[93] "On Gang Street," *48 Hours* (New York: Columbia Broadcasting System, June 30, 1988).

something quickly, and readers agreed.[94] As one reader wrote, "you can't win a [gang] war without decisive leadership, and congressional leaders have yet to show me that they're playing to win."[95]

Recognizing a hot button issue, federal politicians moved to capitalize on the public's momentum. Congress held almost twice as many hearings on the gang issue from 1988 through 1994 than it had in the previous twenty years.[96] With an election looming in the fall of 1988, both houses of Congress passed new legislation for the war on drugs, which due to the media's and the police's coupling of gangs and crack, was seen as a way to combat gang violence. The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 enhanced prison terms for drug possession and extended the death penalty to drug offenders who ordered the murder of others.[97] The latter was a direct attack on gang leaders who, hoping to avoid long jail terms, commissioned younger members to shoot rivals.[98] The act also provided federal funds for anti-gang education programs in major cities. These programs taught elementary and middle school students how to spot gangs in their neighborhoods and resist gangs who tried to recruit them.[99] On the local level, these programs were wildly popular. Creating an anti-gang education course was a quick and easy way to make it appear that local officials were addressing gang violence and seemed to be an inventive short-term solution until more money was available for increased policing. In

[94] Morgenthau, "Drug Gangs," 20–27.
[95] "Letters," *Newsweek*, April 18, 1988, 14.
[96] Based on an analysis of Proquest Congressional Database.
[97] *Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988*, Pub. L. No. 100-690, 102 Stat. 4181, (1988).
[98] Cohen et al., *National Evaluation*, 3, 10.
[99] Despite their popularity, studies later showed that anti-gang education courses did not reduce gang membership. As a result, the federal government stopped funding such programs in 1995. Noelle E. Fearn, Scott H. Decker, and G. David Curry, "Public Policy Responses to Gangs: Evaluating the Outcomes," in Miller, Maxson, and Klein, *Modern Gang Reader*, 333–334.

fact, local governments often used more money on these programs than the federal government had allocated. They simply covered the shortfall by taking funds from a part of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act that had set aside federal dollars for new drug counseling facilities. Gang intervention was a higher priority than addict rehabilitation.[100]

Vice President George H.W. Bush pushed gang violence to the center of his presidential campaign that same year. In late summer, the FBI, DEA, DOJ, and ATF all met with Bush's office to develop a national gang policy for the campaign trail. Minutes from the meeting stressed that the "VP needs the credit" to capitalize politically on the panic over gangs.[101] At a campaign rally only a few weeks before the election, Bush announced a five-point plan to address crime, which highlighted ways to attack gang violence. His proposals to deal with gangs focused entirely on suppression efforts: a gang unit for the DOJ, an expanded death penalty, swifter and harsher sentencing, and more money for local law enforcement.[102] Once elected president, Bush founded the Safe Streets Violent Crimes Initiative, which gave the FBI power to create special task forces to "proactively" go after gangs and drug organizations.[103] Meanwhile, the DOJ under the aegis of the Bush White House established the National Youth Gang Suppression and Intervention Program, a federal clearinghouse for information on how to effectively

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[100] Cohen et al., *National Evaluation*, vii.
[101] Emphasis in original. "LA Efforts on Gang Project."
[102] Memorandum from Michael Lempres to Attorney General, 13 October 1988, box 179, file "Gang Task Force/FBI Gang Squad," DOJ Records; "Proposed Remarks for Vice President George Bush: Crime/Law Enforcement," 6 October 1988, box 179, file "Gang Task Force/FBI Gang Squad," DOJ Records.
[103] Ted Gest, *Crime and Politics: Big Government's Erratic Campaign for Law and Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 78.

establish anti-gang programs on the local level.[104] The department convened an inaugural

conference of prosecutors, law enforcement, and gang experts in Washington. Reflecting

the central role that law enforcement and criminal justice experts had come to play in

national crime policy, a majority of the organizers and participants were police officers

and prosecutors; no community members or social service experts were invited to speak.

While the conference's final report did make overtures to community programs in a few

comments, the primary solution was the elimination and suppression of gangs

nationwide.[105] With the federal government taking its first steps to address gangs since

the War on Poverty, it appeared that at least while a Republican president was at the helm

advised by federal law enforcement bodies, the response would heavily favor

punishment.

This trend did not change when Democrat Bill Clinton won the presidency in

1992. In fact, the Clinton Administration shepherded through Congress one of the most

expansive crime bills in American history, dramatically increasing the punitive nature of

the federal "war on gangs." Late in 1993, key Democratic leaders decide to make crime a

central platform for the upcoming midterm elections by drafting an omnibus crime bill

that would address a variety of illegal acts.[106] The proposed bill contained provisions for

100,000 new police officers nationwide (a 20 percent increase in the size of the American

police force), billions of dollars for prison construction, extension of the death penalty for

almost fifty federal crimes, measures to protect women from violence, and a ban on

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[104] Suzanne Cavanagh and David Teasley, *Youth Gangs: An Overview* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, June 9, 1992), 10.
[105] Bryant, *Communitywide Responses*, 1–2.
[106] "It Oughta Be a Crime," *National Review*, September 12, 1994, 14–16.

semiautomatic assault rifles. By including funds for prisons and cops while also increasing gun regulations, the Democrats ensured that the crime bill was a careful mix of conservative and liberal crime proposals that in the words of Democratic Senator Joe Biden placed punishment "first and foremost."[107]

Through this new bill, Democrats hoped to wrest the crime issue away from Republicans who had defined the parameters of the crime debate since the "law and order" era. For nearly three decades, Republican politicians had received most of the electoral support that came from voters worried about the issue. Democratic leaders had noted that beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s polling data showed that American voters considered crime one of the most important issues facing the nation. Furthermore, Democratic strategists knew that these same polls showed that Americans no longer felt certain that Republicans could contain crime any better than the Democrats could because crime had continued to rise under Republican leaders.[108] Sensing an opportunity, the Democratic Party launched a full-scale battle for what one Clinton advisor called the "hottest political issue in the country." "There is no stopping this train," the advisor wrote. "The only question is whether we get in front of it or get flattened by it."[109]

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[107] President Bush had proposed a more limited crime bill as early as 1989 but never received enough support from Democrats at the time to secure passage. Gest, *Crime and Politics*, 44–50; Joseph R. Biden, "Combatting Violence in America: Crime Affects All of Us," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 60, no. 11 (March 12, 1994): 323; "White House Fact Sheet on Combating Violent Crime," 15 May 1989, Public Papers 1989, George Bush Presidential Library and Museum— Digital Collection, College Station, TX, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=421&year=1989&month=all; David Corn, "The Great Crime-Bill Show of '91," *Nation*, April 29, 1991, 550–552.

[108] Bill Turque and Eleanor Clift, "The Politics of Crime," *Newsweek*, December 6, 1993, 20–23.

[109] Scholar Katherine Beckett has argued that the increasing number of Americans concerned about the crime issue was the result of the political and media campaign around the 1994 bill. Though she is right that the campaign probably did account for part of the increase, internal memos like these demonstrate that politicians thought they were responding to changes in public

Bill Clinton, as an early member of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC),

became a leader in the movement to recapture crime politics. Founded in 1985, the DLC

was a powerful group within the Democratic Party that had charted a new strategy for

Democrats in the wake of Ronald Reagan's reelection. Members of the DLC argued that

to overcome the apparent dominance of Reagan and the New Right, the Democrats

needed to recapture white, middle- and working-class voters who had defected to the

Republicans in the 1980s. The DLC believed that the best way to accomplish this goal

would be for Democrats to shed their reputation as the party that catered to minority

groups and to transcend the liberal/conservative divide by embracing a centrist approach

to issues popular among white voters. At the same time, Democrats did have to be careful

to keep minority voters and leaders marginally happy, especially African Americans who

had gained substantial numbers in Congress in 1992 due to redistricting of the electoral

map. The trick for the "New Democrats" was to embrace more conservative stances on

the issues while maintaining just enough minority support to ensure passage of legislation

and to prevent too many minority voters from abandoning the party at the polls.[110] For

Clinton and his strategists, crime seemed to be the right topic to use for this new strategy.

Internally, White House advisors argued that there was "no reason for us to engage the

opinion. Memorandum from Bruce Reed and Jose Cerda III to Carol Rasco and David Gergen, 22 October 1993, box 74, file, "Crime Bill—Senate 2," Bill Reed Collection, William J. Clinton Presidential Library—Digital Archive, Little Rock, AR (hereafter cited as Reed Collection), http://www.clintonlibrary.gov/assets/storage/Research%20-%20Digital%20Library/Reed%20Crime/74/647420-crime-bill-senate-2.pdf; Katherine Beckett, *Making Crime Pay: Law and Order in Contemporary American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 60. For a minute overview of the Congressional debates and negotiations of the entire bill, see Gest, *Crime and Politics*, 219–247.

[110] Claire Jean Kim, "Managing the Racial Breach: Clinton, Black-White Polarization, and the Race Initiative," *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 1 (April 2002): 61–66; Luis Ricardo Fraga and David L. Leal, "Playing the 'Latino Card': Race, Ethnicity, and National Party Politics," *Du Bois Review* 1, no. 2 (September 2004): 303–305.

Administration in Washington's left-right crime debate;" there was a middle ground that Democrats could carve out.[111] Publically, the DLC claimed that the crime issue could "unite inner cities and suburbs" for the Democrats.[112] To achieve this centrist vision, Democratic leaders at first worked closely with police offices and prosecutors to craft a crime bill that would receive the support of this powerful constituency of experts, a process clearly at work in devising the parts of the bill that would address gang violence. Second, the Clinton White House used the image of hardcore gang members preying on innocent black, Asian, and Latino communities to convince some minority leaders and voters to support the bill.

When crafting early versions of the legislation, Democrats discussed the issue regularly with law enforcement and criminal justice personnel. The IACP, FOP, and National Sheriff's Association all met with Clinton's team and recommended stronger sentencing and extension of the death penalty to ensure "a strong, tough Crime Bill."[113] To address gangs, the IACP's president told his organization "we suggested acquiring and providing more information and intelligence on gangs, enacting new laws directed at illegal gang activity, and encouraging multijurisdictional cooperation." In particular, the police advocated longer sentences for drive-bys and restrictions on semiautomatic assault

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[111] Emphasis in original. Memorandum from Bruce Reed and Jose Cerda III to Carol Rasco, 1 December 1993, box 75, file "Crime Bill Strategy Group," Reed Collection, http://www.clintonlibrary.gov/assets/DigitalLibrary/BruceReed/Crime/75/C%20647420-crime-bill-strategy-group.pdf.

[112] Nancy Gibbs and James Carney, "Laying Down the Law," *Time*, August 23, 1993, 22.

[113] Dewey R. Stokes, "National Lodges Involved in Many Issues," *National FOP Journal* (Spring/Summer 1994): 8; Melinda E. Lund, "NSA's 1994 Position Paper," *Sheriff* 46, no. 3 (August 1994): 16–17; Bud Meeds, "Law Enforcement Gets a Crime Bill…At Last," *Sheriff* 46, no. 4 (October 1994): 6.

weapons.[114] The state of California had successfully banned semiautomatic weapons in

1989 with the help of police lobbying, and law enforcement hoped it could achieve the

same at the federal level. California's law, which made it a felony to possess, sell, or

manufacture an assault weapon, had originally been drafted, in the words of the law's

sponsor, to "take these weapons of destruction out of the hands of the gang member."[115]

The statewide ban received massive support from California's prosecutors and police,

because as LAPD Chief Daryl Gates explained "my police officers are tired of facing

them."[116] Now at the national level, police organizations and leadership argued that such

bans were critical to winning against the gangs. With these provisions added to the bill,

the police would no longer be "outmanned, outgunned, and outspent" by gang members.

　　　　Once the crime bill had been announced, Clinton's team asked state attorneys

general, local district attorneys, and law enforcement to speak publically in support of the

legislation.[117] In particular, Democrats relied on these experts to apply pressure to

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[114] Sylvester Daughtry Jr., "Maintaining the Focus on Violent Crime," *Police Chief* 61, no. 1 (January 1994): 6; Sylvester Daughtry Jr., "Our Legislative Successes and Challenges," *Police Chief* 61, no. 3 (March 1994): 6; Marilyn B. Ayers, "Ban Assault Weapons Now!: One Sheriff's Perspective," *National Sheriff* 41, no. 4 (September 1989): 23–25.

[115] At the time, many commenters credited passage of the bill to outcry after a mass shooting of five students at an elementary school in Stockton by a suicidal gunman on January 17, 1989. Legislative files and articles from the period, however, show that fears about gang violence were the original reason for the bill's proposal and were a consistent motivation throughout debates. Nancy Marion, *A History of Federal Crime Control Initiatives, 1960–1993* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 201; David Roberti to Tom Rodriguez, 23 March 1989, box 48, file "Issue Files," Roberti Collection; "Shooting to Kill," *Monterey* (CA) *Peninsula Herald*, April 29, 1988; Josh Meyer, "Rise in Gang Killings Projected," *Valencia* (CA) *Daily News*, January 19, 1989; Memorandum from Donne Brownsey to David Roberti Regarding Assault Guns, 8 December 1989, box 50, file "Issue Files, Bill" Roberti Collection; Carl Ingram, "Roberti Proposes Bill to Ban Sale of Military Weapons," *Los Angeles Times*, December 7, 1988, 31.

[116] Quoted in John Chandler, "LA Bans Possession, Sale of Assault Rifles," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, February 8, 1989, A1; Jon Matthews, "Showdown Looms over Gang-Type Assault Guns," *Sacramento* (CA) *Bee*, January 16, 1989, A1.

[117] Bryant, *Communitywide Responses,* 6.

Congressional members, knowing that such backing would have "tremendous impact."[118]

Clinton spoke often before groups of prosecutors and police officers, reminding them that

it was their demands for more funding to fight the gun-wielding street gangs that had

brought this bill to Capitol Hill.[119] Pleased to see that Clinton's bill embraced the same

punitive policies they had been fighting for, prosecutors and police urged their colleagues

to write representatives in Congress in support of the legislation. By discussing the bill

and these specific elements with law enforcement, President Clinton acknowledged the

powerful policymaking role that police and prosecutors had constructed for themselves as

crime experts. But he was also making a calculated decision to attract white voters. As in

the late 1960s, American law enforcement remained largely white and middle-class.

Although racial minority groups had increased their numbers in police departments

across the country, white men and women still made up almost 80 percent of all sworn

officers in the early 1990s.[120] Championing law enforcement's crime control proposals

and making them a central element of the crime bill would have been one way that

Clinton and his fellow "New Democrats" could woo back a large bloc of their target

audience to the Democratic Party.

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[118] "Crime Strategy Outline," 1993, box 75, file "Crime Bill Strategy Group," Reed Collection http://www.clintonlibrary.gov/assets/DigitalLibrary/BruceReed/Crime/75/C%20647420-crime-bill-strategy-group.pdf.

[119] For examples, see William J. Clinton, "Remarks to the Law Enforcement Community in London, Ohio," 15 February 1994, The American Presidency Project, University of California Santa Barbara, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=49656&st=gang&st1=; William J. Clinton, "Remarks to the National Association of Police Organizations in Minneapolis, Minnesota," 12 August 1994, The American Presidency Project, University of California Santa Barbara, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=48970&st=gang&st1=.

[120] Brian A. Reaves, *Local Police Departments, 2007* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Department of Justice, December 2010), 12.

Having secured police and prosecutors' support for the bill, the Democrats turned their focus to minority leaders and voters. A major element of the White House's public relations campaign was the image of hardcore gang members whom Democrats used to symbolize the absolute depths of inner-city crime and the worst offenders in the drug economy.[121] Clinton started his national tour for the bill in an urban school in Los Angeles that had garnered attention for gang shootings and intimidation.[122] Stumping for the bill over the next year, he spoke often about heavily armed gang members and their drive-by tactics, both of which posed a grave risk to innocent civilians in the poor, minority neighborhoods gangs purportedly controlled. "This bill," Clinton argued, "takes on the sickness of gangs and drugs and gives our young people a new chance at life."[123] Clinton talked about adding more police in minority neighborhoods to protect residents from gang violence. He also heavily lobbied for the bill's bans on semiautomatic weapons and on the sale of guns to minors, provisions that were traditionally central to liberal crime control and especially popular among black and Asian American voters.[124]

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[121] William J. Clinton, "Remarks at the Full Gospel AME Zion Church in Temple Hills, Maryland," 14 August 1994, The American Presidency Project, University of California Santa Barbara, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=48979; William J. Clinton, "Remarks to the National Council of La Raza in Miami," 18 July 1994, The American Presidency Project, University of California Santa Barbara, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=50505; William J. Clinton, "Remarks to the National Conference of Black Mayors," 28 April 1994, The American Presidency Project, University of California Santa Barbara, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=50060.

[122] Memorandum from Bruce Reed and Jose Cerda III to Crime Squad, 15 November 1993, box 17, file "Violence 1," Carol Rasco Collection, William J. Clinton Presidential Library—Digital Archive, Little Rock, AR, http://www.clintonlibrary.gov/assets/storage/Research%20-%20Digital%20Library/rascosubject/Box%20017/r_612956-violence-1.pdf.

[123] William J. Clinton, "Proclamation 6717," 10 September 1994, The American Presidency Project, University of California Santa Barbara, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=49063&st=gang&st1=.

[124] "Crime Strategy Outline"; "EE.UU. Necesita El 'Crime Bill'," *El Mundo* (Las Vegas, NV), August 24, 1994, 6; DaoAnh Kie Relyea, "ID Leader Joining Call to Ban Assault Weapons," *Northwest Asian Weekly* (Seattle, WA), February 12, 1994, 7; Kathleen Maguire and Ann L.

In a speech on November 13, 1993 from the pulpit in Memphis where Martin Luther

King Jr. gave his last public speech, Clinton evoked King's memory and contemporary

concerns among many African Americas about gangs and guns. "[King] did not live and

die to see 13-year-old boys get automatic weapons and gun down 9-year-olds just for the

kick of it," Clinton charged.[125] But at the same time Democrats stressed that this bill was

not meant to target blacks and Latinos at large. It was a surgical attack on the hardcore

gang members and hardened criminals these communities already feared.[126]

Minority leaders and minority journalists were widely split on the crime bill.

Some argued that it was badly needed to punish offenders who targeted nonwhite

neighborhoods. These advocates uniformly welcomed the addition of more law

enforcement in under-policed minority communities. There were others who were

ambivalent, such as *Chicago Tribune* columnist Carl Rowan who argued that the bill

pandered to fear and did not provide enough in the way of social services and economic

opportunities. But at the same time, he argued that something had to be done about "the

predators, the drug dealers, the other criminals that infect [our] neighborhoods."[127] On the

other end, many minority leaders worried that the crime bill was too punitive.[128] One

Pastore, eds., *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1993* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1994), 172, 176, 209; Kathleen Maguire and Ann L. Pastore, eds., *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1994* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1995), 195.

[125] William J. Clinton, "Remarks to the Convocation of the Church of God in Christ in Memphis," 13 November 1993, The American Presidency Project, University of California Santa Barbara, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=46115.

[126] Clarence Page, "Jesse Jackson's 'Bad Black Brother'," *Baltimore Sun*, January 11, 1994, 9A; "Jesse Jackson on Crime," *Baltimore Sun*, January 18, 1994.

[127] Mary A. Lehman, "Rowan: Don't Give Up on Offenders," *Corrections Today* 56, no. 6 (October 1994): 44.

[128] For a sample of the diverse debates, see Lynne Duke, "Confronting Violence," *Washington Post*, January 8, 1994, A1; Joe Davidson, "Blacks' Increasing Vocal Opposition to Violence Is Matched by Strong Opposition to Crime Bill," *Wall Street Journal*, January 27, 1994, A16;

Latino Congressman from Texas argued that the expansion of the death penalty made the crime bill itself "criminal."[129] African American legislators agreed, especially given the historically disproportionate use of the death penalty against men of color. They vociferously pushed back against the death penalty provisions and tried unsuccessfully to concurrently pass a provision that would allow defendants to fight a death sentence by presenting evidence that the death penalty was racially biased.[130]

The fight over the death penalty demonstrated just how risky championing a new, punitive crime bill was for the Democrats, but Democratic leaders believed that they could maintain enough support among the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) to see the bill into law. Democratic lawmakers based this belief on four factors. First, polling data, which Clinton's advisors relied heavily on to craft their strategy, showed that minority voters nationwide wanted a crime bill from Congress. As Chapter 5 discussed, minority voters had grown more conservative on crime policy over the past two decades; many were now willing to support trying juveniles as adults, lengthening jail terms, adding police, and incrementally expanding the death penalty.[131] Second, like the police, many of these

Richard Lacayo, "Lock 'Em Up!," *Time*, February 7, 1994, 50–54; "Local Clergy Give Support to Crime Bill," *Cincinnati Call and Post*, August 25, 1994, 1A; Courtlan Milloy, "We're Killing and Kidding Ourselves," *Washington Post*, January 9, 1994, B1.

[129] Herny B. Gonzalez, "Anti-Crime Proposals Not the Answer," *La Prensa* (San Antonio, TX), April 15, 1994, A3.

[130] Gibbs and Carney, "Laying Down the Law," 22–27; Memorandum from Reed and Cerda to Rasco and Gergen.

[131] There was some diversity of opinion among nonwhite voters. For example, Latinos were more accepting of the death penalty than blacks, while blacks wanted harsher punishment for juvenile offenders. Regardless of this variety, each individual group became more punitive over time. Lacayo, "Lock 'Em Up!" 50–54; Maguire and Pastore, *Sourcebook, 1993*, 155–156, 192, 200–201; Maguire and Pastore, *Sourcebook, 1994*, 169, 178–179; James L. Tyson, "Mayors Urge Congress to Go Beyond Crime Bill," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 17, 1993, 3; Gwen

voters heavily favored weapons restrictions. Democrats hoped that the bill's ban on semiautomatic weapons would be enough to convince at least some hesitant members of the CBC, CHC, and minority constituents to support the bill. Third, Democrats took special note of rhetoric from a few of the leading African American organizations and publications, which had previously worried that crack was decimating black urban communities and that gang members who dealt crack were to blame for rising gun violence. For example, the *Crisis,* the official magazine of the NAACP, had claimed "two of the biggest plagues on black America: drugs and gangs" had gotten out of control. Its authors argued that although social service approaches and job creation were needed to help addicts and young people at risk for addiction in low-income, minority neighborhoods, a tougher enforcement approach against the gang members who dealt crack was not only necessary but desired by black voters.[132] Clinton tried to appropriate this language in his own speeches to drum up support among the CBC and CHC for the bill. He clearly emphasized that the bill was not intended to target addicts or wayward youth who had fallen in with the gang. Instead, this bill was a direct attack on the hardcore gang members and leaders who were responsible for the violence, drug dealing, and drive-bys. Removing these gang members from the streets, Clinton argued could ensure the safety of innocent civilians and might break the cycle of gang recruitment for urban youth. Through this rhetorical strategy, Clinton and leading Democrats hoped to convey the perception that lawmakers were listening to minority activists and responding

Ifill, "After Clinton's Sermon Blacks Are Looking for Action, Not Amens," *New York Times*, November 21, 1993, E3.

[132] Ervin Washington, "Teen Drug Dealers," *Crisis*, March 1989, 21–25; Gary Kamiya, "The Crack Epidemic: The Season of Hard Choices," *Crisis*, March 1989, 12, 15.

to their demands. Lastly, the bill's architects hoped that Clinton's personal popularity among minority voters, especially African Americans, would temper criticism of the bill's more punitive portions.[133]

White House and Democratic leaders also worked with minority Congressional members to negotiate changes to the crime bill that would incorporate Latino and African American Congressional members' demands. They added to the bill the Drive-by Shooting Act of 1993 making such shootings federal crimes. The new provision had been introduced by Latino Congressman Luis V. Gutierrez and was heavily championed by Republicans.[134] The Clinton administration supported African American Senator Carol Moseley-Braun's amendment to the bill, which allowed the courts to try juveniles thirteen years old and older as adults if the accused had used a firearm in the commission of a federal crime.[135] Since the crime bill already contained a section that categorized many gang-related offenses as federal crimes, Moseley-Braun's amendment meant that

[133] Clinton's relationship with African American voters was a complex one. Some scholars have argued that Clinton took seriously the demands of African Americans and appointed the largest number of minorities to government positions up until that time. Many black voters felt that his election was a turning point for the White House after twelve years of Reagan-Bush Administrations. Others have argued that black opinion was based more on "style than substance" because although Clinton's campaign speeches, interactions with citizens, and professed appreciation for black culture may have made him popular with black voters, his policies (especially in regards to welfare reform) actually hurt large numbers of minority Americans. Adolph Reed Jr., "Black Leadership in Crisis," *Progressive*, October 1994, 16–19; Kim, "Managing the Racial Breach"; Melissa Harris-Lacewell and Bethany Albertson, "Good Times?: Understanding African American Misperceptions of Racial Economic Fortunes," *Journal of Black Studies* 35, no. 5 (May 2005): 650–683; Monte Piliawsky, "The Clinton Administration and African-Americans," *Black Scholar* 24, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 2–11; Katherine Tate, *From Protest to Politics: New Black Voters in American Elections* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Dewayne Wickham, *Bill Clinton and Black America* (New York: Ballantine, 2002); Louis Bolce, Gerald De Maio, and Douglas Muzzio, "The 1992 Republican 'Tent': No Blacks Walked In," *Political Science Quarterly* 108, no. 2 (July 1, 1993): 259.
[134] *Drive-by Shooting Act of 1993,* H.R. 1735, 103rd Cong. (1993).
[135] Moseley-Braun's addition to the bill was unpopular with many other members of the CBC, yet it made its way into the final version of the bill. Davidson, "Blacks' Increasing Vocal Opposition," A16.

juvenile gang members would face harsher penalties. On the other hand, the

administration worked to temper some of the amendments that were the most unpalatable

to the CBC and CHC. For example, Republican Senator Bob Dole proposed making it a

federal crime to simply be a gang member, which black and Latino lawmakers warned

would unfairly target massive numbers of minority youth and could be used

discriminatorily by law enforcement. At the urging of the CBC, Democrats successfully

quashed the amendment.[136] Finally, the CBC and CHC won almost $9 billion worth of

federal funding for preventative social services, much of which went towards gang

prevention programs, such as anti-gang education courses for urban schools.[137]

When the final votes were tallied in August 1994, twenty-five of the thirty-nine

members of the CBC and twelve of the fifteen members of the CHC voted in favor of the

crime bill, thus ensuring its passage.[138] These legislators explained that they chose to

support the bill because of the ban on semiautomatic weapons and the last-minute

inclusion of funds for badly needed social programs. Although they continued to protest

the expansion of the death penalty to new crimes, they believed if they held back their

support any longer, the Democrats might lose the issue to the Republicans who would

pass an even harsher bill. Most importantly, black and Latino legislators believed that

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[136] "Omnibus Horribilis," *Nation*, December 6, 1993, 678; Davidson, "Blacks' Increasing Vocal Opposition," A16; Michael Welch, "Stop the Anti-Crime Legislation," *Precinct Reporter* (Long Beach, CA), April 7, 1994, A4.

[137] Ted Gest and Kenneth T. Walsh, "When Will Washington Act?," *US News and World Report*, July 19, 1993, 35–367; Jesse Jackson, "'Four Balls and You're On': A Smarter Anti-Crime Bill," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 22, 1994; Karen Hosler, "Black Caucus Yields on Crime Bill," *Baltimore Sun*, August 18, 1994, 1A; Kenneth Cooper, "A Broken Barrier," *Washington Post*, October 14, 1993, C2; Memorandum from Reed and Cerda to Rasco.

[138] Library of Congress, "Final Vote Results for Roll Call 416," accessed September 5, 2013, http://clerk.house.gov/evs/1994/roll416.xml.

most of their constituents wanted some type of crime bill passed.[139] Weighing these competing needs, a majority of these lawmakers decided that the current bill was the best option available to them at the time and supported its passage.

The final version of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 was the largest and most expansive federal crime legislation in history, allocating more than $30 billion in federal funds for the war on crime.[140] And it codified, for the first time, federal penalties for gang-related crimes. It included an entire section on criminal street gangs, lengthened prison sentences for crimes committed by gang members, allowed the adjudication of juvenile gang members as adults in federal court, and provided federal funds for law enforcement's gang suppression efforts in public housing. It ordered the FBI to collect annual statistics on gangs and the Attorney General to head a task force on gang violence. In doing so, it institutionalized the tactics and networks that police and prosecutors had spent the last decade building. It also mandated the death penalty for anyone found guilty of killing another person during a drive-by. Finally, it provided funding for federal agencies to create more than fifty anti-gang education programs.[141] The same week that Clinton signed the bill into law he also declared as National Gang Violence Prevention Week. Speaking from the White House, he touted the promise of the new crime bill and asked communities across the country to take part in ceremonies to honor those killed in gang violence. Echoing the fears and the language that activists, community members, police officers, gang members, and media outlets had

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[139] Steven A. Holmes, "Blacks Relent on Crime Bill, But Not without Bitterness," *New York Times*, August 18, 1994, A1.
[140] JoAnne O'Bryant, *Crime Control: The Federal Response* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, March 5, 2003), 2–3.
[141] *Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994*, Pub. L. No. 103-322, 108 Stat. 1796, (1994).

used for nearly four decades, Clinton declared "The problem of gang violence is among the most profound we as a people have ever faced."[142]

The 1994 crime bill was a major capstone of the carceral state and a pivotal moment in the history of gang-related policy. It demonstrated the power of diverse actors to shape crime control in postwar America. Media portrayals of gang violence, especially the strength and power of the Bloods and Crips, spurred national fears and motivated voters to demand Congressional action. Law enforcement and prosecutors molded the bill using their expertise, their data, and their networks with one another. Finally, the African, Latino, and Asian Americans who had demanded a more coordinated response to gang violence beginning in the 1980s saw their own concerns addressed by the President and Congress. But the inclusion of their ideas was not without debate. Minority legislators fought to add social services to the bill and ensure that the new law would target only the most hardened gang members. The work of these police officers, prosecutors, and minority activists provided an opportunity for Democrats to take a more punitive stance on the crime issue. In doing so, the federal government dramatically shifted its approach to gangs once again. The bill's largely punitive focus increased the level of police surveillance, created new laws to increase incarceration, and funded growing connections between federal agencies and local crime control initiatives. For gangs, this meant that suppression had finally been codified at the federal level and would define the world in which they moved.

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[142] Clinton, "Proclamation 6717."

Conclusion

The 1994 crime bill and its punitive attempts to address gang violence represented the culmination of a road paved by multiple groups over nearly four decades of activism. This road was not simply bulldozed by a titillating media or cemented by white conservative politicians. It was a road constructed with the surveys of social scientists, the labor of minority leaders and community members, the stones laid by gang members, and the lines painted by law enforcement and prosecutors. It was a road whose curving path between liberal and conservative extremes can be explained only by taking into account the work of all of these actors.

However, the 1994 bill was surprisingly the last time that Congress passed legislation to address gang-related violence. Just months after Clinton signed the legislation into law, criminologist and public intellectual John DiIulio published an article in the conservative magazine the *Weekly Standard* warning that the country now faced a "superpredator" nightmare. DiIullio used statistical analysis of census data and a small-scale study of juvenile delinquency rates in Philadelphia to argue that an imminent explosion of the youth population, especially among African Americans, and a simultaneous breakdown of social norms would result in a generation of "superpredator" youth, remorseless killers bent on violence and crime. The specter of alien, irrational, volatile street gangs so common in the early 1990s became the foundation for his harrowing prediction. He argued that a "demographic bulge [in] the next 10 years will unleash an army of young male predatory street criminals who will make even the leaders of the Bloods and Crips…look tame in comparison." DiIulio and his colleagues, pointed

to gang violence as a warning bell of what was to come. Gangs were both the product of

inner-city moral decay and the potential indoctrinators of future youth. America faced a

"demographic crime bomb" that it was probably too late to defuse, DiIulio claimed,

especially given the strength and spread of street gangs.[1] Journalists across the country

featured DiIullio's dire predictions and suggested that the United States was doomed to

see a massive explosion in juvenile homicides, robbery, and rape. Local politicians

warned that America needed to prepare for an onslaught of violence by reforming the

juvenile justice system, increasing the capacity of juvenile detention centers, and possibly

going even further in building a punitive system than the 1994 crime bill had.[2]

But the superpredators never came. In fact, national police statistics showed that

juvenile crime actually fell after DiIulio's frantic call to arms. In hindsight, criminologists

argue that DiIulio had based his predictions on erroneous readings of statistical data and

on racist perceptions about minority youth.[3] Even DiIulio, who later served as President

George W. Bush's director of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, told the *New

York Times* that he had been wrong and deeply regretted his "superpredator" prediction.[4]

As James C. Howell, a leading gang expert and has argued, the "superpredator" scare was

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[1] John J. DiIulio, "The Coming of the Super-Predators," *Weekly Standard*, November 27, 1995, 23; William J. Bennett, John J. DiIulio, and John P. Walters, *Body Count: Moral Poverty and How to Win America's War against Crime and Drugs* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 26–29.

[2] For example, see Ted Gest and Victoria Pope, "Crime Time Bomb," *US News and World Report*, March 25, 1996, 28–33; Peter Annin, "'Superpredators' Arrive," *Newsweek*, January 22, 1996, 57; Richard Lacayo and Sally B. Donnelly, "Teen Crime," *Time*, July 21, 1997, 26–30; Franklin D. Gilliam Jr. and Shanto Iyengar, "The Superpredator Script," *Nieman Reports* 52, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 45–46.

[3] James C. Howell, *Preventing and Reducing Juvenile Delinquency: A Comprehensive Framework*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009), 3–8.

[4] Elizabeth Becker, "As Ex-Theorist on Young 'Superpredators,' Bush Aide Has Regrets," *New York Times*, February 9, 2011.

probably the "most damaging and erroneous myth propagated in the 100-year history of the juvenile justice system."[5]

Regardless of the fact that it was eventually proven wrong, the "superpredator" scare demonstrated just how powerful fears of street gangs had become by the mid 1990s thanks to the efforts of police, politicians, prosecutors, and journalists. The "superpredator" phenomenon was also important because it was the high point of the gang panic. After DiIulio's "crime bomb" failed to detonate, gangs garnered less attention at the national level. Congress has not passed any legislation to specifically target street gangs since the 1994 bill, and the number of Congressional hearings on street gangs fell substantially after 1995. The only exception was an uptick around 2006 when Congressional lawmakers debated the construction of a border fence between Mexico and the United States. During these debates, supporters of a fence often argued that tighter enforcement of the southern border would help contain a gang violence problem purportedly caused by undocumented Latino immigrants. But after the bill passed, federal legislators dropped the issue.[6]

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[5] Howell, *Preventing and Reducing Juvenile Delinquency*, 16.

[6] In particular, they called attention to a new "super gang," MS-13 or Mara Salvatrucha. According to police reports, Latino immigrants who had fled the civil war in El Salvador had organized MS-13 in Los Angeles in the 1980s. By 2005, law enforcement argued, MS-13 members had created a vast network linking gangs both in the United States and throughout Central America. US Congress, House, Committee on Government Reform, *MS-13, and Counting: Gang Activity in Northern Virginia*, 109th Cong., 2nd sess., July 14, 2006; US Congress, House, Committee on Government Reform, *Gangs, Fraud, and Sexual Predators—Struggling with the Consequences of Illegal Immigration, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources*, 109th Cong., 2nd sess., April 12, 2006; US Congress, House, Committee on the Judiciary, *Immigration and the Alien Gang Epidemic—Problems and Solutions: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security, and Claims*, 109th Cong., 1st sess., April 13, 2005.

This relative silence stems mainly from the fact that many of the actors who had made gangs a national concern are no longer as actively mobilized behind the issue. Community-based organizations and minority activists have been less vocal about a national gang problem, thus there are fewer constituents pressuring federal lawmakers about street gangs. Some groups like MAD DADS, SO SAD, and Mothers Against Gangs have spread further across the United States and continue to lobby for legislation, but their efforts primarily have focused on the local level.[7] Meanwhile, minority leaders have started to take a more critical look at the general provisions of the 1994 crime bill and other measures that grew out of the punitive push in the 1990s. Given the dramatic drop in all types of violent crime since then and the continuing rise in the incarceration of blacks and Latinos, many of these leaders now question the need and justice of older, punitive policies.[8] There is a growing movement among these groups and individuals to push back against the growth of the carceral state and limit the powers of the police. However, these activists have not focused on the provisions of these laws that target gang members.

At the same time, prosecutors have stepped back from political agitation because they successfully secured most of the laws they had lobbied for in the 1990s. Prosecutors continue to use the tools created by the 1994 crime bill and have prosecuted an increasing

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[7] There have been a few notable exceptions, such as recent activism in Chicago in response to a reported rise in gang homicides. However, this activism has largely remained a local movement with little national impact. Dahleen Glanton, "Black Caucus Discusses Urban Violence at Chicago State," *Chicago Tribune*, July 26, 2013; Steve James, *The Interrupters* 2011 (Chicago: Kartemquin Films, 2011), DVD; "Emanuel Administration Announces New Coordinated Gang-Reduction and Neighborhood Safety Strategies," *City of Chicago*, last modified May 29, 2012, http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/mayor/press_room/press_releases/2012/may_2012/em anuel_adminstrationannouncesnewcoordinatedgang-reductionandnei.html.

[8] David Von Drehle and Sam Jewler, "Why Crime Went Away," *Time*, February 22, 2010, 32–35.

number of gang members at the federal level using RICO statutes.[9] Prosecutor's offices across the country still employ civil abatement and vertical prosecution against identified street gangs. The courts have validated the constitutionality of both of these tactics and supported prosecutors' efforts. Even when the Supreme Court struck down Chicago's Gang Congregation Ordinance in 1999—the court's only attempt to reign in prosecutors' initiatives—the justices argued that the ordinance was only unconstitutional because it failed to clearly outline how the police should define a "gang" and what constituted "congregating." In the final decision, the courts upheld the right of lawmakers and the police to prohibit gang members from exercising certain rights. In order to prevent threats to residents who lived in gang turfs, the justices argued, proactively punitive measures against gang members were absolutely necessary. Prosecutors and Chicago's City Council quickly rewrote the ordinance's definitions and brought civil abatement back only a year later.[10]

Like prosecutors, police have been less vocal in pressing for federal action on gang related-violence, but only because they were satisfied with the funds and laws they won. Despite the lack of lobbying, law enforcement's approach to gang management has continued to evolve. Since the early 1990s, the number of gang units in police

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[9] Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Violent Gang Initiatives," *Ten Years After: The FBI Since 9/11*, last modified August 2011, http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/ten-years-after-the-fbi-since-9-11/just-the-facts-1/violent-gang-initiatives.

[10] Dirk Johnson, "Chicago Council Tries Anew with Anti-Gang Ordinance," *New York Times*, February 22, 2000; Edward Allan, *Civil Gang Abatement: The Effectiveness and Implications of Policing by Injunction* (New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC, 2004), 58–59; Kim Strosnider, "Anti-Gang Ordinances after *City of Chicago v. Morale*s: The Intersection of Race, Vagueness Doctrine, and Equal Protection in the Criminal Law," *American Criminal Law Review* 39, no. 101 (2002): 101–146; *City of Chicago v. Morales et al.*, 527 US 41 (1999).

departments across the country has increased fivefold.[11] More police departments are

tracking urban residents they suspect of gang involvement, and they are sharing this data

with a growing national network. Federal law enforcement has also expanded its reach

and consolidated its powers. The FBI created a National Gang Intelligence Center in

2005 and the ATF now spearheads the Violent Crime Reduction Partnership. Through

these programs, both law enforcement agencies have widened their influence on local

police through training and collaborative efforts to identify and prosecute gang

members.[12] And finally, with fewer actors lobbying and pressing for change, journalists

no longer cover gang violence with the same fervor or regularity as they did in the 1980s

and 1990s. Without sustained pressure from all of these actors, gangs have once again

slipped below federal lawmakers' top priorities.

This silence has not been because gang-related violence is gone or because gangs

no longer exist. Police data showed a drop in gang-related homicides and gang

membership nationally beginning in 1996, however, over the last decade, law

enforcement has noted a steady increase in both statistics. This rise has not reached the

heights of the early 1990s nor has the political rhetoric returned to the panicked levels of

that period, but the numbers do hint at the possibility that gangs could once again become

a viable political issue for the communities, police, and prosecutors who once mobilized

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[11] George E. Tita and Andrew Papachristos, "The Evolution of Gang Policy," in *Youth Gangs and Community Intervention: Research, Practice, and Evidence*, ed. Robert J. Chaskin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 29.

[12] Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Violent Gang Initiatives"; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, "ATF Fact Sheet: Combating Gang Violence," last modified February 2013, https://www.atf.gov/publications/factsheets/factsheet-combating-gang-violence.html.

around gang-related violence.[13] Whether or not gangs become a cyclical topic in national debates, it is impossible to ignore that they have galvanized political discourse and federal policymaking. Through the issue of gang violence, a wide variety of actors reshaped the course of America's punitive turn. Thanks to their efforts, the carceral state has not followed a steady path free from contestation and modification. Instead, crime politics have been and will continue to be a vital and dynamic political battleground in America.

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[13] Arlen Egley Jr. and James C. Howell, *Highlights of the 2010 National Youth Gang Survey* (Washington, DC: Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, US Department of Justice, 2012).

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